

Open Letter From Anti-Racism Committee

Dear fellow Niagara citizens,

We are the Anti-Racism Committee, acting with PACHRED (the President's Advisory Committee for Human Rights, Equity and Decolonization) at Brock University. We write here to condemn all threats of violence and death always, and specifically, at the present time, the recent threats against Dr. Hirji, which were triggered by Niagara Public Health's recommendation, in consultation with the Regional Chair & CAO of Niagara Region, to the Province of Ontario to keep Niagara in the Grey stage in order to continue protecting the lives of the residents of Niagara.

We add our voices to the many expressions of support and official statements from other local organizations in Niagara decrying this type of harassment. We also appreciate the fact that at the provincial and national level, the Premier of Ontario, the Prime Minister, the Ontario Medical Association as well as several Mayors have come out in support of Dr. Hirji as well. On this issue, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau even Tweeted: "I am outraged to hear threats have been made against Dr. Mustafa Hirji, the Medical Officer of Health for Niagara Region. This rhetoric is unacceptable, and I strongly condemn it. He, and all public health officials working to keep us safe, deserve nothing but our sincere thanks."

We wholeheartedly agree with the statement because we see these threats as unlawful and repugnant intimidation of a public health official. We support Dr. Hirji and other Niagara citizens who feel the burden of racism inherent in this harassment and intimidation. This is unlawful and wrong and as citizens of Niagara we want to express in the clearest possible terms that we deplore these acts.

The global pandemic has produced anxiety and frustration for all publics. We understand the feelings of frustration around the lockdown. Nevertheless, under no circumstances, ever, are threats of violence and death an acceptable expression of sentiments. Instead, these threats contribute to the damaging mental health impact of the pandemic, which disproportionately affects people working in high-risk professions, such as front-line workers in the medical professions. We can disagree about COVID-19. We can dissent about the procedures implemented. We must not let differences of opinion devolve into threats. We cannot improve a deadly situation with more violence. We call for peaceful expressions of legitimate concerns and an immediate end to the harassment and threats against Dr. Hirji, his team and his family.