Published on *University of Toronto Faculty Association* (https://www.utfa.org)

Open Letter to the Laurentian University Faculty Association

March 22, 2021

Laurentian University Faculty Association
Room P-628, Ramsey Lake Road
Sudbury, Ontario P3E 2C6

March 22, 2021

Greetings to President Fabrice Colin and all our colleagues at the Laurentian University Faculty Association!

We, the Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA), express our solidarity and support for our colleagues at Laurentian University during these challenging times. We wish to make explicit our deep concerns over the recent decision by the Administration of Laurentian University to declare financial insolvency and to move toward financial restructuring by filing for court protection under the *Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act*. This departure from the principles of collegial governance and collective bargaining must be condemned. We urge the Administration of Laurentian University to re-commit to negotiations with the Laurentian University Faculty Association, and other representatives of staff and students, to address their fiscal challenges as a community of scholars, rather than rely on court rulings.

UTFA understands that the judge in the case has ruled that "The school can permanently or temporarily cease, downsize or shut down any of its business or operations," and that Laurentian University can also "terminate the employment of such of its employees or temporarily lay off such of its employees as they deem appropriate." We agree with Fabrice Colin, President of the Laurentian University Faculty Association, who stated, "The challenges facing Laurentian University are not due to a lack of government oversight, but a lack of transparent and accountable institutional governance that allows for oversight and input by the university community." We call for the Administration of Laurentian University and the provincial government overseers on the Laurentian University Board of Governors to be held accountable for any financial mismanagement or negligence that might have occurred.

We recognize that as Canada's only university with a tricultural mandate, Laurentian University offers outstanding higher education in English and French, with a comprehensive approach to Indigenous education. It is the only university offering francophone programs in Northern Ontario. The Indigenous programming offered at Laurentian University is vital for students and is part of the collective commitment to the truth and reconciliation process with Indigenous communities. *Laurentian University is a provincial treasure that must be preserved*.

We are concerned that many of Laurentian University's Indigenous and francophone programs may be lost because of the financial restructuring that is occurring, and due to the failure of the Ontario government to step up and intervene in the situation. UTFA joins the Laurentian University Faculty Association, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA), and the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) in urging the Ontario government to intervene in the fiscal crisis and provide immediate financial resources in recognition of the important roles that Laurentian University fulfills in the province of Ontario. Students, faculty, and staff of Laurentian University should not have to pay the price for the poor governance practices of their Administration and the chronic underfunding of the post-secondary education system in Ontario.

The Ontario government's interventions into post-secondary education have contributed to the budget shortfalls and current fiscal crisis that Laurentian University is experiencing: through the ten percent tuition reduction and freeze imposed in 2019; by forcing universities into an over-reliance on recruiting international students to make up for declining provincial education funding; and by changing the funding model for universities, which substantially increase the proportion of their funding tied to performance indicators. We demand that the federal and the provinicial governments fulfill their societal and fiscal responsibilities for post-secondary education and change those of their policies for post-secondary education that have placed the smaller universities in Northern Ontario, like Laurentian University, at a particular disadvantage. The Ontario government must guarantee long term and stable funding for Laurentian University to ensure that no student's education and no jobs will be sacrificed.

In Solidarity,

The Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Faculty Association

---

Source URL (modified on Mar 29 2021):https://www.utfa.org/content/open-letter-laurentian-university-faculty-association