

June 14, 2009

**AN OPEN LETTER FROM MEMBERS OF THE FACULTY OF  
OSGOODE HALL LAW SCHOOL AT YORK UNIVERSITY**

Dr. Chad Gaffield  
President  
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council  
350 Albert Street, P.O. Box 1610  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6G4

Dear Dr. Gaffield:

**Re: Review of SSHRC Funding for Conference at York University:  
"Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to  
Peace"**

---

---

We are writing as members of the faculty of Osgoode Hall Law School at York University to express our extreme dismay that SSHRC appears to be acceding to political pressure by revisiting its decision to fund the above-noted academic conference.

As you know, two of our esteemed colleagues, Professors Susan Drummond and Bruce Ryder, have taken a lead role in planning this event and we write in part to support them and their co-organizers, Professor Sharry Aiken and PhD Candidate Mazen Masri. However this issue has grown far beyond the need to support individual colleagues. Your decision as SSHRC President to require a special pre-conference accounting from the conference organizers, outside the normal post-conference reporting procedures for conference grants, raises the much larger question of your agency's integrity as a funder and promoter of independent university-based research in Canada.

As a group we have extensive experience with the organization of academic conferences and with SSHRC granting procedures. We believe there is no basis at all for the suggestion that "major changes" were made to the plan for this conference after the grant application had been peer reviewed and funding granted. Nor do we believe that you could

possibly see any basis for this suggestion. Rather, it appears that the special accounting was demanded of our colleagues in direct response to the unprecedented and entirely inappropriate political intervention of Minister Goodyear.

We believe that SSHRC made a serious error in acceding to political interference in this manner. *Whether or not* SSHRC ultimately submits to the demand for a new peer review that better meets the Minister's political ends, and *whether or not* the funding for this conference is ultimately jeopardized, we fear that SSHRC has already compromised the autonomy of academic research in this country. By intruding into the planning of an academic event after a funding decision has been made, SSHRC's actions are likely to have a most unfortunate chilling effect on academics considering the exploration of controversial or unpopular topics. In addition, by casting doubt on the integrity of its own procedures, SSHRC has empowered those who would devalue academic research and discourse by insisting that academic freedom be reserved only for those who happen to share their point of view.

We hope that SSHRC will very shortly stand up to defend its own granting procedures and the values of academic excellence and autonomy they are designed to protect.

Sincerely,

Harry W. Arthurs, Professor Emeritus, Former Dean, Former President

Margaret E. Beare, Professor

Neil Brooks, Professor

Ruth Buchanan, Associate Professor

Jamie B. Cameron, Professor

Mary G. Condon, Professor

Carys J. Craig, Associate Professor

Giuseppina D'Agostino, Assistant Professor

Paul D. Emond, Associate Professor

Trevor C.W. Farrow, Associate Professor

Simon R. Fodden, Professor Emeritus

Shelley A.M. Gavigan, Professor

Joan M. Gilmour, Associate Professor

Leslie Green, Professor

Richard Haigh, Visiting Professor

Balfour J. Halévy, Professor Emeritus

Doug Hay, Professor

Allan C. Hutchinson, Distinguished Research Professor

Shin Imai, Associate Professor

Shelley Kierstead, Assistant Professor

Sonia Lawrence, Associate Professor

Jinyan Li, Professor

Michael Mandel, Professor

Ikechi Mgbeoji, Associate Professor

Louis Mirando, Chief Law Librarian

Janet Mosher, Associate Professor and Associate Dean

Mary Jane Mossman, Professor of Law (signature received after first release)

Roxanne Mykitiuk, Associate Professor

Obiora Chinedu Okafor, Professor

Lisa Philipps, Associate Professor

Marilyn L. Pilkington, Associate Professor and Former Dean

Poonam Puri, Associate Professor

Sean Rehaag, Assistant Professor

Benjamin J. Richardson, Professor

Brian Slattery, Professor

Sara Slinn, Assistant Professor

James Stribopoulos, Associate Professor

Craig M. Scott, Professor

Kate Sutherland, Associate Professor

François Tanguay-Renaud, Assistant Professor

Eric M. Tucker, Professor

Gus Van Harten, Assistant Professor

Robert S. Wai, Associate Professor

Janet Walker, Professor of Law (signature received after first release)

Garry D. Watson, Professor

Cynthia Williams, Osler Chair in Business Law

Stepan Wood, Associate Professor

Alan N. Young, Associate Professor

Peer Zumbansen, Canada Research Chair & Associate Dean (Research, Graduate Studies and Institutional Relations)

*Cc:*

Bruce B. Ryder, Associate Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School

Susan G. Drummond, Associate Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School

Sharry J. Aitken, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, Queen's University

Mazen Masri, Ph.D. candidate, Osgoode Hall Law School

Mamdouh Shoukri, President, York University

Stan Shapson, Vice-President (Research & Innovation), York University

Patrick Monahan, Dean of Law and VPA-Elect, York University

Mr. J. Craig McNaughton, Senior Program Officer Strategic Grants and joint Initiatives, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

James L. Turk, Executive Director, Canadian Association of University Teachers

The Hon. Gary Goodyear, Minister of State (Science & Technology)

The Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada

Dr. Marc Garneau, Liberal Critic for Industry, Science and Technology

Mr. Jim Maloway, NDP Critic for Science and Technology

M Robert Vincent, Bloc Critic for Science and Technology

*BC:*

Various