



CESAR

Continuing Education Students'
Association of Ryerson

Local 105 of the Canadian Federation of Students

RE: RYERSON STUDENTS' UNION OPERATING AGREEMENT

Dear Ryerson Community,

It is with anger and disappointment that we address you today.

For 72 years, the Ryerson Students' Union (RSU) has fought for the freedom and autonomy of Ryerson students. From the creation of seven Equity Service Centres - including a food centre that feeds over 300 students a month, to the permanent closure of Gould Street, the RSU has prioritized campus safety and strived to protect students and the most marginalized. To address financial need, RSU has secured TTC Metropass Discount, and in 2009 awarded students with the ability to pay their tuition fees in two installments - alleviating the financial burden of paying yearly fees upfront. This list goes on to include fall reading week, the multi-faith centre, the only student-run building on campus, and much more. The victories of previous RSU committees continue to be enjoyed by students today, and have proved to be invaluable for the Ryerson community at large.

Today's announcement from the Vice-Provost Students, Jen McMillen, is an attack on student union autonomy and the right for students to independently organize.

While CESAR is not privy to the details of the RSU-Ryerson University relationship, we know some publically available details:

- Ryerson University is proposing the dissolution of the RSU on the weekend before the start of their general elections where students democratically elect their students' union representatives;
- Ryerson University is proposing the dissolution of the RSU before a General Meeting on February 3, 2020 where a forensic audit will be presented to general members of the Ryerson Students' Union;
- The Vice-Provost Students, Jen McMillen, has not met with CESAR, the sister students' union to the RSU, to relay any concerns regarding the RSU to encourage better practices and democratic ways forward

In a time when the provincial government is attacking all three levels of education and the public sector, we need to unite more than divide. However, closely following the Ford Government's Student "Choice" Initiative, Ryerson University is choosing to turn its back on decades of reliable activism. The fuel behind this decision is clearly rooted in a hangover of the poor decisions made by individuals on last year's executive team.



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While in their statement, Ryerson University wrote “the university is fully committed to ensuring that services such as health and dental benefits and other key supports remain in place for students for the remainder of the academic year”, it is imperative that we remember who created these spaces. While the RSU and CESAR have spent years lobbying and dedicating funds to meet the non-direct academic needs of students, Ryerson University has continuously responded with closed doors - or joined the party late. Despite Ryerson University’s “equity and inclusion” mandate, it was only through the investigative work of the RSU’s leadership in the Task Force on Campus Racism, that the University’s Vice-President Equity, Diversity and Community Inclusion position was created.

Ultimately, the decision for the RSU to exist is not up to the University. This decision belongs to the students. CESAR believes that this decision is heavy-handed and premature. Ryerson University should reverse the decision, come back to the table with the RSU, and await the pending forensic audit that will be presented to members. The RSU is decades old and has been a beacon for advocacy, services, and events in its rich history. Let students run their students’ union through the democratic process, and do not undermine this process by unilaterally cancelling an agreement that has withstood years of well-managed and effective student unionism.

CESAR represents more than 16,000 continuing education and part-time education students at Ryerson University. CESAR also represents any full-time students (ie. RSU members) who are taking Chang School courses.

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