

By: Brendan Kennedy

From: [Toronto Star](#) | Original Article

Next week's appearance by former U.S. president George W. Bush at an event hosted by a local evangelical Christian university has been cancelled.

The decision came Wednesday, the same day three former students launched a petition <http://www.tyndale.co/petition> urging the university to cancel the speech. On Tuesday, a class valedictorian and professor publicly spoke out against the appearance following the resignation of another staff member.

Bush was scheduled to speak Sept. 20 to about 150 people at an invitation-only breakfast hosted by Tyndale University College and Seminary, home to about 1,400 students at two campuses in Toronto's north end.

Tyndale supporter Prem Watsa, chief executive of Fairfax Financial Holdings and sometimes referred to as "Canada's Warren Buffett," was sponsoring the event, which the administration said was intended to raise the university's profile. Watsa did not respond to requests for comment.

A brief <http://tyndale.ca/news/breakfast-canceledpostEND> on the university's website Wednesday afternoon announced the cancellation "due to scheduling change" but provided no details, nor did it mention Bush by name.

Tyndale spokeswoman Lina van der Wel confirmed the note pertained to the Bush event, which she said would not be rescheduled. She said she could not explain the "scheduling change," nor say whether it was the university or Bush who cancelled.

University president Gary Nelson held a town-hall meeting at the school at noon Wednesday, a few hours before the decision to cancel was made public. Faculty reached by the *Star* refused to discuss what happened at the meeting.

Opposition to Bush's appearance at the non-denominational evangelical university had been growing within the school's community since Monday after a story <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1052707--bush-to-make-promotional-appearance-for-christian-collegestorystoryEND> was published in the *Star*.

The following day, a class valedictorian and professor spoke <http://www.thestar.com/news/article/1053278spoke> out passionately against the visit. The university also confirmed "a valued employee" quit in protest.

Critics accused Tyndale of sacrificing its peaceful ideals to attract wealthy donors with the exclusive event. Many students and alumni also complained they only heard about the high-profile appearance through the news.

"They're still not even saying his name on their web page," said Dan Oudshoorn, a former student body president who graduated in 2006 and was part of the group that launched the petition. "I think it shows they were really trying to sneak in a cash grab through a means they know is dirty, they got busted doing it and now they're trying to sneak back out again without taking responsibility."

The Bayview Ave. school has a history dating back to 1894 as the Toronto Bible College. Renamed in 2003, it awards bachelor of arts degrees and offers graduate studies in theology.