

## Report from Kingston – Billion or Bust



Cam Jay, Tara Kainer, MPP Sophie Kiwala and Jamie Swift - December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Jamie Swift and Tara Kainer from the JPIC Office of the Sisters of Providence along with Cam Jay, Kingston anti-poverty activist, visited MPP Sophie Kiwala on December 12<sup>th</sup>, about the *Billion or Bust Campaign*. We left ISARC's page of demands, background information, and ISAC's list of current social assistance rates with her. We also pointed out that there are several drives going on simultaneously to bring attention to the inadequacy of income for many Ontarians, illustrating the general concern about income insecurity.

Struggling on a CPP-Disability pension himself, Cam spoke about the challenges people on Ontario disability pensions face. In addition to insufficient income, the bureaucracy is difficult to navigate and makes people feel unfairly scrutinized, particularly if they live with mental illness. The system also makes them feel precarious and uncertain as they perceive they could do something 'wrong' at any moment and lose their benefits. Cam pointed out as well that, in Kingston, there is no middle class left – virtually half of the population lives on less than \$30,000 a year -- and that people at the low end are being squeezed the most.

We requested that Ms. Kiwala forward ISARC's demands to caucus and also to the Minister of Community and Social Services and to respond to us in writing about any developments or changes. She suggested that we write a letter instead to Minister Jaczek, cc her, and she will inform us about any progress. That letter will be mailed tomorrow.

We also left several pages of petitions calling for a \$15/hr. minimum wage.