



Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship

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lupker@uwo.ca

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mueller@ucalgary.ca

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21 October 2016

David Cameron
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science

Sioban Nelson
Vice-Provost, Faculty and Academic Life

University of Toronto
100 St George Street, Suite 2005
Toronto, ON M5S 3G3

Dear Drs Cameron and Nelson,

I am writing as president of the Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS), a national organization of university faculty members and others dedicated to the defense of academic freedom and reasoned and respectful debate. (For further information, please see our website at www.safs.ca.)

The letter you wrote to psychology professor Jordan Peterson (reported in the Toronto *Sun* of 19 October: [HTTP://WWW.TORONTOSUN.COM/2016/10/19/U-OF-T-TELLS-OUTSPOKEN-PROF-TO-STOP-MAKING-PUBLIC-STATEMENTS](http://www.torontosun.com/2016/10/19/u-of-t-tells-outspoken-prof-to-stop-making-public-statements)) raises concerns for us about the protection of Dr Peterson's academic freedom.

We commend you for affirming in that letter that "the university is committed to the protection of freedom of speech," and that this commitment includes Dr Peterson's "right to express and debate views that may be discomfiting or even offensive to others."

We add that for this affirmation to be meaningful, administrators and members of the university community must recognize that so long as Dr Peterson is engaging in legal speech, his comments are protected by academic freedom.

In your letter, you state that “the refusal by a teacher or colleague to use the personal pronoun that is an expression of the person’s gender identity can constitute discrimination.” It is not clear to us that this is true in Canadian law. Moreover, unless it is true, it should not be university policy, as such a policy would infringe on the civil liberties of members of the university community and restrict the academic freedom of professors.

We expect that the University of Toronto will want to defend Dr Peterson should he be the subject of a human rights complaint for expressing his views. In addition, should Dr Peterson be charged with a violation of university policy, the university must ensure that due process is followed in the adjudication process.

SAFS looks forward to hearing from you. We will post this letter on our website. With your permission, we will be pleased to post your reply together with it.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Mercer', with a stylized, cursive script.

Mark Mercer, PhD
President, Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship (SAFS)
PO Box 33056 Quinpool Centre
Halifax, NS B3L 4T6
president@safs.ca
<http://www.safs.ca/>

Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy
Saint Mary’s University
923 Robie Street
Halifax, NS B3H 3C3
mark.mercer@smu.ca
<http://professormarkmercerc.ca/>
<http://www.smu.ca/academics/departments/philosophy-faculty-and-staff.html>

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Dr Jordan Peterson, Psychology