

NEWS

McGill's VP external resigns after FEUQ referendum

McGill Tribune
by Tribune News Staff

Students' Society VP External Alex Usher has resigned following a referendum to withdraw from the Federation etudiante universitaire du Quebec.

McGill students voted to withdraw from the FEUQ just four months after joining the provincial student association.

As this year's VP External, Usher was responsible for representing the interests of McGill students outside

the university. He led the campaign to join the FEUQ last fall, and chaired the committee to set up to convince students to vote to stay in the federation.

"My primary task was to bring McGill into FEUQ. Apparently I was unequal to the task," wrote Usher in his letter of resignation to student council President Kate Morisset.

Only 13 more students voted to withdraw from the FEUQ than voted to stay in the organization. But

almost as many voting students had no opinion on the question. The final vote was 845 supporting withdrawal, 832 opposed and 735 people without opinion.

FEUQ's VP Undergraduate Affairs, Robert Fabes, blamed the close loss on the Students' Society's poor campaign. Fabes accused Usher of incompetence and poor judgement throughout the campaign.

"There should've been more effort by the 'NO' committee to get more people out to vote," said Fabes.

But Usher defended the way he ran the campaign. He blamed other factors for the result, such as the confusing wording of the question and the lack of media coverage.

Graduate students sponsored the campaign to pull out of the FEUQ. They blamed the withdrawal on the lack of student interest in the federation. "I think this vote shows, at the very least, that McGill students are not supportive of the organization," said Post Graduate Students' Society VP External Rhonda Mawhood.

She cited widespread student ignorance, which she observed while collecting the 500 signatures required for a student initiated referendum, as a reason for the lack of support.

"People would ask 'FEUQ, what's that?' If people really want to have a democratic association, then its members really need to know what membership means," Mawhood said.

Graduate students are opposed to the FEUQ because they say they are inadequately represented by their own national and provincial organizations.

"They didn't want FEUQ, so they didn't want anyone else to be in it, either," Usher said.

Usher also claimed the graduates used the FEUQ referendum as a bargaining tool in their attempt to negotiate an agreement which would

allow them to secede from the central student government (SSMU).

The terms of that agreement were ratified in a referendum last week. Usher thinks graduate students should have cancelled the FEUQ referendum after an agreement was reached, since they would no longer be members of SSMU or FEUQ.

Fabes is angry about what he sees as a lost opportunity for students. "[FEUQ is] the first organization to get together and have a voice. We have lost that voice in the Minister [of Education]'s office," Fabes said. "Students' Society will have to go to the government on its own next year."

According to Fabes, two members of the incoming executive have pledged themselves to holding still another referendum in the fall. But, the Students' Society may have to wait longer than one year. The result of any student-initiated referendum is entrenched in the Students' Society policy manual and cannot be subject to review for two years.

McGill was a founding member of the FEUQ. Without McGill, there are nine member universities. The organization worked to provide both political representation and a variety of services to students, including a newsletter and student saver cards.

Until the Students' Society Council elects a replacement at next week's meeting, Morisset will administer his portfolio.

Saint Mary's University gets security escorts on campus

Saint Mary's Journal

Beginning this week, students at Saint Mary's University will be feeling a little safer on their campus.

Campus security, with the support of university's administration and Saint Mary's University's Student Association (SMUSA), has implemented an escorting program for students leaving the library late at night.

The service will be available from 10:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. each night and will provide students with an escort to bus stops or taxi stands adjacent to the campus.

Chris Silver, security chief, said that he has had concerns about safety on-campus for some time.

The program was originally intended to be a

walk-home program that would escort students to nearby south-end homes. However, due to the high cost of this original plan, it was trimmed down to its present form.

Silver stated that if the program is well-received by the students, it could be expanded.

Silver stated that the program "is designed to service students, staff, and guests of St. Mary's."

His only concern is that students may end up waiting for the security officers to return to the library after a previous escort. This may cause some people to miss buses if they are not outside early enough to allow for this. Ian Morrison, SMUSA president, stated that "we all felt there was a need for this type of program. Now, any student can feel secure. It's a small campus, but it's not a well-lit or secure campus. This will really help."



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