

Wilfrid Laurier admits it mishandled Lindsay Shepherd academic freedom case

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<https://globalnews.ca/news/3923478/wilfrid-laurier-no-complaint-lindsay-shepherd/>



LISTEN: Excerpts from secretly recorded meeting between Wilfrid Laurier University grad student and faculty

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[Wilfrid Laurier University](#) has found there was no wrongdoing by one of their T.A.s who [played a controversial YouTube](#) clip during a class tutorial.

The clip in question featured Jordan Peterson, a University of Toronto professor who infamously refuses to use gender pronouns other than “he” or “she.”

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Lindsay Shepherd, a master's student at the university, played the clip in her tutorial for students in a communications class.

She was then pulled into a meeting with three other people, including the professor of the course for which she was a T.A., where they told her students had complained about about the YouTube clip and it had created a toxic environment for transgender students.

After a recording of a meeting between Shepherd and officials was shared to Global News, the university's president and vice chancellor issued an apology to her for the way the situation was handled and said an independent investigation was looking into the situation.

READ MORE: [FULL TEXT: Apology from Wilfrid Laurier officials over handling of free speech controversy](#)

On Monday, Laurier president and vice chancellor Deborah MacLatchy issued a statement saying the University mishandled the case.

"There were numerous errors in judgement made in the handling of the meeting with Ms. Lindsay Shepherd, the TA of the tutorial in question," MacLatchy said in the statement.

"In fact, the meeting never should have happened at all. No formal complaint, nor informal concern relative to a Laurier policy, was registered about the screening of the video."

The statement said the investigation said that using a video clip for "the purposes of an academic discussion is a reasonable classroom teaching

tool,” as long as the discussion around it is in context and relevant to the course – and MacLatchy said there was no evidence Shepherd mishandled the discussion.

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In response to the statement, Shepherd told Global News she doesn't believe this is the end of it.

“I think this is a temporary thing and this could happen again,” she said. “You can't get away from this kind of unacceptable abuse of power.”

She said knowing there was no official complaint vindicates her going public.

“If I hadn't recorded the conversation I would have gone on my whole life thinking that someone was offended by me. And there's no basis for that claim,” she said.

MacLatchy also said there will be changes to school policy because of the incident, including greater training and guidelines for T.A.s.

WATCH: Wilfrid Laurier TA says University censored her for showing clip on gender pronouns



She said there will also be a review of the Gendered and Sexual Violence policy, and that there will be additional supports for LGBTQ2 people at the university

Those involved in the meeting have been informed but MacLatchy declined to say if there were repercussions.

MacLatchy also touched on those who used the situation to comment on the wider issue of academic freedom.

“I remain concerned by the way faculty, staff and students involved in aspects of this situation were targeted with such vitriol,” she said.

“Members of the university community must be supported to work and study in an environment free of discrimination and harassment and they have my commitment we will continue to make this a university priority.”

“For those who have chosen to use this incident as an indictment of Wilfrid Laurier University or the plight of Canadian universities in general, I say your assertion is unreasonable and unfounded,” she wrote.

“Properly grounded academic debate at Laurier occurs every day and encourages critical thinking and civil discourse. Ideas that one finds objectionable should be challenged and debated.”

**With files from Global's Mike Drolet*