



## Why NOT to celebrate the opening of York's Markham Campus: *A call to action*

Instead of joining President Lenton on November 4th to toast the grand opening of the Markham campus, let us organize for a better York.

Announcing the opening of a new university campus can give people hope that higher education in Ontario will become easier to access and provide future students with more options to pursue their academic ambitions. Unfortunately, the mismanagement driving York University's new capital project in Markham does more to discourage those hopes than inspire them.

Due to the senior administration's lack of financial planning for the opening of the Markham campus, [sources have reported that York has resorted to deferring maintenance](#) for existing buildings at the Keele and Glendon campuses. Many of these essential educational structures are now neglected and have fallen into disrepair. The [billion-dollar repair backlog](#) at York increases as money is continually funneled into opening this new capital project in Markham.

Equally concerning, the senior administration at York [grew in size](#) by 37% between 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, with a 47% increase in their compensation. This has occurred at the same time as [severe cuts to support staff](#) and the jobs of those who do the work of educating students in the already-existing classrooms, workshops, labs, studios, and lecture halls.

The skewed priorities of York University's spending under the presidency of Rhonda Lenton have significant negative consequences for students and workers. As administrative bloat grows out of control, courses are cut, and classes become impersonal as they [expand in size as much as tenfold](#). Students also have fewer options of courses to choose from and fewer people they can speak to for help due to these wide-ranging cuts.

The opening of the new Markham campus is a monument to this gross mismanagement. Despite the Ontario government providing the [lowest level](#) of funding per student [in the country](#), Lenton's team [pushed the construction of the campus through anyway](#), which strains the institution's finances even further. The Auditor General of Ontario blasted York for making this investment without "[a fulsome cost analysis](#)". The high cost of building the Markham campus contributes to saddling the University as a whole with a [huge debt](#), which will make it more difficult to invest in teaching and learning.

Celebrating the opening of new buildings distracts us from the problems with how they are managed. Those problems can be addressed only if students and workers—including those who will be tasked with trying to make the new Markham campus function—come together to make a better future possible. This means returning to York's original mandate: "[the pursuit, preservation, and dissemination of knowledge](#)".

Fulfilling that mandate can start by reducing the number of managers, reducing class sizes, and hiring more people to offer a greater diversity of courses, more staff to assist students and courses, more workers to repair and maintain existing buildings and facilities. It also means creating the kind of community that would passionately advocate for more funding for education.

On November 4th, we refuse to participate in ritual congratulations that downplay the failure of York's senior administration to fulfill their educational mission. Instead, let us renew our commitment to that mission, and "[cultivate the critical intellect](#)".