



Psychology  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2016

Professor Jordan Peterson  
Department of Psychology  
University of Toronto

Dear Dr. Peterson:

Concerns have been raised by members of the University of Toronto community regarding statements you have made publicly regarding transgendered persons in a recent YouTube presentation. Among other things you have indicated (and I paraphrase) that you do not recognize the right of others to tell you which personal pronoun to use when addressing them. You have also indicated (and again I paraphrase) that you do not accept that gender identification can be independent of biological sex. Some transgendered persons believe that particular pronouns other than he or she are appropriate or necessary, depending on the context, to signal basic acceptance of their statutorily protected right to equality and equal treatment without discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression. In addition, some transgendered persons may perceive the comment that gender identity cannot exist independent of biological sex as refusing to acknowledge their existence in a manner that would permit equal treatment without discrimination on these prohibited grounds.

In your presentation you state that you believe that some of your commentary may be illegal.

I am writing in my capacity as Chair of the Department of Psychology to remind you of your responsibilities as a University of Toronto faculty member. As you know, among the students, faculty and staff of the University of Toronto are those whose gender identity and gender expression may be other than male or female. As you also know, the Ontario Human Rights Code states with respect to services, goods and facilities, and employment that every person has a right to equal treatment without discrimination because of various listed grounds, including "gender identity" and "gender expression." The University of Toronto has long been committed to an educational and working environment that is free from discrimination, and this is reflected in its [Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence](#), and in other policies. Such policies include the recently amended "[Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment](#)" which includes in the definition of workplace sexual harassment a reference to engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker because of "gender identity or gender

expression", where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. Article 9: No Discrimination of the Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Toronto and the University of Toronto Faculty Association also provides that there shall be no discrimination, interference, restriction, or coercion exercised or practiced toward any faculty member or librarian, inter alia, on the basis of gender identity or gender expression.

As a faculty member at the University of Toronto you have Academic Freedom and Responsibilities pursuant to and in accordance with Article 5 of the Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the University of Toronto Faculty Association. Like all members of the University community you also have an obligation to comply with the law, including the provisions of the Ontario Human Rights Code. Moreover, it is important for faculty members to consider the impact of their words and actions on the students they teach, and the colleagues with whom they work. Among such students and colleagues are transgendered people, some of whom may have experienced discrimination, or violence related to their gender identity or expression, or who may have vulnerabilities that could cause them to be negatively impacted by conduct that publicly refuses to accept their gender identity or expression as they participate in University activities.

Having consulted with the Vice-President and Provost, and the Vice-President of Human Resources and Equity, I wish to remind you that in your activities as a University of Toronto faculty member you are expected to comply with applicable human rights law.

Yours very truly,



Prof. Susanne Ferber  
Chair, Department of Psychology

cc. Prof. David Cameron, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Science  
cc. Prof. Cheryl Regehr, Vice-President and Provost  
cc. Prof. Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-President, Human Resources and Equity

Encl.:

Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence  
Policy with Respect to Workplace Harassment  
Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the University of Toronto Faculty Association