

Tuesday, October 15, 2024

Dr. Paul Andrews
President of the McMaster Faculty Association
1280 Main St. West

Delivered via email:
mufapres@mcmaster.ca

Dear Dr. Andrews:

We are writing in response to the June 24, 2024 letter from Catherine Anderson, written in her capacity as MUFA President. We appreciate MUFA's support for the approach taken by the University administration in relation to the protest encampment, as well as MUFA's recognition of the care and compassion with which this difficult and divisive situation was handled.

The approach taken by the University administration was - and will continue to be – guided by the principles of freedom of expression, which are fundamental to our functioning as an academic institution. These guiding principles are articulated on the Freedom of Expression page on the [President's Office website](#). This webpage also includes the broader policy framework within which the principles operate.

Our fundamental institutional commitment recognizes and seeks to uphold freedom of expression, including freedom of assembly and peaceful protest, for all members of our community. The motion passed by MUFA members at the general meeting on June 3, 2024, speaks to the safeguarding of civil rights for Palestinian and pro-Palestinian students, faculty, and staff engaged in nonviolent protests. As University leaders we need to be clear that McMaster's approach to freedom of expression and peaceful protest is a principled position which is applicable across our entire community, and the spectrum of issues that arise on campus.

The same approach applies to the University's policy framework, which establishes expectations for behaviour for members of our community when interacting with one another, and when exercising the freedoms outlined above. Applying our institutional policies and codes consistently and equitably is vital to ensure that all members of our community have the opportunity to express their views and make their voices heard without being threatened, ostracized, or harassed for their views or their identities. These policies and codes apply whatever activities are being undertaken.

The MUFA motion includes specific reference to trespassing. The July 2, 2024 decision of the Ontario Superior Court relating to the encampment at the University of Toronto provides clarity that freedom of expression is not a defence to such a charge. The court also drew a clear distinction between peaceful protest and the unilateral and indefinite occupation of university property by certain groups to the exclusion of others.

The University administration will continue to uphold our institutional commitment to freedom of expression and the consistent application of university policies. It is through these actions that we can continue to support all members of our community and their experiences of our campus as an inclusive environment and a place where we can all belong.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'DF', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Farrar
President and Vice-Chancellor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan L. Tighe', written in a cursive style.

Susan L. Tighe
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)