



Ryerson labour and students' unions denounce unprecedented attack on Laurentian community; call for Minister Romano's resignation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Toronto, April 13, 2021 — Members of the Ryerson All-Union Coalition condemn the recent decision of the Laurentian University administration to consolidate its operations at the expense of students, faculty, and staff.

In addition, the Coalition calls for the immediate resignation of the Hon. Ross Romano, Minister of Colleges and Universities.

On April 12, Laurentian announced the closure of nearly seventy of its undergraduate and graduate programs and the termination of at least 100 of its contract, tenure-track, and tenured faculty members, as well as many staff.

These measures were taken as part of the university's restructuring under ongoing insolvency proceedings. They were largely done in secret and will have a chilling effect on higher education in Canada.

Importantly, program closures are expected to impact roughly 10% of undergraduate students, many of whom will be unable to complete their degrees at Laurentian. Programs targeted for elimination span the disciplines, and include English and French-language degrees in the arts, sciences, business, healthcare, and education.

The Midwifery program, the only one of its kind in Northern Ontario and one of only six in the entire country, was also cut. The Indigenous Studies department, one of the founding departments of its kind in North America, has been decimated.

"This is horrifying," said Ian Sakinofsky, President of the Ryerson Faculty Association (RFA), which represents tenure-stream faculty, librarians, and professional counsellors.





“The Laurentian crisis portends badly for all Ontario universities. In addition to reflecting the current moment, and the compliant neglect of the Laurentian Board of Governors and the provincial government, the situation at Laurentian is reflective of a longer term trend. This decision has exposed the vulnerability of universities in the face of government abdication and funding suffocation.”

Maddy Fast, President-Elect of the Continuing Education Students’ Association of Ryerson (CESAR), lamented the incredible strain this decision will place on students, who are already struggling with high tuition fees and the added challenges of learning during the pandemic.

“Our institutions are continuously being put in a position to fund the most profitable programs while cutting those that advance academia not for the sake of profits. Minister Romano and the Ford Government had every opportunity to work with the Laurentian community to move forward collaboratively. They should be ashamed of themselves.”

Laurie Jacklin, President pro tem of the Canadian Union Of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 3904 echoed these sentiments.

“Our union represents Ryerson’s contract academics. Our members are used to dealing with precarity, but the government’s inaction in the Laurentian case sends a clear message to all educators: no one is safe from the Ford Government’s axe.”

“Laurentian is one of Northern Ontario’s largest employers,” Jacklin added. “Its workers and students contribute substantially to Sudbury’s economy. The ripple effects of this restructuring will be felt for years. And that should be cause for concern to the entire labour movement.”

While the Laurentian situation is extreme, it is far from unique. Universities across the province are bracing for significant budget cuts in light of the pandemic and stagnant funding from Queen’s Park.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT), the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), and the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) have launched a national Education for All campaign that calls for more public funding at Laurentian and at post-secondary institutions across the country.

At Ryerson, 55% of the operating budget comes from tuition fees and only 38% from government grants. Reductions of at least 3.5% are expected for 2021-2022.

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Joint statement endorsed by CESAR, CUPE 3904, and the RFA

Joint statement titled “Ryerson labour and students’ unions denounce unprecedented attack on Laurentian community; call for Minister Romano’s resignation” (April 13, 2021) endorsed by:

<u>Ryerson Faculty Association (RFA)</u>	<u>Local 3904 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE 3904)</u>	<u>Continuing Education Students Association of Ryerson (CESAR)</u>
<p>The RFA represents tenure-track faculty, limited term faculty, librarians, and counsellors at Ryerson University.</p>	<p>CUPE 3904 represents approximately 3,000 full-time and part-time academic employees at Ryerson University. Our members include Contract Lecturers, Continuing Education Contract Lecturers, and Academic Assistants (Teaching and Graduate Assistants, Lab Monitors, and Invigilators).</p>	<p>CESAR represents part-time and continuing education students.</p>
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