



January 13, 2012.

Dear Professor Mendelson,

As the legally accredited organization representing all downtown undergraduates at McGill University and as the organization responsible for administering referendum questions for our constituents, the SSMU is concerned to hear of your decision not to recognize the results of the Fall 2011 Referendum questions concerning the Quebec Public Interest Research Group and CKUT Radio. It is our understanding that your stated reason is that “By including several issues in the same question, the student body was not able to unequivocally indicate support for [CKUT or QPIRG]” and that the question was “unclear” and consequently “will not provide McGill’s Board of Governors the assurance necessary to approve the renewal of your agreement with the University.”

As you know, each question’s whereas clauses outlined the activities of each organization before culminating in the following questions:

Do you support CKUT continuing as a recognized student activity supported by a fee of \$4.00 per semester for full-time undergraduate students, which is not opt-outable on the Minerva online opt-out system but is fully refundable directly through CKUT, with the understanding that a majority “no” vote will result in the termination of all undergraduate funding to CKUT?

Do you support QPIRG continuing as a recognized student activity supported by a fee of \$3.75 per semester for full-time undergraduate students, which is not opt-outable on the Minerva online opt-out system but is fully refundable directly through QPIRG, with the understanding that a majority “no” vote will result in the termination of all undergraduate funding to QPIRG?

Each question clearly asks if the voter supports the organization as a recognized student activity. While a “no” vote could be interpreted either as lack of support for the organization and the fee or as a lack of support for the fee only, it is difficult to interpret a “yes” vote as anything but support for the organization’s existence.

The student news articles referred to in your letter to CKUT and QPIRG discuss lack of clarity in the context of the fee and opt-out system and/or direct opposition to the proposed change to the opt-out system. To date I have not seen any suggestion that it is unclear that a “yes” vote indicated support for the organization. Consequently, it is our understanding that, since both referendum questions received a majority “yes” vote (with 72.3% and 65.6% for CKUT and QPIRG respectively), the student body has clearly expressed its support for the existence of these organizations. We are naturally concerned that a democratic decision by the student body—and, by extension, SSMU’s democratic processes in general—are being declared invalid, and would appreciate a response to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Maggie Knight
President