

Ryerson University Submission to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism

Please accept this submission from Ryerson University. Recognizing the importance of this issue on our campus, Ryerson's senior executive team wanted to make a submission by the stated deadline. Accordingly, we have not had the breadth of community consultation we would have desired had this process taken place outside of the summer months. We ask that you consider accepting additional information from our Ryerson colleagues should they wish to provide comments beyond this statement. Thank you.

Principles and Values

Ryerson University is a scholarly community whose academic mission is to nurture ideas, learning, teaching and research which will have a positive impact on the world around us. This mission cannot be carried out without unequivocal support for the underlying values of academic freedom and freedom of speech, which are the hallmarks of all great universities worldwide.

It is in this context that in 2007 President Sheldon Levy added his voice to those of his colleagues who rejected any call for a boycott of Israeli universities. President Levy characterized academic boycotts as undermining the very nature of university education.

Ryerson is deeply committed to open inquiry and freedom of expression even when this leads to uncomfortable discussion and debate. We do not shy away from controversy, difficult ideas, or disagreements over deeply held views. This inevitably means that events held on campus and invited speakers may take controversial positions which some will find offensive.

A healthy learning environment must provide all members of the community the ability to learn, work and live together without fear or intimidation, despite widely differing views on the actions of the government of Israel. We are aware that anti-Semitism is manifest on the Ryerson campus at different times. We know that some of our students, staff, and faculty are not always comfortable on campus owing to their perceptions or experience of anti-Semitism.

Last year, in order to research and investigate racism (including anti-Semitism) at Ryerson University, a Task Force on Anti-Racism was established. The Task Force is co-chaired by Dr. Grace-Edward Galabuzi (Ryerson Department of Politics and Public Administration) and Dr. Eileen Antone (member of the Oneida of the Thames First Nation and a faculty member in the Transitional Year Programme of the University of Toronto) and has members drawn from among the students, staff and faculty of the University (<http://www.ryerson.ca/antiracismtaskforce/index.html>).

We await the report of the Task Force this Fall and are eager to find ways in which we can better address anti-Semitism and all forms of racism on campus. We believe there is no room on the Ryerson campus for anti-Semitism or indeed any form of racism or discrimination. We have a responsibility to ensure that our campus is a welcoming, safe and inclusive space for all to learn, teach and work.

