



April 16th, 2018

Letter re: Long-term Space Negotiations

To the SFSS Board of Directors,

In November 2017, the SFSS denied space in the SUB to all four independent student societies. SFPIRG, CJSF, and The Peak were all told that space might be available to them in the MBC, specifically in Forum Chambers, the Undergrounds, and The Peak's current offices. Embark was not offered any space. We understand that The Peak has agreed to remain in their current offices.

In response to the possibility of Forum Chambers or the Undergrounds as organizational space, SFPIRG listed five conditions that would need to be met in order for our organization to be able to accept either space. These were not arbitrary conditions, but very real needs that would have to be met in order for either space to even be considered. Briefly, these conditions were:

1. That the offered space be accessible.
2. That the offered space be adequate for a student society's operational needs. To clarify, it must be at least the size of the smallest organizational suite in the SUB, 820 square feet, and must include both office space and an open lounge / work space.
3. That any necessary renovations to SFSS-controlled space be paid for via the SFSS Funds that are already paid into by our shared members; these Funds are earmarked specifically for renovations to, and accessibility measures in, SFSS-controlled space.
4. That the only rent and operating costs charged for the offered space be the same as those charged by SFU to the SFSS for its own leased space.
5. That all three independent student societies currently under threat of displacement (including Embark, CJSF, and SFPIRG) receive long-term and sustainable homes on campus, either through the SFSS or SFU.

Hangué Kim, SFSS President, specifically said that the SFSS could not meet the last condition. He has asked SFPIRG to reconsider this condition.

SFPIRG remains committed to the principle that all of SFU's independent student societies need secure, long-term, sustainable homes on campus. As we have previously stated, we are not interested in seeing any of our fellow student societies rendered homeless. In the meeting between the SFSS and SFPIRG Boards of Directors on March 13th, 2018, Hangué Kim said of CJSF and Embark that "They're okay." The SFSS CEO has

given the same unreasonable sublease extension terms to CJSF as he has to SFPIRG, and it remains to be seen whether ongoing space negotiations with CJSF will result in adequate long-term space for the organization. Embark has always been and continues to be without any formal lease or agreement for the office space they have been given in-kind by the Faculty of Environment. The reality is that Embark could be displaced at any time, as they most recently grappled with in August 2017. No reasonable student could look at these circumstances and describe them as “okay.”

If the SFSS will not provide any space to Embark, and if CJSF does not receive adequate long-term space from the SFSS, then we ask the SFSS to meet this last condition by committing publicly and in writing to support these independent student societies in securing leased space from SFU. To do otherwise is to say that your fellow student societies do not deserve the same security and dignity that the SFSS is privy to.

We remain disappointed by the SFSS’s decision to exclude all of the independent student societies from the SUB, especially given that the SUB was designed to include all of our organizations and the project was pitched to students as being the solution to SFU’s lack of student space. The SFSS has now created an artificial space shortage, exacerbating the campus space problem, and has left the independent student societies in precarious situations.

We also understand that two other student organizations who currently receive permanent space from the SFSS are now also facing displacement: the First Nations Student Association and Students of Caribbean and African Ancestry. As a constituency group of the SFSS, exactly like Out On Campus and the Women’s Centre, the FNSA was always supposed to receive an organizational suite in the SUB. As an equity-seeking group that has been provided space by the SFSS since the late 1990’s, SOCA must also continue to receive permanent space from the SFSS. We are absolutely stunned to learn that both of these groups are now also under threat of displacement.

As we have stated before, we fully recognize the importance of space for clubs and student unions – we regularly have several areas of our centre booked by different kinds of student groups, and we would love to see spaces like the Undergrounds transformed into useful, accessible, bookable student space. We were very pleased to see that the new SUB was designed to have lots of space for clubs and student unions, including bookable event and meeting space, work space, storage space, and more. But it was also designed to house the longstanding organizations that serve students here on campus.

We believe that student dollars would be better spent utilizing event spaces like Forum Chambers and the Undergrounds as bookable space for clubs and SUs, rather than spending what will likely be an exorbitant amount on retrofitting them entirely into organizational suites. We implore the SFSS Board of Directors to really engage with this question, and to choose to use its new organizational suites in the SUB to house organizations, and to continue utilizing its existing and new event spaces as bookable student space for clubs and SUs.

We hope that the SFSS will make decisions with the best interests of students at heart, and that the SFSS will meaningfully proceed with negotiating in good faith with student groups about space allocations. As fellow student leaders, we ask you:

1. If the SFSS will not provide space to the independent student societies, please publicly commit to supporting all of them in securing leased space from SFU.
2. Please reconsider the allocation of the organizational suites in the SUB.

Under threat of displacement,

The SFPIRG Board of Directors