

Hon. Ross Romano

Minister of Colleges and Universities
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

Hon. Monte McNaughton

Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development
Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
14th Floor
400 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 1T7

May 26, 2020

Dear Ministers Romano and McNaughton,

First and foremost, we hope that you and your families are doing well during these difficult times.

We write as representatives of the Ontario Universities and Colleges Coalition (OUCC)—which represents over 435,000 faculty, staff, and students from every public postsecondary institution in Ontario—to request that your ministries ensure that unions and campus Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC) are integrally involved in return-to-work planning and decisions regarding on-campus operations this fall. Union representation and JHSC inclusion are essential for ensuring campus workers' voices are adequately heard and best practices for protecting the safety and health of our campus communities are followed as preparations are made for reopening Ontario's university and college campuses.

We are disappointed to report that on most campuses JHSCs were sidelined once the pandemic started, even though they are now more important than ever for ensuring the safety of workers and administrators alike.

JHSCs have proven to be essential in protecting the health and safety culture in the workplace, including on college and university campuses. While employers have the greatest responsibility for health and safety in the workplace, workers' input and inclusion through JHSCs and unions representation are essential.

Custodial staff and cleaners in particular play an essential role in preparing campuses for reopening, including in developing and implementing the increased cleaning standards needed during the pandemic. Their representatives must be present at the table.

Without workers' input, it would be impossible to adequately identify new workplace risks created by COVID-19 and to develop best practices for addressing these risks. During a pandemic, the role of these committees and the need for cooperation between employers and unions is more important than ever.

We appeal to you to ensure that Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC) and unions are included and adequately consulted in return-to-work planning on all campuses in Ontario.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

The Ontario Universities and Colleges Coalition

- David Simao, Chair - Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)- Ontario University Sector
- Rahul Sapra, President - Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA)
- RM Kennedy, Chair - Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU) - College Faculty Divisional Executive
- Kella Loschiavo, Chair - Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU) University Sector
- Harvey Bischof, President - Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
- Felipe Nagata, Chairperson - Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario (CFS-O)
- Kayla Weiler, National Executive Representative - Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario (CFS-O)
- Sharon DeSousa, Ontario Regional Executive Vice-President - Public Service Alliance of Canada Ontario (PSAC Ontario region)
- Naureen Rizvi, Ontario Regional Director - Unifor
- Marty Warren, Director - United Steelworkers District 6