



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeurs et professeurs d'université

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Rick Waugh
Chair of the Board of Governors
York University
York University Secretariat
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Dr. Rhonda Lenton
President and Vice-Chancellor
York University
Office of the President
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Dear President Lenton and Mr. Waugh:

At the Canadian Association of University Teachers' (CAUT) Council meeting held this past weekend in Ottawa, delegates representing more than 70,000 academic staff across the country unanimously passed the following resolution:

Whereas existing university legislation and policies give the York University Senate jurisdiction over decisions to alter or suspend classes on academic grounds during a strike;

Whereas in the days prior to the recent strike by CUPE 3903 the York University senior administration declared that classes would continue to be held during a strike without consulting Senate and despite the long-standing practice that the university Senate in conjunction with Senate Executive is the body that decides on academic grounds on class cancellations during a strike;

Whereas the Chair of the Board of Governors has issued a letter to the university Senate declaring - for the first time in York's history and contrary to university policy - that final decisions on class cancellations fall exclusively under the Board's statutory rights;

And, whereas the current attempt to curtail Senate's authority follows similar efforts to undermine and limit the academic governance responsibilities of Senate with respect to other important activities such as the recent

Presidential search process and approval of the academic priorities inscribed in the Strategic Mandate Agreements negotiated with the government;

Be it resolved that the CAUT Council hereby condemns the actions and policies of the York University Board of Governors and Senior Administration in their attempts to broaden the Board's jurisdiction in ways that undermine and limit the legitimate authority of Senate over the academic affairs of the University.

CAUT legal counsel has reviewed the *York University Act*, and has determined that the authority to cancel classes is not expressly granted to the Board. Nor is the exercise of such authority by the Board consistent with past practice. In previous labour disputes, it has been the York University Senate, not the Board, which made decisions about class cancellation. Moreover, the authority to cancel classes falls under the Senate's express responsibility for "academic policy", and is demonstrated by existing Senate policies on class cancellation and disruption of academic activities by labour disputes.

As such, CAUT is extremely alarmed by the Board's disregard for Senate authority over these matters. As you are well aware, collegial governance is a core value of universities and colleges. If our institutions are to fulfill their public responsibilities for the preservation, transmission, and creation of knowledge, it is essential that academic bodies play the decisive role in making academic decisions and setting academic policy.

I will be referring this matter to our Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee for further consideration and discussion about steps that CAUT may take to ensure that fundamental principles of collegial governance are respected at York University.

Sincerely,

David Robinson



Executive Director

cc: James Compton, President, CAUT
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee
Richard Wellen, President, York University Faculty Association