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March 16, 2026

Board of Governors
University of Alberta
7-095 University Commons
11308-89 Ave NW
Edmonton, AB T6G 2N8

Via email: boardchair@ualberta.ca

Dear Chair and Members of the Board of Governors,

On behalf of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, a national public interest organization dedicated to the protection and advancement of rights and freedoms in Canada, I write to urge you to vote against the proposal to eliminate explicit Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) commitments from the recruitment and hiring policy of the University of Alberta at your upcoming March meeting.

The proposal to eliminate EDI commitments in the University's hiring procedures undermines substantive equality enshrined in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the *Charter*) and the *Alberta Human Rights Act (AHRA)*. Both of these instruments affirm the right of individuals to equal treatment in employment without discrimination based on protected grounds, including race, gender, disability, religion, and other enumerated characteristics.

Importantly, Alberta's human rights framework does not merely prohibit overt discrimination; it recognizes the reality of systemic discrimination and permits proactive measures to ameliorate disadvantage. Section 10.1 of the *AHRA* explicitly protects ameliorative programs designed to provide opportunities for disadvantaged individuals.

Similarly, section 15(2) of the *Charter* expressly protects ameliorative programs designed to improve the conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups. The Supreme Court of Canada has consistently affirmed that targeted equity initiatives are not exceptions to equality rights; rather they are an expression of substantive equality. Section 15(2) exists to ensure that governments and public institutions may lawfully adopt measures that address historic and ongoing disadvantage without fear that such programs will be struck down as discriminatory.

In this legal context, EDI-informed hiring policies are not preferential or unlawful. Such policies are consistent with – indeed contemplated by Canada's constitutional and statutory human rights framework. Removing explicit references to addressing

underrepresentation and employment disadvantage risks weakening the University's ability to fulfill its obligations under both provincial human rights law and the *Charter's* equality guarantees.

As a publicly funded institution exercising statutory authority, the University must act in a matter consistent with *Charter* values and human rights principles. Retreating from clearly articulated equity commitments undermines efforts to dismantle systemic barriers in academic employment and creates greater uncertainty about how the University intends to ensure substantive equality in recruitment. A vote to eliminate EDI commitments also sends a troubling signal to historically underrepresented communities regarding their place within the institution and exposes the University to reputational and legal risk if equity objectives become unclear or inconsistently applied.

CCLA therefore respectfully urges the Board to:

1. Vote against the proposed elimination of explicit EDI commitments in the University's hiring policies;
2. Affirm the University's adherence to substantive equality principles under the Alberta Human Rights Act and the Charter; and
3. Engage in transparent and meaningful consultation with faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders before advancing changes with significant human rights implications.

The decision before you is not merely administrative. It is a statement about how your institution understands equality, fairness, and its obligations under Canadian human rights law. We urge you to uphold a human rights–centered approach to recruitment and to preserve policies that advance inclusive excellence at the University of Alberta.

Sincerely,



Howard Sapers
Executive Director, CCLA



Harini Sivalingam
Director, Equality Program, CCLA

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