

News Release

Group of Laurier Professors Launch Freedom of Expression Campaign

“Lindsay Shepherd Issue” Inspires the Call for Firm, Clear Protections on Freedom of Speech

22/11/17

Waterloo, ON — In reaction to the oppressive treatment of graduate student, Lindsay Shepherd, and other documented cases of censorship at Wilfrid Laurier University, a small but growing group of professors from various departments and faculties across the institution are calling on Laurier to support a resolution—*The Laurier Statement for Freedom of Expression*—which will ensure unfettered inquiry and maximal freedom of expression on campus.

The group have launched a petition and are calling on the remaining fellow colleagues and students to show their support for the resolution by signing their names. Laurier students are also encouraged to sign.

The petition can be seen and signed here: <http://chn.ge/2A7dk0b>
It can also be searched online under the title: “Defending Free Expression at Wilfrid Laurier University”

The *Laurier Statement for Freedom of Expression* (the full text of which appears with the petition; also attached to this release) is modelled on the *University of Chicago Free Speech Statement* known more commonly as the “Chicago Statement.” The Chicago Statement is considered the gold standard for maximizing freedom of expression on campus within the bounds of the law and the operations of a university. To date, more than 30 universities in the United States have adopted the statement itself or a close variant. The list of adoptees includes Princeton, Columbia, Purdue, Vanderbilt, Georgetown, University of Michigan and others (full list here: <https://www.thefire.org/chicago-statement-university-and-faculty-body-support/>)

In response to this controversy, Wilfrid Laurier’s administration has stated that it will launch a task force to explore the issue of freedom of expression on campus and to make recommendations. Recent past events—specifically, the outcomes of the Freedom of Expression working group at the University of British Columbia earlier this month—give us reason to worry that such a task force will not come out strongly for maximal freedom of expression. As such, we feel a concrete, tested, proposal must be offered as the solution. (See Globe and Mail response to the UBC task force here: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/globe-editorial-why-an-unabashed-embrace-of-free-speech-is-the-best-option-for-our-universities/article36950250/>)

It is our great hope that our university, Wilfrid Laurier, will follow the advice of motto that appears on its official seal: *Veritas Omnia Vincit* (Truth Comes First).

Again, to move toward that goal, we are alerting our Laurier colleagues and our Laurier students to the *Laurier Statement on Free Expression* and are asking them to sign the online petition to show their support and give us a mandate for positive change.

We are pleased to relay that Lindsay Shepherd gives her full support to this initiative.

Those faculty or students interested in signing the petition can contact the faculty named below.

Acting on Behalf of the Laurier Freedom of Expression Petition Signatories are the following:

Dr. William McNally, Professor, Business and Economics (wmcnally@wlu.ca)

Dr. Simon Kiss, Associate Professor, Digital Media and Journalism (skiss@wlu.ca)

Dr. Andrew Robinson, Associate Professor, Human Rights and Human Diversity (arobinson@wlu.ca)

Dr. David Millard Haskell, Associate Professor, Religion & Culture/Digital Media and Journalism
(dhaskell@wlu.ca)

Acting on Behalf of all Laurier Students:

Lindsay Shepherd

Dr. David Millard Haskell is available for comment or interviews (226-989-6247).

Special Notice: A rally organized by Laurier students in support of freedom of expression will take place Friday, November 24th, 2017 on the corner of Hazel St. and University Ave. W. in Waterloo. The rally begins at 1pm. **Lindsay Shepherd will be speaking.** Facebook page for the event is found here: https://www.facebook.com/events/1919354484992482/?active_tab=discussion