

# NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ

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## **Colleges are set to fail with free speech policy**

TORONTO – OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas has warned that Ontario colleges are ramming through a free speech policy in virtual secrecy with next to no consultation.

OPSEU has learned that the colleges secretly put together a taskforce of 12 college administrators and one student, but deliberately excluded faculty. They then drafted a free speech policy they intend to keep under wraps until the January 1, 2019, deadline set by the provincial government.

Premier Doug Ford issued a demand for a free speech policy on August 30, 2018, and threatened that the colleges could lose funding for non-compliance. They also warned that students who protest on campus could be disciplined by dismissal from their college program.

Thomas says it's ironic that college administrators have developed a policy on free speech without giving anyone a say.

"No free speech about a free speech policy? I'm scratching my head over this one," said Thomas.

"The colleges should go back to square one and do it right. College faculty, students and support staff should be involved, everyone's voice should be heard."

RM Kennedy, OPSEU College Faculty Executive Chair, said faculty have a huge responsibility when it comes to upholding the principle of free speech at Ontario colleges and ensuring an inclusive and supportive educational environment. "I'm worried that they will focus on punishing students and faculty who try to speak out on campus."

"They're undermining the academic credibility of the colleges by developing this policy without full stakeholder representation. This incident highlights the need for collegial governance, so that faculty and students are guaranteed a role in academic decision-making," said Kennedy.

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### **For more information:**

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