

10 November 2023

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Premier's Office, Room 281
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Re: Censure of Hamilton Centre MPP Sarah Jama

Dear Premier Ford,

Our Labour Council, which represents 220,000 working people across Toronto and York Region, is writing to express our deep concern and disappointment regarding the October 23rd vote to censure a democratically-elected MPP. As a result, MPP Sarah Jama will not be recognized by the Speaker and is therefore barred from speaking in the Ontario Legislature.

Freedom of speech, within a framework of very limited restrictions, is a fundamental pillar of our democratic society. It is through the open exchange of ideas and perspectives that we are able to address our challenges, find common ground, and work towards a more inclusive and just province. This freedom is even more important when connected to the political process, including for an elected representative.

MPP Jama's statements do not warrant this extreme measure taken against her. MPP Jama has already apologized for her original statement and added another statement condemning Hamas' terrorism. We call on your party to seek to rescind the motion imposed on MPP Jama, as the results are harmful on multiple fronts.

First, it is an attack on Sarah Jama as an individual, as a Black, Muslim woman with a disability.

Second, it shuts down the voices of all of MPP Jama's constituents, those who voted for her and those who did not. This action is damaging for the democracy of this province, and across the country, when any constituents (in this case, the constituents of Hamilton Centre) have taken away their democratic right to be heard through their elected official.

In recent years, the only MPP censured by the Legislative Assembly was Randy Hillier, who had a long list of misconduct and disreputable behaviour, bordering on criminal. Regarding MPP Hillier, it was clear there was general agreement that he needed to be stopped from using his legislative authority as a cloak for his behaviour. The vote was unanimous.

We urge the Government of Ontario to reconsider its position on MPP Jama.

We await your response.



Andria Babbington
President
Toronto & York Region Labour Council
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Jeff Irons
Vice-President
Toronto & York Region Labour Council

Cc: Leader of the Official Opposition, Marit Stiles, MPP for Davenport
Interim Leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, John Fraser, MPP for Ottawa South
Leader of the Green Party of Ontario, Mike Schreiner, MPP for Guelph