

Union Council report critical of Baker, LeBlanc

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Skinner stressed that because he was democratically elected by a majority of voting SU members, his nomination to the SUBS Inc. Board of Directors should not have been called into question.

"It should not matter what the SUBS Inc. Board of Directors thinks about my nomination," he said, "If the student body did not like my ideas, they had the option of not voting for me."

Ciana Chiasson, current President of the UNB Student Union, wonders why both Baker and LeBlanc sat on the information for a month without informing Council.

"The fact that this information was withheld is appalling. It's sickening. It makes you question everything that was done. It makes you wonder what else hasn't been found yet," said Chiasson.

LeBlanc said that it wasn't his responsibility to inform Council of a matter that concerned SUBS Inc. That responsibility would fall to then SUBS Inc. President Baker, said LeBlanc.

"It was not my conscious decision to keep the SU Council ignorant of SUBS Inc.'s position in

regards to the appointment of Mr. Skinner. Given the many other activities which I was conducting on behalf of the Union, this matter was largely forgotten about," said LeBlanc.

For his part, Baker said that, "in my mind duty as President of one organization trumps duty as Vice-President of another organization and there may have been decisions or courses of action taken by me that reflect this."

One of those courses of action may have been to actually write the letter for LeBlanc, in which the SU President nominated Lawson to the SUBS Inc. Board. An anonymous email sent to *The Brunswickan*, Ciana Chiasson, and Lyle Skinner, from "cellarletterproblems@hotmail.com" contained three documents and a graphic highlighting their significance. MacKenzie received a



Adam Baker

similar email, containing another document - a draft of Lawson's acceptance letter. He sent an email outlining the evidence to the entire SU Council late Monday night. It stated that all four documents, the March 16 letter from Baker to LeBlanc, the April 4 letter from LeBlanc to Baker, the April 16 letter from Baker to Skinner, and the draft acceptance letter, were created within 54 minutes of each other, at 9:57 p.m., 10:18 p.m., 10:42 p.m. and 10:53 p.m. on April 3, 2005.

Baker said that this apparent discrepancy arose when he burned the files onto a CD on April 3, because he planned to format his hard drive. He said that the date the files were created was the same for all three because that is when he created the CD.

Former SU Councilor Nick Ouellette checked to see if Baker's assertions held any merit. He found that the only way to alter when a document in Microsoft Word is created would be to save the document under a different name - burning it to a CD would not change when the files were made.

MacKenzie also verified Ouellette's test with his own set of trials - and found the same results.

"From the information provided to Council, I believe these documents were created on April 3 over a period spanning 54 minutes," said MacKenzie.

To add further confusion, LeBlanc can't find the original, electronic version of the letter on his computer - but that's not surprising since only the most important documents were kept, he said.

"I would love to think that it's all a big misunderstanding and that there's some piece of evidence out there that's going to clear all this up. I don't think it's out there," said Chiasson.

And it's not for a lack of trying. SU Chair MacKenzie developed a thorough research plan, reviewing documentation and surveying those directly involved.

But a number of former SU Executive members did not answer the survey.

The Report on R44 states that, "Answers were sought voluntarily, with Mr. Baker and Mr. Matheson [former SU VP Executive] indicating their choice not to respond."

According to MacKenzie, former VP Student Services Lynette Manderson forgot to send in a reply before the deadline.

"As a former director of the SUBS Inc. corporate entity I do not feel I am at liberty to discuss the internal functions or discussions of that board with anyone but those who were Members of the entity at the time any of the events in question took place," said Baker in an email to *The Brunswickan*.

He continued, "It is for this reason... that I felt unable to respond to Mr. MacKenzie's questions regarding the matter."

MacKenzie's Report on R44 was tasked with discovering if the events detailed above "constituted a breach of the Incorporating Act or by-laws of the Union, and if so whether the nomination of Mr. Nigel Lawson for membership on the SUBS Inc. Board of Directors is therefore invalid."

The report found that "On April 7th, the President did not report

to Council as required by By-Law No.1 s.35(i) that he had undertaken to nominate Mr. Lawson on behalf of the Union." It also stated that "On April 4th, the President failed to ensure adequate student representation in the decision making processes of the Union" (By-Law No.1 s.35 (g)) by unilaterally nominating Mr. Lawson as the Union's membership nominee to SUBS Inc."

The report also noted that Lawson's nomination was never discussed at either the Executive or Council meetings.

According to the report, the proper procedure would have been to form a Selection Committee that would make a recommendation to the Union regarding a nominee.

In his defense, LeBlanc stressed that the issue of Skinner's nomination was "not high on the priority list."

According to LeBlanc, his activities during the time period in question included overseeing the newly appointed SU General Manager, negotiating with the City of Fredericton for a universal bus pass, meeting with university administration regarding Student Opinion Surveys, and attending meetings of CASA, a national lobby group for students, and UNB's Board of Governors, the university's main oversight body.

"I am aware that I made mistakes last year, yet I am not ashamed of them. I am, after all, human; a student who worked very hard to make the Student Union a success... I believe that I did a good job given how little experience I had and the expectations of the students who voted for me. Dare I say that professional politicians, those who have the experience to know better, have made far bigger blunders than I," said LeBlanc.

"Those excuses just don't work. He should have told Council," said Skinner.

The report is clear that Baker and LeBlanc did not breach any Union by-law by not informing Council of the SUBS Inc. decision to reject Skinner's nomination.

However, the Report on R44 does state that Baker, in his capacity as both UNB SU VP Finance and SUBS Inc. President, "may have known or ought to have known that the nomination of Mr. Lawson's name was not offered under valid authority, thus bringing the nomination acceptance by SUBS

Inc. into question."

When asked if he knew that Lawson's nomination was in breach of UNB SU by-laws, Baker replied, "no."

He also said that, "Considering that this is all stemming from the simple oversight of a single by-law I would say that the amount of energy and emotion being directed to the oversight does seem somewhat excessive."

The report also calls into question the minutes kept by SUBS Inc. on March 15, 2005. It states that the minutes are not consistent with Baker's March 16 letter to LeBlanc; "The minutes from the day earlier do not indicate that the Board reached this decision [to not accept Mr. Skinner's nomination]."

Report on R44 is able to draw one definite conclusion: the nomination of Lawson was invalid. President Chiasson said that a, "Selections Committee has been tasked with re-nominating someone to Council to be nominated to SUBS Inc." She expects the process to begin this week.

In a letter read to Council last Wednesday, Chiasson encouraged members to "remain confident that the 2005-2006 executive is keeping you aware of their activities and ensuring due process is followed in appointing students to committees and other governing bodies. All students deserve a fair opportunity to become involved in their Union."

Skinner echoed her comments, saying that any "structural flaws in the Union shouldn't diminish Council's successes."

The Brunswickan would like to assure readers that Greg LeBlanc has no influence over the editorial content of the paper; he manages the business side of the company. The article's author, a long-time friend of LeBlanc's, strove to deliver a fair and accurate account of the events, without bias. LeBlanc received the same treatment as everyone else interviewed for this story.



Brandon MacKenzie



Greg LeBlanc

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