TEMPLATE MUNICIPAL LETTER

DATE

Dear [ENTER YOU MAYOR’S NAME]:

**RE: Municipal and regional race-based data collection during COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted many of the social and economic inequalities that have affected the ability of communities to withstand the impacts of this national and international public health crisis and economic fallout.

We are members of Unifor Local NUMBER, and we are writing today to ask you to take action to fight the oppression that has caused the effects of the pandemic to be felt unequally.

We are gravely concerned about the increasing number of stories emerging regarding the disproportionate impacts of this crisis on racialized communities and workers.

In many large American cities, Black Americans are contracting and dying from COVID-19 at a much higher rate than other groups. In the U.K., the death rate amongst Black and other ethnic communities is rising higher than that of the white British population.

For those engaged in racial justice and equity work, these stories come as no surprise – systemic racism and discrimination have resulted in racialized communities experiencing higher rates of poverty, precarious work, food insecurity and less access to quality housing and health services. This leaves these communities at higher risk of poor health, disease and higher mortality rates.

In cities and regions across Canada, however, we are unable to determine which groups are feeling the greater impacts of this current health crisis, and to what extent, due to a simple fact – **we do not collect the necessary data to draw those conclusions.**

For years, researchers, activists, academics, community groups and organizations have called on all levels of government to collect and publicly release race-based disaggregated data so that we can better understand how racial inequality and discrimination affects the social and economic outcomes for racialized communities. This information is not only critical for making evidence-based public policy decisions, but also ensuring barriers for social programs are removed for marginalized groups and that public services are developed using an equity lens.

**As a municipal leader, you have the power to influence public health, and the platform to call for widespread collection of disaggregated data on the racial impacts of COVID-19.**

We are calling on all municipalities and public health authorities across Canada to take immediate steps and begin collection of disaggregated race-based data as it relates to COVID-19 infections, testing and mortality rates.

We also ask that municipalities work together in applying pressure to provincial and federal governments to do the same. To ensure this information is collected and used in the most effective, confidential and safest way possible, we recommend the following:

* Consult and collaborate with local community organizations, racial justice advocates and equity experts to ensure that data variables and collection tools are comprehensive and inclusive;
* Coordinate with other government departments and agencies at all levels to ensure data collected is as standardized as possible so that appropriate cross-country comparisons can be made;
* Ensure data is available publicly and in disaggregated formats so that we can better understand the experiences of a variety subset of people;
* Ensure data is not used in the further policing or surveillance of racialized communities by law or immigration enforcement;
* Work to include the collection of additional key demographic information, such as income, gender, language, sexual orientation, disability, place of birth and immigration status, so we can understand how intersecting factors also influence and affect people’s health, access to health services and overall standard of living;
* Make all data collection tools and processes permanent once this pandemic subsides.

As we move through this crisis, we cannot leave a single worker behind. There is a shift toward equity, and to acknowledge the racial discrimination that is present in our communities and institutions.

Several jurisdictions, such as the province of Quebec and Ontario, as well as the city of Toronto, and the Region of Peel Public Health, have already announced their intentions to start collecting race-based data on COVID-19 infections.

We urge you to commit to begin collecting this data, as outlined above. When armed with information, we can identify and eliminate inequities, and can build healthy, stronger and more resilient communities.

We thank you for considering this urgent request and we await your positive response.

Sincerely,

NAME