

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

We, the undersigned, are a committee formed of elected student representatives to the University of Ottawa Board of Governors and Senate. This committee acts independently from the University of Ottawa administration and represents the interests of both undergraduate and graduate students pertaining to the matters governed by the uOttawa Board of Governors and Senate.

This letter is in support of the University's action to send a notice of termination of the contract between it and the Student Federation of the University of Ottawa (SFUO), effective December 24, 2018. This notice is a result of a lack of response on behalf of the SFUO executives and the Board of Administration with regards to the allegations of fraud, originally brought to the University's attention in June of 2018.

Although we maintain that student government should remain as independent as possible, the University ultimately has a responsibility towards its students, from whom fees are being collected, in respect to assuring these funds are spent legitimately.

The University has expressed its interest in being consulted with the scope and choice of the forensic audit. One of the executives named in the allegations was made the primary point of contact between the University and the SFUO and was also involved in the decision of both the auditing firm, and the scope of the audit.

The scope of the audit does not include items such as executive spending, a topic of importance for both students and the University. The SFUO Board of Administrators approved a motion regarding the audit which states "This report is not to be used with the intention for prosecution by any party and/or individual unless the current Board of Administrators votes upon it." This occurred while motions to suspend the executives and staff named in the allegations (with pay) until the completion of the forensic audit ultimately failed. To the general student body, this demonstrates a lack of interest on behalf of the Board of Administrators to keep executives accountable to the general membership of the organization.

Although one executive named in the allegations revoked their signing authority, the other executive and the staff member also named in the allegations maintained signing authority. One of the executives named in the allegations remained on the constitutional committee, which was the deciding body for the scope and choice of the auditor. The staff member named in the allegations also chaired a meeting of the Board of Administrators, in which a motion for this staff member's suspension with pay was presented and failed. The executives and staff member named in the allegations voluntarily recused themselves of their duties only after the notice of termination.

With the executives and the Board of Administration of the SFUO not responding adequately to the allegations, the general student body expressing its discontent with the handling of the situation, and formal complaints of harassment and mismanagement brought forward by employees of the SFUO to the University, we maintain that the University acted in the best interest of the general student body in sending the notice of termination on September 24, 2018.

With this being said, we firmly support student representation, whether through the formation of a new undergraduate student government or the SFUO should they bring themselves into compliance with the demands of the students. As student representatives, we understand the frustrations of the student body as well as the concern that services currently provided by the SFUO be maintained. We strongly advocate that a period in which no student government is recognized should be avoided in order to minimize the end-impact on the student body. Though after consultation, we maintain confidence in the University to establish adequate temporary measures in the event of such a period of no recognized student government. Ultimately, no compromises should be made when allegations of fraud, harassment and mismanagement are not being responded to adequately.

Should a student union make a proposition with the University to be recognized as the undergraduate student government, we would support a student union that will (1) draft a constitution that can only be amended at an Annual General Assembly with a majority vote, (2) hold elections that are handled by a third party, which cannot be the University of Ottawa administration, (3) implement a model of governance which includes strong measures of financial accountability, including mechanisms for punitive action should that trust be breached, and (4) remain transparent and accountable to its membership.

In order to maintain a fair and democratic process on the choice of student government, we suggest that the University run an online vote presented to all registered undergraduate students with the choice of which student government will be recognized following the termination of the contract with the SFUO. This vote should include all student unions satisfying conditions and negotiations with the University. Regardless of whether the University is satisfied or not with its negotiation with the SFUO, the SFUO should also be included in such a vote. Once a student government is chosen, the University shall also assist in the first election of the Board members and the Executives, which would represent the extent of the University's involvement in the election process of the student government.

Though we find the actions taken by the SFUO at the recent Board of Administrators meeting to be reassuring, we recognise that these actions were taken in light of the recent termination of the agreement between the University of Ottawa and the SFUO. None-the-less, we recognise these first steps towards the rectifying of several breaches in trust and mechanisms for abuse. Therefore, we invite the SFUO to address our recommendations prior to the termination of its agreement with the uOttawa.

As a committee, we are continuing to work with the University Administration on issues that matter to students, such as increased mental health services, academic student services, appeals, as well as issues that affect each of our faculties individually.

Should there be any questions or need for clarification, please do not hesitate to get in contact with your representative(s) through the email addresses provided below.

Signed,

Student Representatives from the University of Ottawa Board of Governors and the Senate

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