

September 20, 2018

**OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
& VICE-PRESIDENT
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Professor Mark Mercer
President
Society for Academic Freedom and Scholarship
PO Box 33056, Quinpool Centre
Halifax, NS B3L 4T6

Sent Via Email: president@safs.ca

Dear Professor Mercer,

I am writing in response to your letter received September 14, 2018 but dated September 17th on behalf of SAFS.

SAFS challenges York University's searches for tenure-track positions which are limited to Indigenous scholars on the basis that focussed hiring is "a violation of the merit principle" and that it is "wrongfully discriminatory". You also suggest that it could have the effect of discouraging Indigenous scholars from applying. With respect, York University strongly disagrees with these assertions.

As one of the largest universities in the country with one of the most diverse communities of students, faculty and staff, we believe that academic excellence requires a diversity of knowledge and active participation in the collegium by faculty with a range of different scholarly perspectives, backgrounds and lived experiences. We have a comprehensive and rigorous collegial hiring process for all faculty positions that ensures only candidates who meet our high academic standards are hired. Every academic appointment at York University meets the merit principle.

The historic Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report is a clear call to action for educational institutions. Our University Academic Plan 2015-20 contemplated the creation of a pan-University Indigenous Strategy and a goal of increasing engagement with Indigenous communities to ensure student, staff and faculty complement better represents Indigenous communities. This commitment is further elaborated in our Indigenous Framework which recognizes the need to increase the complement of Indigenous faculty and the many benefits to the University of doing so.

We will be hiring at least six new Indigenous faculty members by 2021, a goal reached in concert with the York University Faculty Association. These efforts to address under-representation are fully compliant with human rights legislation and are not "wrongfully discriminatory".

There are many excellent Indigenous scholars in Canada and abroad and we expect to receive multiple applications for each of the posted positions. In the unlikely event that searches do not identify candidates that meet our standards of excellence, offers of employment will not be made.

In summary, the postings to which you refer rest within an overall framework for York University that recognizes our values of excellence in teaching and learning; progressive thinking; embracing inclusivity and cross-cultural knowledge; supporting



social justice and social responsibility and environmental, social and fiscal sustainability. We support the approach taken and decline your request to alter it.

Thank you for taking the time to contact us and express your views. Thank you also for agreeing to post our response in full on your website. The respectful and free exchange of views is enriching to society and we are happy to be a part of it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Philipps". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "P".

Lisa Philipps
Provost & Vice-President Academic