

National Campus News

From University Newsrooms Across Canada

Forensic Auditor finds single Concordia SU employee to blame \$200,000 in missing funds turned over to police

Pierre-Olivier Savoie

The Link

MONTREAL (CUP) - According to a confidential auditor's report, a single Concordia Student Union employee stole a total of \$193,061.71 from the organization over a period of 15 months.

The forensic auditor's report, completed last November and recently obtained by Canadian University Press, details what has been called the largest student union theft in Canadian history.

The report reveals all of the cheques made out by the suspect to him or herself were co-signed by union president Rob Green.

Most of the money stolen from the union between June 1999 and September 2000 originally came from student fees. The suspect's name cannot be revealed due to an ongoing criminal investigation.

The fraud was discovered on October 4th, when Ahmad Mahboub, the student union's bookkeeper, looked over the previous month's bank

statement and found money missing that he could not account for. He then found five handwritten cheques addressed to the suspect during August, totaling \$26,406.87. No carbon copies of these had been given to him, as they should have been, the report noted.

Mahboub informed Green and the student union executives immediately. The suspect was suspended from working at the union on October 5th.

The forensic auditor's investigation later found 45 cheques Mahboub had not been made aware of - all issued to the suspect.

The report also reveals that Green signed blank cheques the suspect later used for his or her personal benefit.

"We were told by Mr. Green that he has no recollection of having signed these cheques made payable to [the suspect]," the report reads. But in fact, "all of the 52 cheques issued to the suspect were co-signed by Rob Green. After due examination, the latter acknowledges that it is his signature that appears on these cheques."

Green said that he had agreed to sign a number of blank cheques in

advance for the suspect, however, Green said the employee never seemed suspicious. While the suspect did lead a wealthy lifestyle, fellow student union employees believed the money came from a large family inheritance.

"I can also say the suspect had a very extravagant lifestyle," Green said. "Like a rented car, trips to the spa, expensive meals, expensive furniture."

Green said he holds himself responsible for continuing to trust the suspect.

"If there's any doubt in any student's mind, bring on the lie detector test. I'll bring them my bank statements and they can have a look and see that I'm a very poor individual," he said.

Student union council chairperson, Patrice Blais, said the fraud shows there were numerous faults in the checks and balances system at the student union. Between 75 and 100 cheques are signed every month at the student union, totaling between \$60,000 to \$65,000. The student union has made changes to prevent a similar situation in the future, Blais said.

The student union has turned the report over to the Montreal police fraud division for further investigation.

Student sues after nomination denied

Richard McKergow

The Varsity

TORONTO (CUP) - An outspoken student is suing the University of Toronto because the school's governing council recently rejected his nomination as a part-time undergraduate representative.

Chris Ramsaroop was the president of the university's student council from 1998 to 1999. He gained notoriety for speaking out on controversial issues such as rising tuition, the university's handling of the Kin Yip Chun case, and corporate donations to the university.

His application for judicial review will be heard on March 5th, when his lawyer will argue that the governing council's election guidelines should be declared invalid and his nomination accepted. His lawyer is also arguing that Ramsaroop should be given damages totaling \$25,000.

"Basically the chief returning officer's decision was invalid because the documents upon which she based her decision are inconsistent with the U of

T Act," said Vilko Zbogor, a U of T law graduate representing Ramsaroop.

The election guidelines state that candidates must be members of their program for the entire election period, beginning when the nominations open. Ramsaroop, however, was searching for financial assistance several days before that deadline. On January 26th, when the nominations closed, he enrolled and handed in his nomination form.

Zbogor says the election guidelines are not consistent with the U of T Act, which states that all students are entitled to run in an election. Because Ramsaroop has been a student at the university since 1993, Zbogor argues he should be able to run.

"He's enrolled in the program, and he's pursuing his degree," he said.

Ramsaroop says his case sets a precedent for thousands of U of T students who may want to run in an election but may face similar difficulties.

Louis Charpentier, secretary of the governing council, said she couldn't talk about the case because it is heading to court.



Mike Cormier / The Brunswickan
(L-R) Kate Whitfield, UNBSU VP (External), Charles Goguen, UNBSU President and Jeff Richardson, STUSU President presented objections to proposed changes to municipal by-laws which affect students living in apartments.

Trent students occupy office

Rose Spender & Alyssa Evefts

The Arthur

PETERBOROUGH, ON (CUP) - Eight Trent University students have occupied a vice-president's office demanding two of the university's colleges not be closed.

The women have occupied the office since 8:30 a.m. Monday, angry over the university's board of governors' approval in November 1999 of an application to SuperBuild, that didn't include a clause preventing the "sale, relocation or closing of any college."

In May 2000, Trent was awarded more than \$26 million under the SuperBuild program. The university's two downtown colleges have since been slated for closure.

Vice-president academic Graham Taylor was not in his Lady Eaton College office when the students showed up Monday. The students asked the two staff members who were in the office to leave, while the students formed a human barricade.

"Everyone asked them politely to go," says fifth-year Trent student Jamie Williams. Students helped the staff retrieve their coats and boots. "They were pretty upset but we've tried to accommodate them."

Students formed a human barrier outside the office, standing with arms linked, while a group of students inside the office constructed a sturdy barricade across the office's only door with desks and padlocked chains.

Trent student Jessica Grillanda says the office occupation comes after 18 months of attempted participation in university governance processes.

"The [board of governors] bears a responsibility for the action that is being taken now," she says.

"This is not particular to Graham [Taylor]," says graduate student Ali Sauer. "We are looking to negotiate before we leave."

The students have said they will occupy the office until their demands are heard.

They include a promise to keep the downtown colleges open; the creation of a committee to look at decision-making at Trent; a referendum on campus advertising; and the creation of

a policy on campus privatization.

They are also calling for the current administration to recognize its "culpability in the process leading up to these demands and grant legal and academic amnesty to all students in the current protest actions."

Nobody from Taylor's office would comment on the situation.

Trent President Bonnie Patterson paid the students a brief visit. One protestor addressed Patterson through the glass, saying, "When you're ready to negotiate you can come back and discuss it with us." Patterson said "Okay" and walked away.

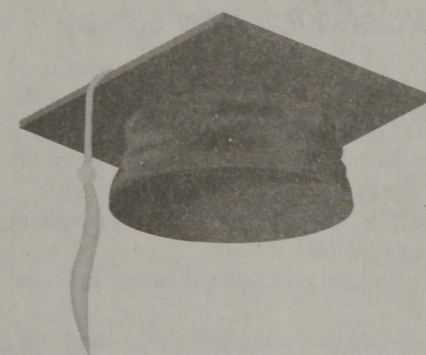
Local television coverage of the

occupation featured a statement from Patterson. "The board has made some decisions and we are proceeding to move forward," she told viewers. "This is a self-appointed group of students that obviously disagree with decisions that have been taken and they've chosen to protest in this way. But the demands as they've laid them out are not issues of negotiation, they are simply their perspective on issues."

Student association president Derrick McIntosh says the group of students who occupied the office "feels consistently ignored."

"Students have the right to express themselves," says McIntosh.

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Annual General Meeting - March 23, 2001 at 12:30pm



"Show up at the Bruns on Friday, March 23 for The Brunswickan's Annual General Meeting. I've been to one - it was fun. I got to meet Dexter and "The Puppet". Then the BAD thing happened and Dexter and "The Pupper" disappeared. Well, show up to the AGM. Or I'll come and find you."

-Sharkey

There will also be elections for all Editorial Board positions on March 23. Show up - it should be a nasty brawl. Room 35 of the SUB at 12:30pm sharp.