May 23, 2006

Mayor Larry Di Ianni
and Members of Council

Re: Caledonia Dispute and the Effects on the City of Hamilton

The Committee Against Racism (CAR), a volunteer advisory committee of the City of Hamilton, is committed to its mission "To advise, advocate and consult on relevant issues in the community of Hamilton relating to racism and its consequences and anti-racism strategies and its benefits". To that end, we respectfully request that the following letter be received and acted upon appropriately as pertaining to the land claims & reclamation issue of our sister communities of Caledonia and Six Nations and the ensuing racist consequences that have been felt both locally and nationally.

The Committee Against Racism’s responsibilities include:

➢ To work actively with institutions and all other relevant organizations, including education, police services, emergency services, public, private, voluntary sector and all levels of government to advise, consult, advocate and to promote proactive measures pertaining to racism and its consequences;

➢ To initiate and facilitate discussions between individuals and/or groups to address issues and concerns of racism and/or while promoting respect and understanding in the community; and

➢ To make recommendations to the City of Hamilton on issues relating to Equity in Employment as well as issues relating to anti-racism.

Unfortunately, the dispute in Caledonia has resulted in multiple examples of overt and blatant racism. Members of CAR are disturbed to hear of incidents such as:

- A civics classroom discussion where a shy, embarrassed 16 year old Aboriginal young lady left the room when she perceived the conversation to be very one-sided with many racist and derogatory remarks such as "you guys pay their taxes" and "drunken Indian". The teacher later approached this student and asked her, "Why didn't you stay and stick up for yourself?"

- Local media reporting (i.e. radio, television, and newspapers) where derogatory phone calls were aired, and newspaper articles utilizing words such as "angry", "terrorists" and "clash" were highlighted.

- Increased public conversations where name-calling and stereotypical remarks such as: "bunch of drunken Indians" and "you get free money, don't you" are escalating. A CAR member stated that "there's been more racist remarks stated now than there ever was after 9 - 11".
As a result there have been a polarization of sides, long time neighbours and classmates have been divided, families and friendships have been ruined. The consequences of this racism can felt by all of us with a heavy heart, tearful eyes and disbelief that this can still occur in this day and age.

The Committee Against Racism believes that the events in Caledonia are also having an impact in Hamilton and require action. The message should be clear - RACISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED! To that end the Committee Against Racism respectfully requests and advises the following:

(a) That the City of Hamilton, as a leading institution of Hamilton, issue a statement immediately denouncing all forms of racism (i.e. statements, behaviour and actions) that should proactively call for respect and mindful consideration of all;

(b) That the City of Hamilton issue a statement to all levels of the Canadian government to act quickly regarding peaceful negotiations as pertaining to the land claims & reclamation issue of Caledonia and Six Nations, and one that promotes "NEGOTIATION not ESCALATION", and one that assists in the diffusion of racist behaviours and actions;

(c) That the City of Hamilton work with the Hamilton Executive Directors' Aboriginal Coalition (HEDAC) to ensure that adequate short term and long term supports are in place locally to support individual victims of racism. These locations included:
   i. The Aboriginal Cultural Interpretive Centre,
   ii. Civic Resource Centre
   iii. School supports (i.e. ad hoc and permanent training – sensitivity & awareness, anti-oppression, cultural, etc.)
   iv. Culture & Recreation
   v. That the City of Hamilton continue to consult, assist, and ensure the capacity of HEDAC to respond meaningfully to this and future issues of racism.

(d) That the Strengthening Hamilton's Community Initiative advise its Hamilton Media Advisory Council to facilitate a meeting of local media to advise on proactive measures to provide respectful, unbiased, and equitable local media reporting that offers equal opportunities for Aboriginal specific reporting mechanisms such as: www.reclamationinfo.com, CKRZ 100.3FM Six Nations radio station and Turtle Island News, etc.

In closing, the Committee Against Racism respectfully calls on all Hamiltonians to be both local and national role models, with mindful consideration of our next generations, in our collaborative fight to end racism! In a most simplistic view, RACISM WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!

In Friendship & Unity,

[Signature]

Cindy Sue (Montana) McCormack
Chair, Committee Against Racism

cc. City Clerk