



Dear colleagues,

WLUF has been alerted by several concerned members to new Provincial legislation setting out a definition of the term "antisemitism" (Bill 168 Combating Antisemitism Act). Ostensibly, the legislation amends the Legislative Act, which suggests it would apply only to how the Government interprets its own legislation and regulations, but the preamble to the Bill implies a more far-reaching change to the Human Rights Code.

The definition of antisemitism chosen was drafted in 2016 by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and in the examples it provides, that organization characterizes many forms of criticism of the policies of the State of Israel as antisemitic. Because the application of the new definition of antisemitism is unclear, there is reason for apprehension that the interpretations offered in the IHRA document may be applied in Ontario Human Rights Tribunal cases.

WLUF's concern is that the Bill may serve to restrict scholarly communication and constrain academic freedom.

On 27 October, in the face of growing protest from Faculty Associations like ours, concerned citizens and other groups, the Ontario Government circumvented public discussion of the issue (and clarification of its application and scope) and approved the Bill by Order-in-Council.

For more information, the Executive refers members to the attached letter of concern on Bill 168 as well as to the legislation (<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-168>), and to the attached text of the 2016 IRHA declaration.

In view of the potential seriousness of the threat to academic discourse, the Executive passed the following motion which was sent to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

WLUF unequivocally supports the academic freedom of its members. This freedom includes the right to pursue research and open inquiry in an honest search of knowledge that is free from institutional censorship, including that of the government. **WLUF opposes Bill 168 Combating Antisemitism Act**, which will redefine anti-Semitism to include a broad range of criticism of the State of Israel. While **WLUF opposes anti-Semitism and all forms of racism and hatred**, the passing of Bill 168 poses a significant **threat to academic freedom** at Ontario universities as it can be used to **censor political speech** and **restrict the academic freedom** of teachers and researchers who have developed critical perspectives on the policies and practices of the State of Israel. Such targeted attacks will have a **chilling effect on the academic freedom** of our members in the classroom, in their research, and in campus politics more broadly.

Sincerely,
David

David Monod,
President



Wilfrid Laurier University Faculty Association