

March 6th, 2025

Re: Statement of Solidarity from the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association

Dear Dr. Rhonda Lenton,

The University of Western Ontario Faculty Association (UWOFA), representing 1,700 faculty, librarians, and archivists, stands in steadfast solidarity with our colleagues at York University, whose programs are currently facing potential enrolment suspensions. We share grave concern over the repercussions these cuts will have on faculty, librarians, archivists, students and staff across a wide array of programs which include:

- English (Glendon College)
- Global History and Justice (Glendon College)
- Spanish and Latin American Cultures (Glendon College)
- Sociology (Glendon College)
- Spanish
- Gender and Women's Studies
- Classics and Classical Studies
- East Asian Studies
- German Studies
- Hellenic Studies
- Italian Studies
- Indigenous Studies
- Jewish Studies
- Portuguese and Brazilian Studies
- Religious Studies
- Biomedical Physics

In addition to our concern about the impact of these cuts, we are deeply troubled by the failure of due process and transparency in the decision-making processes by the administration of York University. We are heartened by the successful efforts to reassert appropriate systems of collegial governance in the Senate motion to hold the suspensions in abeyance until the Senate and its subcommittee can develop a transparent and equitable framework for determining the viability of academic programs. We urge the President of York University to respect the will of the Senate and to refrain from engaging in unnecessary and damaging jurisdictional disputes.

Program cuts in the disciplines of Gender and Women's Studies, East Asian Studies, Jewish Studies, Global History and Justice (Glendon College), and Indigenous Studies are particularly troubling given the escalating attacks on equity, social justice and decolonizing work happening in Canada and the United States. It is urgent that we protect disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, which are central to building better, more socially just futures.

That there is a crisis in higher education in Ontario is not in dispute. Chronic underfunding by progressive provincial governments has landed us dead last in the country in terms of per capita funding. We need an immediate and ongoing reinvestment which reflects a commitment to educating our strong domestic students. More reasoned and nuanced approaches to the provision of international student education is also required from the federal government. Despite these pressures, every budget remains a choice and transparency on the true nature of the challenge is critical.



Transfers must flow to the operating fund to bolster the core mission of the university and sustain the activities on which it is defined. Capital spending and transfers away from operations must be avoided and university administrators must work collaboratively and in good faith with academic staff and other key campus stakeholders to assess the issue and determine appropriate solutions.

We call on the York administration to avoid narrow, instrumental arguments for cutting programs, particularly those in marginalized and “feminized” fields. The global demand for cultural awareness, fluency in multiple languages, and critical thinking skills is growing, as is the need for skills like empathy, active listening, complex problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These are foundational qualities for the future of work—qualities that will be increasingly important as disruptive technologies reshape our world.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johanna Weststar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "W".

Johanna Weststar, President

On behalf of the University of Western Ontario Faculty Association

Cc:

Lauren Sergio, Chair of the York University Senate

Paul Tsaparis, Chair of the York University Board of Governors % University Secretariat

Ellie Perkins, President, York University Faculty Association