

Hon. Ross Romano
Minister of Colleges and Universities
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
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April 13, 2021

Dear Minister Romano,

I am contacting you on behalf of the Carleton University Academic Staff Association (CUASA), the certified trade union representing over 950 professors, instructors, and librarians at Carleton University.

We stand in total and unwavering solidarity with the students, faculty, staff, and broader community of Laurentian University. It is unacceptable that 80 Laurentian faculty members have been laid off and that 60 programs have been cut. These draconian measures will destroy livelihoods, educational opportunity, and will have disastrous consequences for the Sudbury community and for French and Indigenous communities and education in particular. The Ontario government knew about Laurentian's financial difficulties months prior, and in fact was partly responsible for creating the problem in the first place with its continuous chronic underfunding of public education. The layoffs and program cuts were predictable and preventable; the Ontario government could have and should have provided Laurentian with the short-term and long-term funding needed to ensure that its revenues exceed their expenses as required under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA).

Laurentian University is a public institution and doesn't neatly fit under the CCAA process, which was largely written with for-profit corporations in mind. Universities create public goods and they rely on public funds. There are other unique aspects to the university sector that aren't properly accounted for in the CCAA, such as tenure and its connection to academic freedom, collegial governance, financial exigency clauses, and funding through research grants. Ontario can and should be home to a world-class university sector. It is clear that the current government does not see the importance of education, and of education in the north in particular. Among Laurentian's other crucial contributions, we remind the government that Laurentian serves a unique role in Ontario with its tricultural mandate to support English, French, and Indigenous communities.

The provincial government has a *responsibility* to support this vital body. In a letter I wrote to you in February, I had written that "without increased funding, Laurentian is in a vulnerable position at risk of having to close or merge programs, layoffs or terminate employees, reduce salaries, and possibly even file for bankruptcy." Those risks are now being realized. The government could have prevented this sorry state of affairs and it did not step up. The faculty, staff, students, and community around Laurentian are paying the price. CUASA reaffirms that Laurentian University is a crucial public institution in Northern Ontario. We continue to call on the provincial government to stop the needless suffering: increase funding and restore Laurentian to good financial health. It is not too late to do what is right.

Sincerely,



Raj Singh, PhD
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