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**December 17, 2020**

REGION OF PEEL

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**Sent:** December 17, 2020 1:52 PM

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**Subject:** Call for Awareness: India's Farmer Protests

Hello Juliet, hope you are well.

Over the past couple of weeks, you may have come across news stories of farmers protesting in India, including local support protests taking place across Peel and around the globe.

2020 has been a very heavy year for many people, to say the least. Similarly, we are witnessing the largest protest in human history in India and across the world on this matter. Since August 2020, hundreds of thousands of farmers from Punjab, Haryana and other states (upward of 250 million people), have been peacefully protesting new agriculture legislation (3 bills) in India that were not passed democratically. These bills deregulate agricultural markets by eliminating the minimum support price that was previously guaranteed by the government, as well as any bargaining leverage or control for farmers. These bills open farming up to exploitation by large corporations and create economic disadvantages for farmers, jeopardizing their livelihood and future. Unjust circumstances for farmers are nothing new, and due to the introduction of biotechnology (genetically modified crops), mounting debts and struggles, India has seen over 300,000 farmer-suicides in the past 20 years—and we are seeing suicides happen amongst the current protests as well.

India's agriculture sector employs more than 50% of its total 1.4 billion population. Protestors (from seniors, to women, to children) are now fighting for justice in the middle of a pandemic in one of the hardest COVID-hit countries in the world. They are being faced various forms of police brutality including the use of tear gas, water cannons, barriers and batons. Despite all this, these protestors are prepared to camp out on the streets for months away from their families, and are even feeding the same forces that are hurting them along the way. And what's worse is that despite India being a "democratic" country, the Indian media is falsely portraying these peaceful protestors as "terrorists" and censoring the reality of what is happening. We are also seeing the impacts of racism outside of India from those who are either unaware of the situation and questioning protests in our cities, or from those who choose to ignore it altogether.

The farmers' protest is a massive issue in the South Asian community right now. This is the conversation happening every day in many of our homes as we are very concerned for the safety and livelihood of farmers and families back home. For many South Asians, especially from the 'grain bowl' of Punjab, farming is part of our identity and culture. It is in our blood, passed down over generations, and many of us outside of India are proud children and descendants of farmers who have dedicated their lives to building a quality life for us and future generations. Some even have family and friends who have left their homes in India, in the middle of a pandemic, to protest this legislation in Delhi.

This fight for justice is not about race or religion. It's about food production, the rights of farmers, and more so, humanity. No farmers means no food. We see our parents and grandparents in the face of

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these protestors and it has been very difficult and disturbing to witness the hardships faced by farmers in India, including images of peaceful protestors being met with force and aggression.

Regardless of what happens in Delhi, India over the next few days, weeks or months, this is a global movement and South Asians across the world have their eyes on India, with many ready to stand next to our homeland's farmers as they fight for their rights. This is likely only the beginning of protests and advocacy taking place in our communities, and this movement continues to grow.

On October 14, 2020, Brampton City Council unanimously passed a motion to support and stand in solidarity with Brampton residents and their families who are being adversely affected as a result of this situation. As we have seen in the past, global mass movements work to push society forward and we are looking to spread awareness at the Region to the issues that are greatly affecting our communities both in India and worldwide. South Asians represent more than half of the population in Peel. As the Region of Peel, we are empowered to make a difference as we pursue and embrace purposeful change in the lives of staff and Peel residents. We believe that *Community for Life* means not only celebrating the diversity of Peel's population, but also ensuring appropriate services are provided to meet the population's unique, changing needs. While we may not have the power to influence what is happening politically and at the ground level in India, we do have the power to educate, build awareness and advocate for humanity. We would be very much appreciative of your thoughts on how we can best approach this at the Region, and what we can do to help staff who are experiencing difficulty or are personally affected, as Indians face a very real threat to their livelihoods, culture and heritage.

Thank you very much and we look forward to hearing your thoughts and recommendations on this matter.

-Navreen, Lisa, Binny, Taranjit, Navbir, Ritu  
(and many more)

**Navreen Chohan**

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**Stay safe and healthy.**

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## Resolution from the City of Brampton, Minutes of the October 14, 2020 City Council

### 16.2 Discussion at the request of Regional Councillor Dhillon re: Indian Farming Protests in Brampton.

A motion, moved by Regional Councillor Dhillon and seconded by Regional Councillor Medeiros, was introduced, with the operative clause as follows. The motion was subsequently also seconded by City Councillor Singh.

Therefore, be it resolved that the City of Brampton stand in solidarity with those Brampton residents and their families who have been directly affected by the farming bills passed in India.

Councillor Dhillon and Councillor Medeiros outlined the purpose of the motion.

The motion was considered as follows.

#### **C387-2020**

Moved by Regional Councillor Dhillon Seconded by Regional Councillor Medeiros

Whereas the City of Brampton remains a proud farming community;

Whereas the City of Brampton understands and respects the contributions of farmers in feeding nations;

Whereas the City of Brampton is home to thousands of farmers who still own farmland in their ancestral countries;

Whereas numerous rallies have recently taken place across the City of Brampton protesting three farming bills that were passed in India in September 2020;

Whereas the passing of the bills will result in the privatization of farmers' markets in India and will adversely affect the financial situation of many Bramptonians and their families back home;

Whereas India's agriculture sector contributes nearly 15 per cent of India's \$2.9-trillion economy but employs nearly half of the country's 1.3 billion people,

Whereas 86 per cent of Indian farmers only own two or less acres of farmland with an average income of \$1400 per year, and do not have the means to bargain with large, private corporations;

Whereas anti-farmer policies, debt, and a deteriorating financial status have led to 363,726 farmers and farm labourers committing suicide between 1995 and 2019;

Whereas Brampton City Council has recently recognized and stood with its Black, Tamil, Vietnamese, and other communities whose families have faced hardship abroad;

Therefore, be it resolved that the City of Brampton stand in solidarity with those Brampton residents and their families who have been directly affected by the farming bills passed in India.