



## King's among first Nova Scotia universities to sign the "Can't Buy My Silence" pledge

For immediate release

December 7, 2023

The University of King's College has adopted the "Can't Buy My Silence" pledge, through which King's commits to never use a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) in a case involving sexual harassment, discrimination, other forms of misconduct and/or bullying. Adoption of the pledge followed a September meeting of King's Board of Governors, during which it authorized President William Lahey to proceed.

Today, Acadia University also announced that it has signed the pledge, making King's and Acadia the first signatory institutions in Nova Scotia.

Non-disclosure agreements are sometimes used as a tool to silence victims in circumstances of sexual misconduct, racism, pregnancy discrimination and other human rights violations. The negative implications and results of NDAs being used in this way are many, and include:

- allowing a problem to perpetuate as those who have behaved abusively or even criminally may remain in their role or move to other organizations with impunity;
- the protection of employers' reputations and of perpetrators', but not victims';
- preventing victims from reporting, speaking to family and friends about their own experiences, or warning others;
- compelling victims to lie or risk being sued for defamation;
- creating a so-called "chilling effect" that discourages those wishing to speak up about abuse in the workplace from doing so.

King's adoption of this pledge is in keeping with [other actions it has taken](#) in response to recommendations made by Rubin Thomlinson LLP in both the [Interim Report](#) and [Final Report](#) of the Independent Review of Accusations of Sexual Assault Against Dr. Wayne Hankey (in particular, the second recommendation of the Rubin Thomlinson Final Report, "Making Amends to Individuals.") It continues existing practice established in settling claims against the university arising out of Hankey's misconduct, during which no claimant was asked or required to enter into a non-disclosure agreement.

The "Can't Buy My Silence" [campaign](#) is pursuing legislative and regulatory change to make non-disclosure agreements "unenforceable for anything other than their original purpose – the

prevention of sharing confidential business information (“intellectual property”) and trade secrets.” The campaign was founded and is led by British activist and former employee of Harvey Weinstein, Zelda Perkins, together with Professor Julie Macfarlane, a Canadian law professor and member of the Order of Canada.

President Lahey and King’s Sexual Health and Safety Officer Jordan Roberts met with Professor Macfarlane to learn more about the pledge and understand its suitability for King’s.

Roberts notes that non-disclosure agreements have not been considered as part of investigative or non-investigative measure within the university during her tenure, nor are they mentioned in King’s [Sexualized Violence, Awareness, Prevention and Response Policy](#) (“the Policy”). By formally adopting this pledge, Roberts says the university sends an important message about its commitment to “the survivor-centric and trauma-informed values of our Policy.”

President Lahey says the pledge forms part of [larger changes](#) taking place at the university.

“For a long time now, King’s has been engaged in difficult and necessary work to create the cultural shift required so that our community is truly safe and welcoming to all. By adopting this pledge, we are taking an important step forward on that journey.”

### **About the University of King’s College**

Established in 1789, King's College is Canada's oldest chartered university and is associated with Dalhousie University. A small and extraordinarily lively academic community located in Halifax (Kjipuktuk), Nova Scotia, King's is known nationally and internationally for its highly acclaimed interdisciplinary programs in the humanities, including its renowned Foundation Year Program, its professional programs in journalism and its fine arts programs in creative writing. [ukings.ca](http://ukings.ca)

For more information contact:

Elizabeth Grant, Associate Director, Communications, University of King’s College  
[Elizabeth.grant@ukings.ca](mailto:Elizabeth.grant@ukings.ca) | 902.719.9187