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April 16, 2021

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Ross Romano
Ministry of Colleges and Universities
5th Floor
438 University Ave.
Toronto ON M7A 2A5

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Romano,

On behalf of the Archives Association of Ontario (AAO), I am writing to you today to express my concern and disappointment about the dire situation affecting Laurentian University. This University is a pillar of academic and cultural prosperity for our entire Northern community with a unique mission to support French, English and Indigenous communities. It provides hundreds of jobs in Northern Ontario, while also being a source of research that contributes to the advancement of economic, medical, and social well-being in the North.

As a network representing over 350 archival research institutions and information professionals, the AAO acknowledges the value that Laurentian University – its faculty and students – brings to Ontario. Furthermore, the AAO recognizes the importance of programs that support Ontario's diverse culture, history, and heritage. As such, the AAO demands that the Government of Ontario assist Laurentian University in preserving programs and stabilizing their operations. We urge you to deliver the immediate and long-term funding that is necessary to end Laurentian University's insolvency and stop these costly Companies' and Creditors' Arrangement Act legal proceedings.

The steady erosion of public funding has put the future of Laurentian University, its programs, students' educations, and jobs at risk. Given that Ontario pays the lowest amount of public dollars per-student towards post-secondary education in all of Canada, many other post-secondary institutions across Ontario are also in critical financial positions.

In addition to the larger structural funding issue, Laurentian University's financial problems are partially due to a lack of transparent and accountable institutional governance that resulted in arbitrary, unilateral decisions being made behind closed doors. The Laurentian University Faculty Association has repeatedly raised concerns about the secretive and non-consultative approach the University administration has taken to making important financial decisions.

The provincial government has five representatives on the Board of Governors who should have been providing oversight and good governance. Instead, they joined with the senior administration and other Board members in making irresponsible financial decisions. Faculty, workers, students and our Northern community should not have to pay the price for the poor governance practices of an underfunded public institution.

The AAO has members from across all of Ontario, and as a cohesive unit we will be drawing from all corners of our province to support post-secondary institutions. It is within the Government of Ontario's means to make the changes that will have a long lasting impact on our cultural and academic perseverance.

We urge you to provide the immediate and long-term operating funds necessary to secure the future of Laurentian University and end to these needless insolvency proceedings. In addition, we call on the provincial government to remove its appointees to the Laurentian University Board of Governors, who have clearly neglected their duties and responsibilities.

We look forward to hearing your response to this pressing concern.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Grant
President, Archives Association of Ontario

cc. The Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education
Jamie West, MPP Sudbury
France G  linas, MPP Nickel Belt

Paul Lefebvre, MP Sudbury

Marc Serré, MP Nickel Belt

Mayor Brian Bigger and Council, City of Greater Sudbury

Mayor Christian Provenzano and Council, City of Sault Ste. Marie

Mayor Al McDonald and Council, City of North Bay

Mayor Bill Mauro and Council, City of Thunder Bay

Mayor George Pirie and Council, City of Timmins

Mayor Daniel Reynard and Council, City of Kenora

Mayor Dave Plourde and Council, Town of Kapuskasing