



TO: Senate

FROM: Joey Shea, SSMU; Jonathan Mooney, PGSS

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Student Services Contingency

MEETING DATE: December 4th, 2013

PREAMBLE: On the November 21st meeting of the Committee on Student Services, a proposal was brought forth regarding possible initiatives for the \$6 million Student Services Contingency. This contingency is a result of external circumstances, such as conservative enrolment estimates, shortening of the fiscal year from 12 months to 11 months in FY11, unfilled positions and employee turnover and the MUNACA strike which reduced salary expenditures. This contingency fund has been built up from the Student Services FIO, which is a fee restricted to Student Services.

Proposed initiatives for the contingency included extending study spaces during the exam period through additional security and cleaning for the HSSL and Schulick Libraries, deferred maintenance on the Brown building, and for projects within Enrolment Services. While all of these proposals are potentially beneficial to students, they are outside the jurisdiction of Student Services.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why is McGill University attempting to reallocate funds for Student Services to the University operating budget considering the dire need for more funding within Student Services? Furthermore, is the University going forward with this reallocation despite universal dissent by the student members of the Committee on Student Services?
2. Would siphoning this Student Services contingency fund for initiatives outside of the Student Services portfolio set a precedent for accessing other restricted funds?
3. Given that the funds for this contingency are listed as a Student Services Fee on a student's E-Bill, is it financially transparent for this money to be reallocated to other departments within McGill?

ANSWERS:

Answer to Question 1:

Bringing the contingency fund question to the Committee on Student Services (CSS) was made in the spirit of improving student life at McGill and in the spirit of collaboration. For example, one of the items presented to CSS, the need for

more study-spaces during the exam period, was a request originally made by SSMU. The proposal brought to CSS was meant to be the beginning of a consultation process.

We are trying to find ways to improve services for students. And since services for students would appear to embrace many support programs outside of Student Services, it seemed reasonable that, with student support and in the spirit of collaboration, a proposal to see whether monies might be redistributed across budgets to ensure a better student experience, could be discussed.

Answer to Question 2:

McGill always refers to the Terms of any restricted funds and will always closely adhere to any constraints or limitations. The use of the word 'siphoning' is, I believe, excessive. Again, the objective of this proposal was to improve services to all students. I may not have framed the proposal correctly at CSS, but the intent was, and still is, to consult, to listen and to get support.

Answer to Question 3:

The objective has been to find ways, collaboratively, to improve some student services that have been affected by, among other things, the government's cuts to our budget.

I will ask Jana Luker, Executive Director of Student Services, to draft a preliminary proposal to identify needs within the Student Services envelope that might be addressed by making use of the contingency fund. The draft plan will be discussed at CSS. Please note that there will be a need to maintain a portion of the surplus to address deferred maintenance in the Brown Building and to offset inflationary increases that have not kept pace with increasing expenses in Student Services. Please also note that these are not recurring funds and will not be there for long-term use. Any use of these funds will be to meet current priorities on a one-time basis.