Re: *Report of the McGill Ad Hoc Working Group on Systemic Discrimination*

Dear Colleagues,

Your survey asks whether I have felt frustrated by things going on at McGill. I certainly am beginning to, in part because I object, for academic reasons, to this whole business of turning to the measurement of people’s ‘feelings’ as a basis for university policy. I will say more about that in another context, but I want to say here that the survey is unscientific, highly biased, and able to produce very few results capable of guiding sound university policy. What may be of more interest to you, however, given your chosen starting point, is that I regard the survey itself as a form of harassment.

It does, however, raise some interesting questions. One of them concerns the category ‘sexual minorities,’ a category presently understood to be relevant to hiring procedures, inter alia. As someone who sits on search committees fairly often, I would like a clear definition of this category. I would also like a clear understanding of how we are to determine when a particular sexual minority is under- or over-represented in the McGill community, and whether all sexual minorities should be regarded as equal. I would further like to know what questions you think should be asked of members or prospective members of the McGill community in order to determine whether they truly belong to a sexual minority. And I would like to know why any and every search should concern itself with such a matter, even to the narrowing of its consideration of qualified candidates.

Another concerns your proposed mandatory ‘equity audits’ and ‘compulsory diversity awareness and sensitivity training for all faculty’. Who will determine what is equitable and what inequitable? And will faculty members who are philosophically critical of what you call ‘equity and diversity’ and ‘diversity awareness’ and ‘sensitivity’, and of the anthropological and political or religious justifications thereof, be given equal opportunity in these proposed sessions to explain their own perspectives and alternatives? If so, the sessions could get quite long. If not, it is hard to know how they could be distinguished from mere indoctrination in a particular worldview – which was no condition of our employment and is indeed inimical to the kind of employment we understand ourselves to have taken up.

I look forward to your answers to these questions. They are questions of a sort that will have to be asked publicly and publicly answered.

Sincerely,

Douglas Farrow
Professor of Christian Thought
McGill University

PS: I note that none of the concerns I raised in the attached document have been addressed as this business has moved forward.