



Canadian Association of University Teachers  
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

## Open Letter to the President of SSHRC

June 12, 2009

Dr. Chad Gaffield  
President  
Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council  
350 Albert Street  
P.O. Box 1610  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 6G4

Dear Dr. Gaffield:

We are deeply troubled by your response to Minister of Science and Technology Gary Goodyear's complaint to you about the conference on Israel/Palestine being held at York University later this month. Your action of requiring the conference organizers to immediately provide you with a list of all changes to their program since their grant was awarded violates SSHRC's own policies and legitimates the Minister's unprecedented and unacceptable political intervention in SSHRC's peer-reviewed granting process. In short, your response was not to stand against the Minister's action but to bow to it.

When asked by the Minister to review SSHRC's peer-reviewed approval of the York University conference, you should have pointed out to him that his request was inappropriate -- that every minister before him had understood it was unacceptable to bring political pressures to bear on academic decision-making.

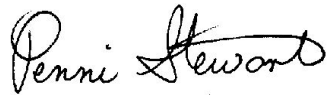
In an apparent effort to please the Minister, you chose to disregard SSHRC's Grant Holder's Policy that specifies any changes other than a major change to the theme of the conference are to be provided in the organizers' report of activities submitted *at the conclusion of the grant*. Instead, you demanded the information now so as to comply with the Minister's request. Whether or not you allow the funding to go ahead, your actions have legitimated political intervention that sullies SSHRC's record of commitment to standing behind its peer-reviewed decisions.

As President of SSHRC, you have an obligation to uphold the integrity of the academic grant awarding procedures of SSHRC that are designed to ensure that peer review, not political considerations, guide SSHRC's decisions.

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At the very least, you owe an apology to the conference organizers for your failure to protect the integrity of the granting process of SSHRC. You need publicly to assure the Canadian academic community that your bowing to political pressure will not happen again. If you cannot or will not do this, we question your fitness to continue in your present position.

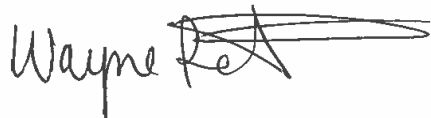
Sincerely,



Penni Stewart  
President  
(Associate Professor of Sociology  
York University)



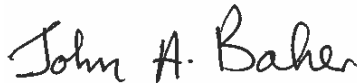
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Executive Director



Wayne Peters  
Vice-President  
(Associate Professor of Engineering  
University of PEI)



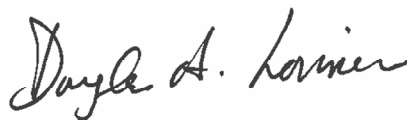
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(Professor of Sociology  
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/mmp