

UWFA AGM Spring 2023, Apr. 12, 12:30PM, 3C01

Resumption of Debate on a Motion Tabled from the Fall AGM

At our Fall meeting, the following motion was moved seconded by Matthew Flisfeder and Jacqueline Mcleod-Rogers, respectively. After over one hour of debate, it was decided to table it for our Spring AGM:

Motion to Rescind UWFA Support for the CAUT Anti-IHRA Campaign

Given that UWFA's policy on Respectful Workplace (Policy #006) clearly indicates its accordance with the Human Rights Code, including its definition of discrimination [Section 9 (1)(b) and (2)(b)(c)(d)(k)], which includes differential treatment of an individual or group on the basis of nationality, religion, ethnic background, or political belief,

and, given that UWFA council passed a motion to support the CAUT anti-IHRA campaign without prior informing of the membership that this motion was to be brought to council for a vote,

and, furthermore, given that this motion concerns an issue related to the struggle against antisemitism, an issue that directly affects Jewish faculty at The University of Winnipeg,

and, also, since no reasonable opportunity was provided to allow Jewish faculty to prepare to address council on this motion and to speak to it, therefore, unreasonably excluding Jewish faculty from a decision regarding an issue that directly affects the Jewish community,

and, since the exclusion of Jewish faculty from the conversation about antisemitism potentially discriminates against Jewish members of UWFA based on the terms outlined in the policy on Respectful Workplace,

~~be it resolved that the UWFA shall rescind its support for the CAUT anti-IHRA campaign effectively immediately.~~

AMENDMENT:

BIRT that the membership direct the UWFA president to seek outside legal advice as to whether or not council did indeed violate its respectful workplace policy, in which case the UWFA will rescind its support of the CAUT anti-IHRA motion immediately.

As item 6 on the Spring AGM Agenda, the membership continued its debate on this motion. Prior to opening debate, I outlined the context of the Council's decision and I include that statement below. The debate was, to my recollection, approximately 75 minutes long and included multiple speakers who addressed the membership multiple times, including the original mover. In the end, the membership voted against the motion by a strong majority, and therefore UWFA Council's endorsement of the CAUT position on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism will remain. I thank members for engaging in vociferous, contentious, heated, but nonetheless respectful debate.

President's Statement on UWFA Council's Endorsement of the CAUT position on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism prior to Resumption of Debate

The motion here was moved and seconded at our Fall meeting; it was amended and then tabled to this meeting. Before we move to continue discussion, I want to add some context to the motion as phrased by the mover. I'll note that there is not a CAUT Anti-IHRA campaign. The academic campaign against adoption of this definition of antisemitism, because of its actual and potential threats to academic freedom, has been organized by Independent Jewish Voices Canada.

In November 2021 at the CAUT Council, I voted – as UWFA's rep – in favour of a motion that opposed adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism. As the CAUT Motion made clear through four introductory paragraphs, opposition to this definition does not in anyway dismiss or disregard antisemitism. In fact, quite the opposite: the motion vigorously opposes all discrimination. There was no suggestion of campaign and by voting in favour of this motion, I did not signal UWFA's support for a campaign.

In any case, with that passed, I alone brought forward the idea at Council that UWFA should also take a stand and oppose adoption of this definition because of its threat to academic freedom; again, not to join a campaign but to oppose adoption. I suggested, that is, that UWFA Council do what over 45 FAs and a petition with over 650 signatures from Canadian academics did: to oppose adoption of this definition because it is, to quote the statement by the Jewish Faculty Network, "a vague and worrisome framing of antisemitism," "tied to a series of examples of which many are criticisms of the Israeli state." The Jewish Faculty Network concludes by stating: "The issue is particularly pressing as the IHRA working definition has been invoked by those seeking to interfere with collegial governance and student life at Canadian universities. The IHRA working definition distracts from experiences of anti-Jewish racism, and threatens to silence legitimate criticism of Israel's grave violations of international law and denial of Palestinian human and political rights." This is not only a Canadian issue, and a series

of Jewish organizations in the United States and beyond, including those in the Progressive Israel Network, oppose adoption.

UWFA Council debated the issue over two lively meetings and decided to adopt a motion explicitly endorsing the CAUT motion. It's worth noting that one part of our debate was the fact that the University of Winnipeg HAS adopted the IHRA Working Definition and therefore imperiled academic freedom at this institution as outlined in the concerns by CAUT, Independent Jewish Voices Canada, Jewish Faculty Network and others. As the highest elected body in our Association, Council has the right and indeed the responsibility to make decisions such as these, especially when they affect academic freedom, probably the most important article in our Collective Agreement. There was, contrary to this motion and other communications, no exclusion of any of our members, Jewish or otherwise in the Council's deliberation or decision about this issue.

Dr. Matthew Flisfeder approached me by email in September to ask whether UWFA had "signed onto the No IHRA Campaign." I advised him that Council passed a unanimous motion in support of the CAUT motion and that I referenced it in my Spring 2022 AGM report to the membership. Dr. Flisfeder asked "which Jewish faculty" were consulted prior to the vote and I informed him that Council had debated the issue among Council members. He then asked whether there was a process to contest the decision of Council, and I invited him to come to the Sept. 23 2022 meeting of Council or to bring it to the General Membership meeting. He came to Council and a Council member moved his motion – the same as this one – so that it could be brought to Council; we also permitted Dr. Flisfeder to speak to his motion at Council. He did so, but it was not seconded and thus, per the rules of order, it was not debated. Finally, Dr. Flisfeder brought his motion to the AGM in Fall.

I am going through this to demonstrate the careful process by which Council approached this issue and debated it within the rights and responsibilities given to Council by the Constitution and By-Laws of our Association; and, how we carefully approached the concerns of one member about this issue and invited him to contest the decisions of Council.

Submitted by: Dr. Peter J. Miller, President, UWFA