

# WLUF ADVOCATE

Building community through dialogue, discussion, and debate.

## One more nail in the coffin of collegial governance

By the WLUF Executive

On Nov. 5 [President Max Blouw announced](#) that he will strike a Special Advisory Committee “to review the varied opinions associated with the Prime Ministers Statues Project and to make recommendations on how the project might be moved forward.”

Whatever one thinks about keeping company with 21 bronzed former PMs, faculty should be alarmed at the ways in which this latest move abrogates the spirit (if maybe not the letter) of collegial debate, discussion and decision-making. Sadly, the attack on the academy’s democratic institutions and processes (as [Nipissing striking faculty](#) are well aware) is becoming all too commonplace.

The Special Advisory Committee is the President’s response to a 39 to 6 to 7 vote in the Oct. 20 meeting of Senate in favour of cancelling Laurier’s involvement with the project. Following the usual process, a recommendation from Senate is presented at the next meeting of the Board of Governors. Were that to happen, and were the Board to vote in favour of the statue project, the President could *then* call for a committee to find middle ground. At least in that scenario, due process would be served.

But in striking this committee *before* the Board has had the chance to hear and discuss the Senate recommendation, the President ensures in advance that the recommendation will not be adopted. Collegial governance in this case, is merely a pretense. The President’s intervention effectively supplants the current Senate recommen-

dation with another—one that is more likely to accommodate the President’s wishes.

Moreover, the President’s rationale for striking this committee is ill-founded. Noting the Senate vote contradicts the Board’s initial approval of the project, [Dr. Blouw suggests](#) a special committee is needed because middle ground must be sought between

group,” of which four of five members have expressed strong support for the project. We also don’t know how the faculty and student representatives will be elected, how the Committee will receive information, or if the committee is even allowed to find in favour of Senate’s motion and call an end to the statue project. Indeed, the President’s three-



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the university’s two governing bodies. But, with one body, Senate, calling for cancellation, there can be no middle ground. Any compromise position means refusing to honour the Senate vote.

Consider as well that the [composition of the Special Advisory Committee](#) has already been struck with the exception of a few students and faculty still to be elected. Who decided on this committee structure and, if it was the President, is there not a potential conflict of interest given his clear and continued support of the project? Part of the committee includes the “statue project advisory

question mandate for the Committee suggests not.

The larger question this debacle raises, however, is: so long as the President can intervene willy-nilly to derail a Senate recommendation, why would any Senator even bother to attend Senate, discuss issues and vote? If their reasoned and democratic decision making can simply be ignored by the President and Board, what is the point of Senate? The President should think long and hard about these questions if he is to give anything more than mere lip service to the value of collegial governance.