

February 7, 2024

Stephanie Latella, CUPE 3903 Chairperson
Room 143, Atkinson Building
93 the Pond Road York University
4700 Keele Street
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Via email: cupe3903chairperson@gmail.com

Dear Stephanie,

Thank you for replying to our January 29 message and invitation to meet. We recognize that CUPE 3903 is an independent organization separate from the University and respect your right to communicate with your members. As you may appreciate, the University also has responsibilities.

We know that the *Toolkit on Teaching Palestine* has received considerable attention from concerned community members but were unaware that hostility has been directed toward you personally (i.e., the “abusive behaviour” and doxxing threats you refer to in your letter). We are concerned by this and want to make sure you are aware of the support the UIT Information Security office offers all York community members in such cases. You can reach them at: infosec@yorku.ca. There are several non-York resources we can refer you to, too, if you prefer.

The purpose and agenda for requesting a meeting were as stated in our January 29 message: “[T]o discuss ways in which CUPE 3903 Education Committee’s contributions in the future might be integrated in collegial and inclusive ways that would not appear to ‘divert’ classroom teaching.” Such a meeting might have allowed the opportunity for the University and CUPE to advance our shared goals as educators: the promotion of constructive, thoughtful pedagogy and classroom conditions that support all students as learners, individuals, and York community members.

We regret that you were not open to engaging with us in such a dialogue. We will therefore elaborate our concerns here and ask that you address the following by Friday, February 16, 2024:

- As stated in our original message, we view the circulation of the *Toolkit on Teaching Palestine*, which urged Teaching Assistants to “collectively divert” (*Call to Action*) their tutorials and “refuse business as usual” (p. 6), as potentially compromising both their academic freedom and fulfillment of their pedagogical and professional responsibilities.
- We therefore request that CUPE 3903 issue a communication to its members withdrawing its support for the *Toolkit*’s call to divert tutorials and clarifying, as



stated in your response, that it was for information only, and not intended to be deployed by Teaching Assistants in place of their assigned teaching materials and responsibilities.

- We request a commitment that in the future, the Union will refrain from calling on their members to take action that interferes with their responsibilities as Teaching Assistants.
- The naming of a student organization in the *Toolkit* has provoked fear and alienation and is diametrically opposed to our purpose and principles as a university. Therefore, we request that CUPE acknowledge and apologize for the harm done by the singling out of Hillel York in the *Toolkit*. Our student organizations exist to provide our diverse students a sense of community and belonging, and we must do everything possible to assure their safety.

We remain open to a meeting at any time.

Sincerely,

Lisa Philipps
Provost & Vice-President Academic

Laina Y. Bay-Cheng
Interim Vice-President, Division of Equity, People & Culture