



Arts Undergraduate Society of McGill University
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Motion to Stand in Solidarity with Floor Fellows in their Negotiations with McGill

Whereas the work performed by floor fellows at McGill is integral to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of over 3000 students living in residence;

Whereas, a significant proportion of students living in residence and floor fellows are members of the Arts Undergraduate Society,

Whereas the floor fellows have been unionized with AMUSE since the spring of 2014;

Whereas the floor fellows operate with an anti-oppressive harm reduction philosophy, which establishes trust among first year students and allows them to receive support for issues without fear of disciplinary action;

Whereas, the AUS outlines a commitment to anti-oppression in Article 1 of the Equity By-Laws,

Whereas the floor fellows are not paid a wage for their work, which violates Quebec labour law;

Whereas the floor fellows have been in negotiations with McGill for over a year;

Be it resolved that the AUS stand in solidarity with the floor fellows as they continue their collective agreement bargaining process.

Be it further resolved that the AUS Legislative Council sign on to a letter [Appendix 1], addressed to Principal Suzanne Fortier, which outlines our reasons for this support.

Moved By:

Becky Goldberg, VP External
Erin Sobat, Arts Senator
Kat Svikhnushin, RSUS Representative

[Appendix 1]

Dear Principal Suzanne Fortier,

We are writing to express our support for Floor Fellows, who, with the Association of McGill University Support Employees (AMUSE), are currently in their collective agreement bargaining process.

The AUS exists to represent the welfare of students in the Faculty of Arts, and support their cultural, educational, environmental, and social interests. Our community consists of 7000 people, some who are Floor Fellows, and many who are first year students in residence. Many of our initiatives cater specifically to first year students. It is a consistent goal of the AUS to cultivate strong relationships with first-years, to promote awareness of our services for their use throughout university.

Floor Fellows play an extremely important role of facilitating the transition of students from high school to university. They are the front-line of support for over 3000 first-year students, many of whom struggle to navigate the complex web of university workings. As non-disciplinarian figures in residence, Floor Fellows act as community builders, mentors, counselors, and more. The anti-oppressive, harm reductive philosophy that exists in residence successfully builds inclusive spaces on campus, and further establishes trust amongst the community. Students, as a result, feel comfortable seeking out Floor Fellows for support, without fear of repercussions.

This dynamic has proven to be very beneficial to students in the AUS. Floor Fellows often disseminate very important information regarding different opportunities to students, thus connecting more students to our services. As well, their harm-reductive philosophy helped with Frosh 2015, when open and honest communication by staff with Floor Fellows ensured the safety of participants. While the success of frosh can most significantly be attributed to the hard work of coordinators and leaders, there is a clear link between anti-oppressive, harm reductive policies in residence, and the improvement of communication. They were also consistently available for the duration of frosh for support work, to enhance inclusivity and comfort. The preservation of harm-reduction is integral to this success going forward, and is not confined to orientation week.

The AUS supports employee empowerment, as outlined by Article 3 of our Ethical Business Practice By-Laws. We believe that Floor Fellows should be paid for their work, which is often upwards of twenty hours a week. Currently, they are only compensated by housing and meal plan. McGill has thus far refused to provide housing security, and further, Quebec labour law specifically states that if an employee must live where they work in order to complete their jobs, costs of living should not be included in the employee's payment. As a result, the Floor Fellows who play an essential role of support at McGill are grossly undercompensated, and are not given fair circumstances of employment.

Ultimately, we would like to express our solidarity with the Floor Fellows, who are unionized under AMUSE, during the process of collective bargaining. We believe that their demands, most importantly, the formalization of harm reduction and anti-oppression in the Floor Fellow role, as well as requests for a just workplace through fair pay and housing security, should be honored by the university. McGill has made claims in favor of creating a culture of well being for students. Floor fellows are essential in that process, and thus should be empowered in their roles.

Sincerely,

The AUS Legislative Council