

An open democracy

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Re: Police union boss faces complaints, April 2.

I am very happy to hear that the Ontario Civil Liberties Association has filed a complaint to the Office of the Independent Police Review Director against Ottawa police union president Matt Skof. I believe Skof was out of line when he wrote to the Carleton University president and demanded an apology from Carleton professor Darryl Davies for his criticism of police actions and expenditures.

Something tells me Skof needs to review his police training and Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. While he may have the right to freely express his own opinions, he does not have the right to silence others or to demand apologies from people who criticize the police and do not agree with him.

Further, in Skof's letter to his union membership, he told his fellow officers that he was severing all ties between the union and Carleton University if professor Davies did not apologize for his critical statements about the police. As an Ottawa taxpayer, and funder of the Ottawa police, as well as a Carleton University supporter for many years, I take issue with Skof discouraging his union members from engaging with Carleton University and I am assuming this would include discouraging his members from taking on speaking engagements at Carleton.

In my opinion, the next generation of justice and policy-makers - many of whom will come from Carleton's criminology, sociology and law programs - should hear from all people who are currently involved in Canada's justice system, including police officers, trial witnesses, judges, defence lawyers, Crown attorneys and victims.

As students and police union members living in Canada, these individuals have the right to form - and express - their own opinions.

Living in an open democracy, we have the right to freely express our opinion about the operations of our public and academic institutions, i.e. police and universities. To fully achieve the best democratic resolutions in our society, however, we must also engage in open and informed dialogues with one another. Let the public debates continue. By doing so, we will all be better informed and better off for it.

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Ottawa

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