

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Jon Thompson Opens New Lecture Series on Academic Freedom

SAINT JOHN/FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK (19 March, 2012): Jon Thompson, one of the foremost authorities on Canadian academic freedom, will give the first lecture of a new speakers series announced by the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT). He will speak in Saint John on Tues. March 20, and in Fredericton on Thurs. March 22. His talk is titled "Academic Freedom in Reactionary Times."

"Professor Thompson was the perfect choice to lead off the new series," said Dr. Jula Hughes, president of the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT). "He literally wrote the book." Jon Thompson is a co-author of *The Olivieri Report* and author of *No Debate: The Israel Lobby and Free Speech at Canadian Universities*. He is a professor emeritus in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at UNB and a former president of AUNBT. He chaired the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers (1985-1988) and received the James B. Milner Award for contributions to academic freedom in 1993.

"We have been considering this series for awhile," continued Hughes. "The current political and economic environment poses particular threats to academic freedom, both in Canada and globally. But as an issue, it is a difficult sell: we in the universities need to work hard to explain to the public how crucial academic freedom is to any research worth the name. So we decided on a speakers series."

In his talk, Jon Thompson will explain how academic freedom lies at the heart of the intellectual life of the university and society at large. "Through academic freedom," he argues, "we promote the free speech and open debate that are central to a democratic society. But today we are seeing an erosion of academic freedom and a deterioration of democratic engagement." The lecture will outline the origins of academic freedom and explain the modern conception. Prof. Thompson will then suggest how to preserve academic freedom in the face of intensifying pressures on universities.

The lectures are free and open to the public. The organizers hope that everyone with an interest in issues in post-secondary education will attend.

In Saint John, the lecture is on Tuesday March 20 at 5:30pm in 107 Irving Hall, UNB Saint John. In Fredericton, it is on Thursday March 22 at 5:30pm in 103 Tilley Hall, UNB Fredericton.

AUNBT represents over 1,000 UNB academic staff at the University of New Brunswick.

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