



OCUFA

Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
Union des associations des professeurs des universités de l'Ontario

2021-2022 OCUFA Service Award

Citation for Fabrice Colin and Linda St-Pierre



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Read by
Sue Wurtele, OCUFA President

The OCUFA Service Award recognizes those remarkable individuals whose work has strengthened OCUFA and advanced the interests of professors, librarians and other academic workers across Ontario.

The Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations is honoured to present the 2022 Service Award to Drs. Fabrice Colin and Linda St-Pierre of the Laurentian University Faculty Association – L'Association des professeures et professeurs de l'Université de Laurentienne (LUFA-APPUL). Fabrice Colin is a professor in the department of Mathematics, and Linda is a sessional instructor in the areas of Biological Sciences and Labour Studies at Laurentian University, which is located on the traditional lands of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and covered by the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850.

As ardent trade unionists, Fabrice and Linda each have their own considerable legacy of service to the local, provincial, and national academic labour movement. Early in his career as a professor at Laurentian, Fabrice demonstrated his commitment to fairness, equity, and justice as a faculty association steward and later served on the LUFA-APPUL bargaining team through several rounds of negotiations. Fabrice earned a strong reputation for championing collegial governance through his role on the Laurentian University Senate and defending French language programming and the arts. When elected as the President of LUFA-APPUL, he became actively involved in the OCUFA Board and its Contract Faculty Committee, dedicating his time to building connections and solidarity with member organizations across the province to fight against precarity in academic work.

Linda is an activist with a decades-long history in the academic labour movement. As a sessional instructor, she was first elected as LUFA-APPUL's Chief Steward and then as its first Chief Grievance Officer. She was later hired as Executive Director. During her time with LUFA-APPUL, Linda has led three



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organizing drives and taken the administration to task for breaches of the collective agreement. For over a decade, Linda has been an active member of the OCUFA Grievance Committee, providing advice, support, and a shoulder to lean on to fellow grievance officers across the province. Linda's bargaining skills and strategic instincts have made her an invaluable resource to the collective bargaining community.

Linda and Fabrice guided the Laurentian faculty through one of the most significant challenges ever faced at a Canadian university. In February 2020, without advance notice or due process, Laurentian University's senior administration engaged an unprecedented *Companies Creditors' Arrangement Act* (CCAA) process that triggered the largest cuts ever experienced at a Canadian university and resulted in the cancellation of 69 programs and the loss of nearly 200 faculty and staff positions. The cuts rocked the foundations of the Sudbury community and threatened the bilingual and tri-cultural mandate at the heart of Laurentian's mission.

And if those challenges weren't great enough, the 20 months of chaos and devastation that followed, occurred in the middle of a global pandemic. Yet, with Fabrice and Linda at the helm, LUFA-APPUL and its members met these challenges head-on.

LUFA-APPUL immediately sounded the alarm about the Laurentian Crisis and rallied faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community supporters across the country to garner media attention and fuel a public outcry that was impossible for administrators and government to ignore.

The campaign they ignited put the Laurentian administration and the Government of Ontario under intense scrutiny for their role in jeopardizing the future of the university. Within the first six months of the campaign, Colleges and Universities Minister Ross Romano had been shuffled out of his job, and the following year, Laurentian announced the retirement of President Robert Haché and Provost Marie-Josée Berger.

A preliminary report from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario found Laurentian's CCAA filing to be inappropriate and avoidable. The report



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also detailed poor management decisions and financial choices by administration officials and a lack of action from the provincial government. For Fabrice and Linda, these findings were both a validation and a vindication.

In September 2022, Laurentian's creditors accepted a Plan of Arrangement outlining debt repayment conditions, but it also included a commitment to faculty input on university governance, priority payment for vacation pay claims above what is required by the CCAA, and the continuation of the pension plan and security for about 600 full-time jobs. LUFA-APPUL will continue to advocate for an increased faculty complement.

Throughout it all, Linda and Fabrice were unwavering in their focus on safeguarding their members, upholding the collective agreement, protecting equity, defending collegial governance, and making sure that no other public university is ever subjected to the CCAA process again.

As noted by one of their nominators "LUFA-APPUL, under the guidance of Linda and Fabrice, is a beacon of resistance and fight in the face of adversity and a symbol to faculty associations across Ontario and beyond."

OCUFA is honoured to recognize Fabrice and Linda's leadership through this award. Each of them has championed the values enshrined in OCUFA's mandate, strengthened our movement, and staunchly defended Ontario's public university sector.



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The OCUFA Service Award was established to honour individuals who have done, or continue to do, exceptional work on behalf of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and its Members.