



## **MAUT Executive Statement on Proposed Revisions of McGill University's Policy on Sexual Violence**

The Executive Committee of the McGill Association of University Teachers (MAUT) welcomes the impressive progress made by the University's working group to revise McGill's Policy against Sexual Violence. In our view, this a true example of what collegial governance can achieve when we all share the common goal strengthening and protecting our community as a whole and set clear guidelines concerning sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The working group, consisting of representatives of several University groups, including but not limited to the administration, student groups, and MAUT, has worked very hard over the past several months to produce a revised policy that meets the legitimate needs of all members of the University community. It sets out to ensure a safe and respectful environment in which to work and learn. It provides survivors of sexual violence with the full support they seek and need to help them overcome their trauma, as well as the assurance that reported cases will be thoroughly investigated by an external special investigator.

We are thankful to the students for reiterating the importance of recognizing the power inequality between teaching staff and students and the potential for abuse this inequality creates. We are pleased to see that this fundamental concern has been properly addressed in the proposed policy revisions, which expressly prohibit intimate relations between students and teaching staff who - in any way - evaluate or supervise those students in the University context. The addition of clear sanctions to be applied to respondents who have been found guilty (e.g., a presumed minimum of a suspension without pay) sends a clear signal that the McGill Community recognizes and addresses this as a serious issue. The new, strongly worded policy will serve as an important deterrent against teaching staff abusing the power entrusted to them by the University. Of course, the new policy continues to be a work in progress that will, like all policies at McGill, be revised regularly to modify and strengthen it to reflect evolving needs and legislation.

Strengthening the policy is only one part of what must be a much broader strategy to deal effectively with the threat of sexual violence and its deleterious effects on campus. It is for this reason that we also welcome the working group's proposals to implement a comprehensive and coherent array of programs and facilities to this end. Together, we hope they will create an environment that deters and prevents conduct that constitutes sexual violence, in which all members of the community can feel safe in the knowledge that their voices will be heard, that cases of abuse will be dealt with appropriately and in a timely

manner, and that they can count on all forms of material and psychological support needed when reporting a case of abuse.

We recognize that the complexity of our current rules and procedures had the effect of discouraging survivors from seeking redress and help. We believe the newly proposed policy and program architecture will help to establish the transparency, accessibility and streamlining needed to (re-)establish full confidence among all members of the University community. We are all strongly committed to and invested in dealing with sexual violence on campus in all its forms.

We look forward to our continued work with the students and the administration, and all other groups on campus, to further strengthen the University's Policy against Sexual Violence as we learn from experience about what has been effective and what needs further improvement. Ultimately, we are all deeply committed to the same goals.

On behalf of the MAUT Executive Committee,

Axel van den Berg

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Axel van den Berg', written over a horizontal line.

President