

October 23, 2017

Dr. Kevin Hewitt
Chair, University Secretariat - Senate
Suite 210
Henry Hicks Academic Administration Building
Dalhousie University
6299 South Street
Nova Scotia, Canada
B3H 4R2

Dear Dr. Hewitt,

Re Dalhousie University's Role in Protecting Political Expression

We write to you in your capacity as Chair of the Dalhousie Senate. We are professoriate and librarian members of the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this correspondence is to express to you our expectation that the Senate of this university recognize, and act in accordance with recognition of, the fundamental importance of preserving a university community in which political speech can flourish.

While our constitutional order offers protection to many kinds of speech, none is more valued and protected than political speech. Expression which challenges majoritarian views, traditions, and practices that have caused harms to marginalized and oppressed minorities lies at the very core of Canada's constitutional commitment to the protection of political speech. The same values of truth, democracy, equality, and individual fulfillment which underpin this legal commitment to the protection of political speech inform the core mandate of universities, including Dalhousie University. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a context in which it is more critical to ensure that unpopular ideas, political perspectives, and contestation of dominant social, cultural and legal practices and norms are encouraged.

Encouraging speech which challenges us as a community to reflect upon our roles in colonialism, oppression of marginalized communities, and systemic racism is critical to the mandate of this (or any other) university: censoring such speech is antithetical to that mandate. Members of the Dalhousie community must be permitted to speak to these issues freely, with emotion or even anger, especially those who come from communities which have historically been silenced and marginalized on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, sex, ethnicity, ableism, or religion. With the exception of expressive content that promotes hatred towards particular communities or is otherwise unlawful, we must, as a university, administer our policies and standards in a manner which encourages our students, staff, and faculty to debate, even in

heated or profane terms, issues of colonialism, oppression and systemic racism. Dalhousie will fail in its mission to become a more inclusive, respectful, and tolerant community if its policies are administered in a manner that silences political speech which addresses the types of issues highlighted in this letter.

We hope that the Senate of Dalhousie University does not see its role as to police and censor the tone of our community's political speech.

Sincerely,

Elaine Craig
Constance MacIntosh
Jocelyn Downie
Sheila Wildeman
Kim Brooks
Stephen Coughlan
Adelina Iftene
Aldo Chircop
Naiomi Metallic
Jonathan Shapiro
Sara Seck
Lucie Guidbault
Hannah Steeves
Richard Devlin
Anne Mathewman
Joanna Erdman
Jodi Lazare
Nick Hooper
Cynthia Chewter
Geoff Loomer
Jonathan Penney
Jamie Baxter
Linda Aiken
Donna Franey
Michael Hadskis