



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

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(2017-05)  
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June 28, 2016

Dr. Dan Patterson  
President  
Niagara College  
135 Taylor Road, S.S. #4  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario  
L0S 1J0

Dear President Patterson:

At last month's meeting of the Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the matter of Niagara's campus in Saudi Arabia was discussed. Council delegates expressed a number of concerns about the decision of the college to operate in a repressive country known for its severe clampdown on freedom of expression, mass executions, and gender-based discrimination and violence. Delegates instructed the Executive Committee to consider the matter further at its June meeting.

It is well known that authorities in Saudi Arabia systematically discriminate against women. We are therefore deeply troubled that Niagara's campus in the country supports this discrimination by prohibiting female students from attending. This runs contrary to United Nations commitments to equal access to education for women and girls, including the UNESCO *Convention against Discrimination in Education* (1960). Moreover, female faculty are forbidden to work in the Saudi campus, in clear violation of the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel* (1997) and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

That is not the only problem. Academic freedom, as understood in international instruments or practiced in Canada, is not respected in Saudi Arabia. Any exercise of academic freedom involving the criticism of the established authorities inside the college or outside will be met with the severest penalties. According to Human Rights Watch, Saudi authorities continue to arbitrarily arrest, try, and convict peaceful dissidents. Dozens of human rights defenders and activists are serving long prison sentences simply for criticizing authorities or advocating political reforms. A recent example of violations in this regard is the case of the blogger Raif Badawi who was sentenced and re-sentenced to 10 years in prison plus 1,000 lashes for "insulting Islam".

Universities and colleges by their very nature have for centuries encouraged academic internationalism starting with the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages. That is why we encourage students, researchers, and faculty to mix and to collaborate with their counterparts in other countries and other continents. It is, however, important that universities and colleges ensure that this internationalism is conducted fairly and honestly and that it does not involve violations of human rights and academic freedom.

The CAUT Executive Committee discussed the matter thoroughly and is of the view that unless steps are taken to address these serious concerns, we are prepared to recommend to the November meeting of Council that we invoke our procedures leading to the censure of the Niagara College Administration. I have included a copy of our procedures for your review.

Censure is a rarely used sanction. Given the reputational damage this may cause, I hope that we can resolve the matter before November.

Sincerely,



David Robinson  
Executive Director

/mmp

cc: Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development  
J.P. Hornick, Chair, OPSEU Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Division  
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee

October 28, 2016

Mr. David Robinson  
Executive Director - CAUT  
2705, promenade Queensview Drive  
Ottawa, ON  
K2B 8K2

Dear Mr. Robinson,

Thank you for your message regarding Niagara College's global engagement initiatives. We welcome your comments and the opportunity to promote an open dialogue on the role of engagement in Canadian postsecondary education.

When Ontario's colleges were established in 1967, they were mandated to support economic and social development within local and diverse communities through active, sustained and meaningful engagement – which is entrenched within our founding legislation. As colleges have evolved, so has this key principle of engagement, which has expanded to include industry-focused research, work-integrated learning and global education.

Ontario's colleges are held in high regard worldwide, sought after for their quality of education, diverse program offerings and exceptional on-campus experience. Many colleges have leveraged these strengths to develop new partnerships abroad. In fact, several education associations in Canada, including Universities Canada; Colleges and Institutes Canada; and the Canadian Bureau for International Education, have taken a similar position, resulting in decades of successful projects and programs that involve faculty and staff from Canadian universities and colleges, along with other international development professionals.

At Niagara College, we share the belief that engagement is more powerful than isolation, and that historically, education has served as a significant agent for social and political transformation. For more than 20 years, Niagara College has shared its values abroad – in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East -- through educational initiatives that support social transformation, broad-based inclusion and economic development.

Our decision to support social development abroad is informed by our vision, mission and values; the same core elements that guide our consultations with our communities and our public and private partners. We, at Niagara College, place a great importance on respecting diversity and enabling inclusivity in all of our endeavors, and all of our initiatives are assessed through this lens.

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Our international initiatives also align with the Governor General's Diplomacy of Knowledge thesis, which recognizes the role that educational institutions play in enabling social, economic and political transformation in Canada and abroad. We engage the Government of Canada in relation to its International Education Strategy, and we are proud to contribute to the forthcoming Ontario International Education Strategy.

As is the case with other countries, we strongly believe that the future of human rights developments in Saudi Arabia are inexorably linked to education and engagement with those from other cultures. We are proud of our achievements in Saudi Arabia, spanning 8 years through mixed-gender education at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Centre, the region's leading and most progressive medical organization, and through our campus operations where we deliver training focused on improving employment opportunities for young Saudi women and men.

On behalf of Niagara College, I thank you for your interest, and reiterate our commitment to continued dialogue to support a broader understanding of these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Patterson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "P".

Dan Patterson, Ph.D.  
President

cc: Hon. Deb Matthews, Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development  
J.P. Hornick, Chair, OPSEU Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Division  
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee



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**Sent by email: [president@niagaracollege.ca](mailto:president@niagaracollege.ca)**

December 6, 2016

Dr. Dan Patterson  
President  
Niagara College  
135 Taylor Road, S.S. #4  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON  
LOS 1J0

Dear President Patterson:

At its meeting on Saturday, November 26, the Council of the Canadian Association of University Teachers passed the following motion:

*That CAUT Council give notice to the administration of Niagara College that, unless the concerns over the College's offshore Saudi campuses is satisfactorily resolved, censure of the administration will be imposed at the Spring 2017 meeting of Council.*

As I have indicated previously by letter, Council earlier this year expressed concern about Niagara's offshore gender-segregated campuses and programs. These operate in a repressive country known for its severe clampdown on freedom of expression, mass executions, and gender-based discrimination and violence.

CAUT's policy on Post-Secondary Education Initiatives Abroad specifically states that Canadian institutions operating in other countries must respect the following principles:

- provide full equality for all and protect the rights of women, indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups;
- advance and defend the employment and academic rights of post-secondary education staff and students; and,
- defend and promote freedom of speech and thought, academic freedom and tenure, and professional rights.

Similarly, a joint statement by CAUT and the American Association of University Professors provides that overseas campuses must: "ensure academic freedom and tenure and collegial governance...[and provide] anti-harassment and discrimination provisions...[and] equity...." It is Council's view that your campuses in Saudi Arabia violate these policies as well as internationally recognized gender equality rights. Segregated education is not equal education.

As you will note from the motion (consistent with our Procedures Relating to Censure), Council's action is a notice that censure will be imposed if these matters are not satisfactorily resolved by our next Council meeting May 4-7, 2017. We continue to hope a resolution can be found that is acceptable to all parties. I would be pleased to meet with you to explore options or take whatever other action we can to assist. Our objective is not to censure your institution but to ensure that your administration fully respects gender equality and academic freedom.

I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



David Robinson  
Executive Director

/mmp

cc: Martin Devitt, President, OPSEU Local 242, Niagara College  
RM Kennedy, Chair, OPSEU CAAT Division  
James Compton, President, CAUT  
Peter McInnis, Chair, Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee



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

March 14, 2017

Dr. Dan Patterson  
President  
Niagara College  
135 Taylor Road, S.S. #4  
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario  
LOS 1J0

Dear Dr. Patterson:

As I informed you previously, at the May 4-7 CAUT Council meeting delegates will be considering a motion that Niagara College be censured. This decision stems from concerns that Niagara College is violating academic freedom and gender rights in its Saudi Arabian operations.

Censure is the most serious sanction that CAUT can impose. It is not a sanction we take lightly – the last censures having been imposed in 2008 and, previously, 1979. Censure is imposed only when a university or college administration acts in a manner that threatens academic freedom and tenure, or takes other actions that are contrary to interests of academic staff or compromise the quality and integrity of post-secondary education. Niagara College's actions in relation to its Saudi campuses in our view constitute flagrant discrimination and a violation of human rights that our Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, our Executive Committee, and Council unanimously regard as warranting censure.

Censure means that CAUT will ask its members and the international academic community not to accept appointments at a censored institution; not to accept invitations to speak or participate in academic conferences there; and not to accept any distinction or honour that may be offered by that institution. Censure can cause serious reputational damage to a college or university administration.

I am writing one last time before the Council meeting to see if there is any willingness on the part of your administration to enter into discussion with CAUT about ways our concerns can be resolved and censure can be avoided. In particular, we are calling upon the Niagara College administration to:

- ensure that its Saudi campuses adhere to internationally recognized human rights by providing the same quality and program offerings to male and female students;
- provide academic freedom protections for academic staff teaching at the Saudi campuses; and,
- commit to full transparency in its Saudi operations, including making publicly available information on finances, educational programming, and governance.

Your timely reply would be greatly appreciated as I will need to report on any developments to CAUT Council in May. We sincerely hope that the Niagara College administration is prepared to address these matters so that the situation can be remedied and the possibility of censure be avoided.

We look forward to your response.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'David Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Robinson  
Executive Director

cc: Martin Devitt, President, Niagara College Faculty Association  
James Compton, President, CAUT  
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee

April 5, 2017

Mr. David Robinson  
Executive Director - CAUT  
2705, promenade Queensview Drive  
Ottawa, ON  
K2B 8K2

Dear Mr. Robinson,

Thank you for your March 14, 2017 letter regarding Niagara College's operations within Saudi Arabia's Colleges of Excellence program, and the pending motion at CAUT's upcoming council meeting.

In particular, I appreciate your invitation to pursue further dialogue between our organizations. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with representatives of CAUT, as indicated in my October 28, 2016 letter to you. We would be happy to come to Ottawa to discuss our operations in Saudi Arabia and CAUT's concerns.

Please contact my assistant, Laurie Richards, at [lrichards@niagaracollege.ca](mailto:lrichards@niagaracollege.ca) or 905 641-2252 ext. 4000 to identify possible dates for a meeting.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Dan Patterson, Ph.D.  
President

cc: Martin Devitt, President, Niagara College Faculty Association  
James Compton, President, CAUT  
Peter McInnis, Chair, CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee