

To: Senate

From: Brian Lewis and Phil Oxhorn, Arts Senators

Subject: Governance: Consultation

Date Submitted: 2006-09-18

Senate Meeting Date: 2006-10-04

Background:

In July, the Centre for Developing Area Studies (CDAS) was informed that it has to vacate its home at 3715 Peel because the building has been reallocated to the Faculty of Education. This is in spite of the fact that renovations were about to begin with CFI funds to accommodate a recent senior Canada Research Chair hire in the History Department—a project that had been carefully planned over the previous two years. Planned renovations to provide study space for undergraduate and graduate students at CDAS were also put on hold. There was no consultation with the Director of CDAS, with the professor in question, or with any of the other CDAS stakeholders.

In early September, the History Department, the Quebec Studies Program, the Montreal History Group and a number of other research programmes learned that they have to move out of their space in New Chancellor Day Hall so that this can be reallocated to the Faculty of Law. Again, there was no consultation with any of the parties concerned. Again, there was only a vague promise of compensatory space elsewhere, as yet unspecified.

We recognize that the university faces a space crisis and that difficult and often unwelcome decisions need to be made. Our point is the complete lack of consultation in both of these instances.

Three questions follow:

Question:

1. Does the Provost agree with us that a spirit of collegiality and harmony can best be achieved at McGill by a process of full consultation with professors, departments, research units and other concerned parties before important decisions affecting large numbers of people are reached and announced?

2. Can he reassure us that in both the above examples there was a regrettable lapse in the decision-making process that will not be repeated?

3. If not, can he explain to us why he believes that a top-down, consultation-free approach to decision-making at McGill is preferable to the approach that we thought we operated under?

Brian Lewis
Chair, History;
Arts Senator

Director, CDAS;
Arts Senator

Phil Oxhorn
