NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF JAPANESE CANADIANS

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August 10, 2026

Dear President Mohamed Lachemi,

The National Association of Japanese Canadians and the NAJC's Human Rights Committee writes to express its support for Dr. Pamela Sugiman in her challenge to her 2024 dismissal as Dean of Arts at Toronto Metropolitan University.

Dr. Sugiman is widely respected within the Japanese Canadian community as a scholar, educator, and community leader. She is a former member of the NAJC National Executive Board and has been invited to speak at NAJC events on a number of occasions. In 2024, she delivered the NAJC's Dr. Gordon Hirabayashi Lecture in Edmonton, sponsored by the University of Alberta. The lecture honours Dr. Hirabayashi, a Japanese American sociologist, former University of Alberta professor, and posthumous recipient of the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom, whose work championed human rights, including the rights of Indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in Canada. Dr. Sugiman's participation in this lecture reflects the high regard in which she is held within the NAJC and the broader human rights community.

For that reason, we were deeply troubled by the account published in Toronto Life describing the circumstances of her dismissal. The article raises serious questions about institutional accountability, procedural fairness, and the treatment of a senior academic leader at a time of profound personal grief.

It is especially difficult to reconcile Dr. Sugiman's abrupt removal with TMU's stated commitments to equity, diversity, inclusion, and women's leadership. In 2024, the inaugural year of TMU's Empowering Women in Academia initiative, one of the university's most respected advocates for equity was removed from her role in circumstances that appear neither collegial nor compassionate.

Dr. Sugiman's support for Indigenous programs at Toronto Metropolitan University also reflects a broader tradition of justice and solidarity. Within the Japanese Canadian community, our own history of dispossession, advocacy, and redress has created a strong recognition that the pursuit of justice must include standing alongside First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Leaders such as David Suzuki have spoken to this responsibility. Former National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations Phil Fontaine has also acknowledged the 1988 Japanese Canadian redress agreement as an important reference point in advancing First Nations' claims, including through consultation

with Japanese Canadian redress leader Art Miki. We are proud to see Dr. Sugiman carry this work forward.

Institutions reveal their values most clearly in moments of vulnerability and conflict. The combined impact of sudden bereavement and an abrupt, high-profile dismissal would be devastating under any circumstances. We admire Dr. Sugiman's strength in pursuing her wrongful dismissal claim, and we believe TMU has a responsibility to address the harm caused.
We call on Toronto Metropolitan University to resolve this matter without delay and to take meaningful steps toward accountability and repair.

Sincerely,

National Association of Japanese Canadians and the NAJC's Human Rights Committee