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**Message from President Shoukri: A Commitment to Inclusive Communities**

Last week, members of the York community received my message on Inclusion Day in which I reaffirmed our core values of inclusivity, diversity and respect, as well as our commitment to free expression.

Since that time, much attention has been focused on concerns over the mural hanging in the York Student Centre. It is clear that the subject of the artwork is offensive to some individuals and groups, particularly Jewish members of our community. The University understands and respects these concerns. Given that decisions with respect to the mural's continued display are the responsibility of the governing body responsible for the Student Centre, which is a separate and distinct legal entity from the University, we sincerely hope that they will address the concerns which have been expressed.

York University remains firmly committed to the values of freedom of expression, open dialogue and constructive discussion. We look forward to continuing the important dialogue around inclusion that has emerged.

The mural has given rise to a broader conversation about whether as an institution and as individuals we are doing all we can to ensure that all members of our community feel welcome and supported. While the programs, workshops and training we have put in place have been instrumental in setting the stage for a welcoming, inclusive and safe learning environment, there is still work to be done to fully achieve the inclusive environment we desire.

We must do everything we can to ensure that all of our students feel comfortable and safe on campus. We need to work together to strengthen our community by creating a culture of sensitivity to the diversity of our community members. This requires a commitment from each of us to demonstrate civility and respect for the dignity of others.

I want to share with you three of the actions we are taking to support this commitment to inclusion:

1. We will form a President's Advisory Committee on Inclusion composed of York scholars to lead us in examining effective methods to ensure inclusive, respectful exchanges of ideas, particularly on sensitive social and political issues that can otherwise lead to racial marginalization. A call for participation will be issued by March 1, 2016.



2. We will undertake a review of existing University policies and will make changes necessary to better foster and protect an inclusive and positive learning environment. This will include review of Presidential Regulation #4 regarding student groups and organizations as well as the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Our aim is for the review to be completed by the end of 2016.
3. We will continue to work with internal and external partners to ensure York is a leader in promoting inclusion and a positive learning environment.

As we take these additional steps we will hold firm to our position that the University does not support academic boycotts. We value our partnerships with international universities and will continue to pursue partnerships with other academic institutions that align with York's principles and values—and we will not tolerate actions and behaviors that are contrary to our values.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mshoukri', with a small dot at the end.

Mamdouh Shoukri  
President and Vice-Chancellor