



Report of the President

James Compton

After three years of service, this is my final report as CAUT President. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Executive with whom I've worked these past few years. It's been a pleasure. But, more importantly, I would like to extend my thanks to those CAUT members who have done all the small and large jobs that make our work possible. Whether you have written a letter of support for one of our campaigns, participated in a workshop or served as President of your association, you've all contributed something towards our national project to advance the rights of our members, and defend the core values of the academy. Thank you.

Membership growth

Let me start by happily noting that our ranks have grown. This past November, CAUT Council welcomed two new member associations into the fold: Concordia University Part-Time Faculty Association, and the Syndicat général des professeurs et professeures de l'Université de Montréal. It's always a pleasure to welcome new members, but the day was especially memorable because the faculty union at l'Université de Montréal was one of the CAUT's founding associations. We now stand at more than 72,000 individual members at 125 universities and colleges across the country. It was fitting that the entry of new members from Quebec coincided with our extension of real-time translation of French and English for all our conferences and workshops.

Bargaining

Strike preparation proved once again to be necessary for many academic unions this past year. Faculty associations at Mount Saint Vincent, Memorial, and Saint Mary's all achieved collective agreements only after securing a strike mandate from their members. At Western, a deal was finally achieved after the union signalled it was prepared to strike to back demands for contract academic staff. Mobilizing to win matters.

That mantra is likely to become more salient as the political climate in many provinces is anticipated to become antagonistic towards labour. In Ontario, the new Progressive Conservative government repealed many of the labour and employment law amendments passed by the previous Liberal government. And many faculty associations across the province have already been



told more austerity measures are coming. This follows the Ford government's 10% tuition fee cut without a commensurate increase in public funding. Meanwhile, in Alberta bargaining has been hampered by the government's mandate that agreements cannot include any salary cost increases.

In March I joined CAUT Defense Fund flying pickets in Halifax where we walked in solidarity with striking faculty at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD). This small group of 97 instructors and librarians organized the most creative picket line I have ever seen. But they weren't alone in making noise. They were joined by NSCAD students who communicated through performance and speeches that they understood faculty working conditions were their learning conditions. The day included a noon rally and a "sit-in" by students in the university administration offices.

Academic freedom

The CAUT Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee continues to monitor several files concerning possible breeches of academic freedom. In November, the committee released a report investigating the controversial resignation of Dr. Andrew Potter from the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC). The report, authored by Dr. Mark Gabbert of the University of Manitoba, found that the University failed to protect Professor Potter's academic freedom. Professor Potter found himself under fire in March, 2017 after writing a piece for Maclean's Magazine in which he suggested the response to a snow storm in Montreal was reflective of a "pathologically alienated and low-trust society" in Quebec. He later resigned his position as director of the MISC. The central issue in this case arose from the McGill administration's claim that academic administrators do not enjoy the same protections as academics without administrative positions. It has long been CAUT policy that university administrators retain their academic freedom rights to intra and extramural speech in their roles as academics, not as administrators.

In Ontario, the Progressive Conservative government mandated that all Ontario colleges and universities put a free speech policy into place by January 2019. Failure to comply and submit an adequate annual free speech report to the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) would put colleges and universities at risk of penalty. The CAUT has taken a strong position against the government diktat arguing it is an unnecessary attack on the institutional autonomy of universities and colleges in the province.

And in B.C., Trinity Western University lost its legal battle over accreditation for a planned new law school. In a pair of 7-2 rulings in June, the Supreme Court of Canada said that it's "proportionate and reasonable" to limit religious rights in order to ensure open access for LGBT students. The appeals spring from cases originating in British Columbia and Ontario between the private Christian university and the provinces' law societies, both of which rejected the university's attempts to gain accreditation for its law school. The CAUT was an intervenor in the appeals and argued that the lack of academic freedom at Trinity Western constrains the teaching of Canadian law and human rights outside of prescribed doctrine.

CAUT also condemned a policy at Ontario's Durham College that purported to ban political activity by any staff. CAUT intervention has resulted in the policy being modified.

These issues, and many more, were discussed at length in February at the Harry Crowe Foundation conference on academic free speech. One of the big take-aways from the Toronto conference was that academic freedom language needs to be enshrined in collective agreements.

Political action

The federal government delivered its final budget before heading to the polls in October, and the CAUT was there to respond. Compared to the previous year's substantial investment in basic research, the 2019 budget wasn't as generous, but it did provide some welcome investments. It included lowering interest rates on student loans, expansion of the graduate scholarship program, and new funding streams for Inuit and Métis learners. There were also some minimal increases for First Nations students. There was also an investment in skills training for working adults. However, the CAUT's position remains that post-secondary education requires a boost to core funding at the federal level. The last top-up was in 2007.

Copyright took on a high profile this past year, as parliament conducted a statutory review of the *Copyright Act*. We worked closely with the Canadian Federation of Students to promote the importance of fair use of copyrighted material for educational purposes.

Solidarity

Acts of solidarity and support are always important to CAUT. We continued to call for a public inquiry into the treatment of Professor Hassan Diab. Professor Diab was extradited to France where he spent more than three years in solitary confinement, following accusations by the French government that he was involved in a terrorist bombing in Paris in 1980. However, information has surfaced that reveals Canadian officials may have withheld evidence that would have exonerated Professor Diab of any wrongdoing.

Meanwhile, the heavy hand of state oppression continues to harm academic colleagues around the world. The CAUT has written to condemn the jailing and firing of academics this past year in the Philippines, Turkey and Hungary.