

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