



Ryerson, let's talk

Friday, February 5, 2021

Last week was Bell Let's Talk Day. It has never been more evident that employers and educational institutions must go beyond showing they care about mental health and make conscious attempts to improve our wellbeing.

This includes listening to key stakeholders.

The pandemic and our need to shift to remote learning and working has either created or exacerbated serious mental health issues for many community members.

While not all of these issues can be addressed by Ryerson alone, the pandemic has exposed serious flaws in the university's approach to supporting its students, faculty, and staff.

We want to take a moment to highlight the shortcomings that have impacted members of the Ryerson Community since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We believe Ryerson University is well within its means to tackle these challenges and can begin to do so through the following actions:

- 1. Mental health support for all.** Contract faculty and part-time students have little access to health benefits that include mental health practitioners. This can be addressed by giving all workers and students access to our own on-going, long-term counselling services (not just through an employer program), as well as the intentional hiring of more racialized counsellors.
- 2. Increase resources for Academic Accommodation Support.** Delays in the accommodation process create unnecessary uncertainty and stress for all. This can be addressed by bolstering support for academic accommodation requests so that this work is not shifted onto faculty members and so that students can receive accommodations without undue delay.
- 3. Invite student representatives to attend and participate in Joint Health and Safety Committee meetings.** Students are the biggest stakeholder on campus and deserve a long-overdue seat at the table. They should not have to hear news of outbreaks from third parties and should be able to represent their members in discussions on processes to mitigate these outbreaks.
- 4. The locations of COVID-19 cases on campus need to be relayed to the community.** Transparent communication with the entire Ryerson community is vital to minimizing transmission of the virus, to addressing concerns that arise post-exposure, and ultimately to





keeping everyone healthy and safe.

5. Relieve dependant care burden on all. Create proactive, respective dependant care-friendly policies for staff, students, and faculty.

6. Meaningful implementation of ECI policies that would lead to the hiring of more racialized tenure-track faculty. These policies should also address the issue of departmental isolation faced by racialized faculty members.

7. Creation of more continuing Contract Lecturer appointments with full health benefits. This would help ease the professional and mental health burden of precarious employment increasingly faced by Ryerson's contract academics.

We urge [the senior leaders](#) of Ryerson to take the concerns of its labour and students' unions seriously by implementing these recommendations and by committing to work with us to proactively address further concerns that are bound to arise going forward.

Talk is good, but talk alone is cheap and can only get us so far. Now is the time for action.

We are calling on Ryerson University to call a joint meeting with all employee unions and students' unions by the end of February. This meeting should be dedicated to clearly outlining the University's plans to ensure all the above measures are taken to improve the mental health of workers and students on our campus.

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Joint statement by:

[Continuing Education Students Association of Ryerson \(CESAR\) representing part-time and continuing education students](#)

[Local 596 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union \(OPSEU 596\) representing professional staff at Ryerson University](#)

[Local 3904 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees \(CUPE 3904\) representing 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 \(Teaching and Graduate Assistants, Lab Monitors, and Invigilators\)](#)

[Ryerson Faculty Association \(RFA\) representing tenure-track faculty, limited term faculty, librarians, and counsellors at Ryerson University](#)

[Ryerson Graduate Students' Union \(RGSU\) representing all part-time and full-time graduate students starting September 2021.](#)