

Dear Minister Nicolaides,

The Mount Royal University Coalition brings together the elected representatives of the Mount Royal Faculty Association, the Mount Royal Staff Association and the Student Association of Mount Royal University.

We are writing to express our concerns about the letter you wrote to our Board of Governors directing them to rescind the mandatory mask mandate on campus. We urge you to respect our University's autonomy to decide how best to provide a safe and healthy campus at MRU

We note that despite encouraging declines in the rate of hospitalizations, these rates nonetheless remain at an all-time high. And, disturbingly, the positivity rate also remains high. In this environment, where the pandemic is not yet over, wearing masks remains an important part of ensuring a safe environment. This is especially true when students, staff, and faculty spend extended periods of time in confined spaces such as offices, classrooms or larger lecture halls. Mandating wearing masks makes us all safer while we wait to see the direction that the virus takes.

In light of these circumstances, the MRU Coalition believes that our University has until recently adopted a prudent approach to managing the pandemic on our campus. We are troubled by your decision to interfere with our University's institutional autonomy when we are best able to manage matters according to local conditions. In fact, we find this approach is perplexing since in August 2021, the MRFA urged you to mandate vaccinations at all PSIs, you declined, stating each institution knows how best to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, with this reversal, you are infringing on the same autonomy you so wholeheartedly embraced just recently and demand you stop.

Finally, the MRU Coalition strongly supports the Student Association's perspective that students must be given the right to finish their classes with the safety measures they were guaranteed when registering. Many students opted for in-person teaching knowing the University had a mask mandate in place. We believe these students have a right to learn under the circumstances they were offered at the time of registration and when in-person teaching resumed February 28, 2022.

We note many faculty including contract faculty who deliver over 50 percent of MRU's teaching also made decisions with the expectations that masks would be worn. Similarly, MRU staff find themselves being mandated to return to campus April 4 without a mask mandate in place. Needless to say, they too believe masks provide an important layer of protection.

We call on you as the Minister of Advanced Education to respect our institutional autonomy and allow the University to give students, faculty and staff their classes the safety measures they have been promised and deserve to have.

We would welcome a meeting to discuss these points together.

Sincerely



Lee Easton  
President, MRFA



Michelle LoGullo  
President, MRSA



Spirit River Striped Wolf  
President, SAMRU

