

Question

TO: Senate

FROM: Senator Chloe Rourke
Senator Jacob Greenspon
Senator David Benrimoh

SUBJECT: Question Regarding the Allocation of Government Funding for Students with Disabilities

MEETING DATE: March 18, 2015

PREAMBLE: Whereas, \$9.283 million was allocated by the MESRS for “Soutien à l’intégration des personnes en situation de handicap” in Québec universities for the 2014-2015 academic year¹,

Whereas, an envelope of \$7.5 million from the aforementioned \$9.283 will be distributed to Universities’ central budgeting offices, and McGill’s portion exceeds \$1 million²,

Whereas, this envelope is meant to be spent on improving services for students with disabilities, particularly “les étudiants ayant un trouble d’apprentissage, un trouble mental ou un trouble de déficit de l’attention”³,

Whereas, addressing these needs is crucial to ensuring the learning and academic success of students with disabilities at McGill University,

Whereas, “La Charte des droits et libertés de la personne et la Loi assurant l’exercice des droits des personnes handicapées en vue de leur intégration scolaire, professionnelle et sociale (révisée en 2004) amènent désormais à considérer ces étudiantes et étudiants en situation de handicap. Par conséquent, les établissements ont des obligations légales au regard des services à leur offrir.”⁴

Whereas, information about the timing and disbursement of this funding has not been communicated by the University to the McGill community or to the students who will be affected by the disbursement of these funds,

Whereas, as a result of this \$7.5 million envelope, the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) will no longer receive direct funding from the

¹ Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec: Année universitaire 2014-2015, Tableau F http://www.mesrs.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/documents_soutien/Ens_Sup/Universite/PersUniv/ReglesBudgControlesFinan/Regles_budgetaires_universites_2014-2015.pdf

² McGill disability services funding uncertain under new grant model <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2015/02/mcgill-disability-services-funding-uncertain-new-grant-model/>

³ Règles budgétaires et calcul des subventions de fonctionnement aux universités du Québec: Année universitaire 2014-2015, pg 19 http://www.mesrs.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/documents_soutien/Ens_Sup/Universite/PersUniv/ReglesBudgControlesFinan/Regles_budgetaires_universites_2014-2015.pdf

⁴ Modèle d’organisation des services aux étudiantes et étudiants ayant un trouble d’apprentissage, un trouble mental ou un trouble de déficit de l’attention avec ou sans hyperactivité http://www.mesrs.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/contenu/documents_soutien/Ens_Sup/Collegial/Accomp_soutien_eleves/ModOrgServEtudTroubleApprenHyperactivite.pdf

government as in past years, and expects a budget shortfall of approximately 15% for the next academic year,⁵

Whereas, McGill recognized that “building on the work and successes” of the Office for Students with Disabilities is necessary to “achieve a sustained focus on student-centeredness by enhancing educational, research, and extracurricular life and learning experiences,” the second priority of McGill’s ASAP 2012 strategic plan,⁶

Whereas, OSD currently faces budget restrictions that hinder its ability to provide its legally-mandated services and have resulted in reduced provision of additional learning supports that are critical to the academic success of many students,

Whereas, according to the recent Student Health Survey of graduate and undergraduate students, 4% of McGill students found that ADHD was having a significant impact on their academic activities and 3% of students said learning disabilities were affecting their academic performance⁷,

Whereas the OSD is the only unit in the University with an explicit mandate to serve students with disabilities and is the unit where, once allocated, these funds are ensured to be used for their designated purpose,

Whereas, concerns have been raised regarding these funds being allocated for their designated purpose at other Québec universities, notably at the Université du Québec À Montréal^{8 9},

Whereas, on February 23, 2015, the SSMU and PGSS adopted a joint stance expressing “their discontent with the current lack of transparency of funding transfers from the Government of Quebec through the central administration earmarked for student services,” and call on McGill to increase the transparency of these transfers,

QUESTION:

How is the University planning to allocate these funds to ensure they are used for their designated purposes? What is the timeline for their distribution? Which McGill units and services will these funds be distributed to?

Which units and stakeholders are being consulted in this allocation process (eg. students, Student Services, the OSD)? How will the University ensure this process is transparent?

Will any of this funding be used to hire more staff for the OSD given the aforementioned budget constraints that affect their operations?

⁵ McGill disability services funding uncertain under new grant model <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2015/02/mcgill-disability-services-funding-uncertain-new-grant-model/>

⁶http://www.mcgill.ca/provost/files/provost/doc_university_budgetbook_2014_2015_rev20140818.pdf (pg 29-32)

⁷ McGill Student Health Survey http://www.mcgill.ca/studenthealth/files/studenthealth/mcgill_ncha_report_dec_2014_final.pdf

⁸ L’aide aux handicapés servira à éponger les coupes <http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/430547/uqam-l-aide-aux-handicapes-servira-a-eponger-les-coupes>

⁹ Étudiants en situation de handicap: L’UQAM rectifie les faits <http://quartierlibre.ca/etudiants-en-situation-de-handicap-luqam-rectifie-les-faits/>