



Students' Society of McGill University
Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Office of the Speakers
Bureau de Présidents du Conseil

Motion Re: SSMU Legislative Council Statement on James Building Occupation

Whereas the SSMU has not yet distributed a statement on the ongoing occupation of the James Administration Building;

Whereas the SSMU Council has had the opportunity to discuss the issue but has not yet taken a formal stance on the aforementioned events;

Be it resolved that the following statement be adopted by the SSMU Legislative Council and distributed to students via a special listserv message, and posted on the SSMU website.

Dear SSMU Members,

As you are aware, a group of students has organized an occupation of the sixth floor of the James Administration Building. Their demands include recognition of the results of last Fall's referendum questions concerning the existence of CKUT and QPIRG and the way these student groups' fees are charged to students, as well as the resignation of the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) Morton Mendelson. While neither the SSMU Executive, SSMU Council nor SSMU Senate Caucus mandated or organized this occupation, many constituents have called upon us to issue a response. We have heard support for the occupiers as well as calls for their condemnation.

We acknowledge that the actions of the McGill Administration over the past years have not been conducive to the thriving, independently organized student life we aspire to see on campus. The administration's approach has resulted in a failure to foster democratic participation in the decisions affecting students at our University. Professor Mendelson's office is ultimately responsible for the decision not to recognize the outcome of last Fall's referendum questions.

In this context, we understand the motivation behind direct actions such as the occupation of the James building. Occupations, such as the 1968-1969 occupations resulting in seats on McGill Senate, and departmental committees, have proven effective in the past. However, we submit for consideration that this tactic hinders student representatives' work on university committees at this time. Moreover, we recognize some student services have been halted. We call for a broader effort to foster a diversity of forms of engagement that encourages wider student participation and builds mass support.

As student representatives, we recognize that many students do not understand why fellow students decided to occupy an administrator's office, or disagree with the tactic used. However, we are also aware that many students agree with some if not all of the demands of the occupiers; or if not, they still may believe in the validity of last semester's referendum results.

After much deliberation at a SSMU Council meeting last Fall, we approved the formulation of CKUT's referendum question, which was very similar to QPIRG's. In addition, a General Assembly



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motion mandates us to oppose the way the university administration removed the opt-out system from student hands in 2007. We were dismayed to hear that the university administration decided not to recognize the results of a student referendum marked by a near-record participation rate. As such, the SSMU Council echoes the call that the University respect last Fall's referendum results.

We are strongly in favour of a resolution of the current occupation that does not involve the use of force. We wish to see a constructive outcome to the current situation, one which expands the possibility for a more democratic university.

We encourage you to contact us to express your perspectives (our contact information is here). We will continue to collect and post information from a variety of sources on the SSMU website, including details on upcoming avenues for further discussion.

Moved by,

Joel Pedneault, VP External
Maggie Knight, President