

CAUT calls for submissions to newly created academic freedom Inquiry into York/Queens conference on Israel and Palestine

(September 2, 2009) The Canadian Association of University Teachers has asked Dr. Jon Thompson, Professor Emeritus at the University of New Brunswick and one of Canada's leading authorities on academic freedom, to conduct an Inquiry into issues arising from the conference "Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace," held at York University in June this year.

Co-sponsored by Queen's University and York University and part of York University's 50th Anniversary celebrations, the conference drew opposition from pro-Israeli government groups, and the federal Minister of Science and Technology intervened with the federal granting agency that awarded funding to the conference.

The Thompson Inquiry is soliciting submissions from Industry Canada, the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), administrators from the sponsoring universities, conference organizers and participants, faculty, students and any other interested parties in order to examine issues arising from the conference related to academic freedom, the role of federal granting councils and the responsibilities of members of academic communities for protecting the discussion of controversial issues on university and college campuses.

Specifically, the Thompson Inquiry's terms of reference are to:

- examine whether the academic freedom of the conference organizers and the integrity of educational work were threatened by the actions of the York administration, SSHRC, and others;
- draw conclusions from the experiences of this conference with respect to the vulnerability of academic freedom and the integrity of educational work;
- make recommendations as to policies and procedures that will safeguard academic freedom and the integrity of educational work.

Dr. Thompson has been asked to submit the Inquiry report to CAUT by November 30, 2009. CAUT will make the report public.

Written submissions should be sent by October 16, 2009 to Dr. Jon Thompson, c/o CAUT, 2705 Queensview Drive, Ottawa, ON K2B 8K2 or sent electronically to thompson@caut.ca, or faxed to (613) 820-7244.