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Statement from President Lenton on York as a leading institution of higher education and embracing our commitment to diversity and inclusion

Office of the President

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York University is a community that values diversity and inclusion. Our students, faculty and staff come from every conceivable background and bring a wealth of religious, cultural and political beliefs to our campuses. The fact that we encourage this diversity is a great strength of the University and should be a source of pride for everyone.

York also respects the right of all our members to express their views without fear of intimidation or harassment, while simultaneously sharing responsibility, individually and collectively, for creating a community where all members feel welcome and respected. Universities exist partly to facilitate reasoned debate on political and other issues, and there is no reason why any government or any policy should be exempt from criticism. At the same time, however, we must ensure that in the expression of our views and ideas, we do not isolate or exclude individuals based on their own beliefs and convictions. I would hope that we would all agree that such exclusion is unacceptable in our community.

It is therefore of great concern that at an inclusion-focused event organized by the York Federation of Students (YFS), messages were communicated suggesting that students with pro-Israel and pro-Zionist views were not welcome. The fact that this exclusion occurred on International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz is particularly painful. These messages are inconsistent with the aims of Multicultural Week to give "students, faculty and staff a chance to celebrate their cultures and embrace the diversity of York."

As part of York's broader review of the November 20th event and related incidents, we are committed to bringing together members of our community, including student clubs and associations, to develop productive strategies for creating an inclusive space for all viewpoints and opinions. Universities are places where robust debate should be encouraged. Let us disagree. Let us be passionate. But let us never stop being respectful and inclusive of those whose views differ from our own.

For more information on York's work to enhance our inclusive campus, please visit the [President's Initiative on Open and Respectful Dialogue](#).

Sincerely,



Rhonda L. Lenton,
President & Vice Chancellor

