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April 21, 2017

Mr. Zoltán Balog
Minister of Human Capacities
1054 Budapest, Akadémia utca 3.
Hungary

Dear Minister Balog,

On behalf of my colleagues at the University of Alberta, and in concert with concerned academics in Europe and around the world, I write to encourage your government to suspend the implementation of the amendments to the Hungarian Higher Education Law. Scholars, university administrators, and several North American and European governments are concerned that these legislative amendments threaten academic freedom and will undermine the continued operation of the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. We call on you, as Minister, to act in favour of academic freedom and the institutional independence that enables universities, including those in Hungary, to flourish as places of research, teaching, and learning.

The University of Alberta is one of Canada's leading research-intensive universities. As Dean of the Faculty of Arts, I am guided by a deep institutional commitment to academic freedom as fundamental to open inquiry, courageous and independent thinking, and the pursuit of truth. It is this perspective that informs the concerns that my colleagues and I have with regard to the potential for Hungary's recent legislative measures to undermine CEU's capacity to operate in Budapest as a free and independent international graduate university.

As you know, Budapest's Central European University is a globally respected institution. It operates as a private international university with an enviable reputation for research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences. It attracts students from 117 countries and faculty from 40, and is a regional leader in winning European Research Council grants. Canadian scholars were moved by the CEU Rector and President Michael Ignatieff's plea for the Hungarian government to recognize the serious implications of its legislative measures. We wish to show our support for CEU, and join the many others who are urging the government of Hungary to suspend the new law's implementation and take a stand in favour of the traditions of institutional independence and academic freedom that have permitted decades of free and open teaching and research at Central European University.

I respectfully urge the government and the Hungarian parliament to suspend the implementation of the recently passed legislation, to seek judicial re-examination of the legislation, and to enter into meaningful consultations with CEU. Hungary has a well-founded international academic reputation. Acting on the calls to re-examine the recent amendments to the Hungarian Higher

Education Law, will ensure this reputation and future relationships with European and global partners are not irreparably damaged.

Yours sincerely,



Lesley Cormack
Dean, Faculty of Arts

CC: Viktor Orban, Prime Minister of Hungary;
Office of the Prime Minister;
Central European University