

Dear SFUFA Members:

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**Holiday Message from President Kumari Beck:**

As we approach the end of another year, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for the work you do to support students, to serve higher education, to advance public knowledge, and to help to govern the university. Faculty work is unending, as you all know too well, and this past year, as we have continued to deal with the challenges of the pandemic while returning to face to face work, SFUFA members have gone above and beyond.

I hope that all of you can find some time in these next weeks to rest, to be with loved ones, and to celebrate however you choose to do so. We are grateful to have your confidence and support in all the work we do, and have felt this particularly strongly as our work in the Association has become more challenging. To our Executive team and volunteers, thank you for the tremendous work you do. A special word of thanks to our staff: Brian Green, Jennifer Scott, Melanie Lam. They are the ones who represent you, advise you, and keep this Association running.

And to all of you, our colleagues, I wish you a very happy holiday season and all the very best for 2023.

**Human Rights Office and Bullying and Harassment Office:**

As reported in the last bulletin, SFU has moved authority for its policies on Human Rights (GP 18) and Bullying and Harassment (GP 47) to the VP, People, Equity, Inclusion portfolio. This move raises serious concerns for the Association, as it does for SFU's other employee organizations.

The key points SFUFA is concerned about are:

1. The process for consideration of these moves – including consultation and Senate approval - was not followed;
2. All of SFU's employee organizations have consistently opposed this restructuring;
3. In our investigations we have learned that the University has ignored the advice of its own human rights experts, cut them out of decision-making processes, and even tried to silence their objections. Two of these leaders have since left the University;

4. Prior to this the offices were arms-length. We are calling for that to be restored immediately.

More detailed information follows.

There are a number of detailed reasons SFUFA and other employee groups are opposed to such a move, but the short version is as follows:

- Both GP 18 and GP 47 deal with protection of members of the university community from behaviours that are legally prohibited;
- Til now, both offices have been arms-length from Human Resources, which oversees the managerial and disciplinary functions of the University, and has direct responsibility for defending managers and senior administrators from complaints;
- Merging authority for Human Resources with the authority for protection of Human Rights and prevention of Bullying and Harassment reduces the independence and perceived independence of the two offices, which has serious implications for both access of community members and overall trust in the University.

We have heard from administration that the centralizing of processes was a management decision to improve service, and did not require consultation with the community. However, this not a simple editorial change: the change of Policy Authority requires consultation and Senate approval. Following SFUFA's intervention, SFU finally acknowledged that its own procedures had not been followed, and initiated a 'consultation process' of two weeks; extended to some 4 weeks, over the winter break. Dan Laitsch, a faculty senator, has produced a background document outlining the procedural concerns in more detail. That document is available [here](#).

Process, however, is only a part of the problem. The substance of the decision itself remains the key flaw. We have come to learn that three important advisors all recommended against the move of the HRO, and for many of the same reasons we have done so.

- The former General Counsel and Secretary directly advised the President, several times, that she had serious concerns about the move, citing in particular the impact on the independence of the office. She left the University shortly after.
- The Human Rights Officer has also resigned, writing in her resignation letter (which we accessed through a freedom of information request):  
I wish to express that I have had concerns regarding the restructuring from the very beginning, when the decision was first communicated to me at the end of July 2022. I value inclusivity, and to me, part of inclusivity means allowing individuals to have a voice in the decisions that directly impact them. I previously expressed my disappointment at not being consulted prior to the restructuring decision being made and at the lack of transparency throughout the restructuring process...  
I continue to have the same concerns that I raised in July and August 2022, and in the months since, my concerns regarding the restructuring, the proposed changes

to GP 47 and its operationalization (...), the arrivals and departures of certain employees, and the leadership at this institution have only grown.

... Of note, [name redacted] request on Monday that I stay silent about my resignation, until the University allows me to speak, is antithetical to the values and principles that have guided my work, and it illustrates the key concern regarding the Human Rights Office's independence. I hope that the University will do more, and do better, for the many outstanding people at this institution.

The complete letter can be found [here](#).

- The Chair of the University's Human Rights Policy Board has also raised similar concerns, writing to the VP, PEI (in a letter shared with us but which is not fully public):

First, regarding the process by which this decision appears to have been made, transparency and inclusion are precisely the principles on which the HRPB is founded. We exist to allow SFU community members opportunities to share concerns and experiences, as well as expertise, about the implementation of GP 18 both to the VP People, Equity, and Inclusion (as of this re-structuring), as well as to the Director of Human Rights. And yet, we, like Kristen [Human Rights Officer] in her Directorship role, were not provided with an opportunity to provide community feedback nor advice regarding the move of the HRO. We were simply told of the move.

...

A second but equally as concerning an issue is the potential erosion of independence of the HRO with a move to the VP People, Equity, and Inclusion. The recent revisions to GP18 took place over approximately 18 months of consultation. One of the key concerns that the HRPB raised over and over with the University Secretariat and the policy development team was about the need for the HRO to maintain its independence from SFU administration.

While one might understand (while disagreeing with) the administrative logic in centralizing certain processes, the University's behaviour with respect to these policies elevates them to an issue of more serious community concern.

- The offices and their budgets were moved prior to any required process and prior to approval by the Board of Governors. No consultation occurred prior to the centralization of these offices;
- All employee organizations have actively opposed the moves, not only due to the bypassing of procedure, but also due to substantive harms the moves may cause for our members, and the impact on community trust and confidence in SFU's commitment to procedural fairness;
- 3 key senior administrative advisors (two of whom have since left the University) also advised against the changes: the former General Counsel and Secretary, the Human Rights Officer, and the Chair of the Human Rights Policy Board. The last two, who hold direct responsibility for human rights policy at SFU, indicate they were not even consulted, but informed, after the fact, that the decision had been made.

The two policies in question are currently out for community consultation. But the decisions regarding GP 18 and GP 47 do not appear to be grounded in expertise or good practice, and the process by which the changes were imposed is deeply problematic. Given the opposition of all employee groups and the fact that three key administrative advisors (two of whom have since left SFU) all spoke against the proposed changes, the changes should never have come forward, and should be simply be reversed immediately. But if members wish to engage and offer their feedback, the following excerpt from SFU's official announcement indicates the process:

Please provide your input on the proposed revisions to the **Policy Authority** for SFU's Human Rights Policy (GP 18) and Bullying & Harassment Policy (GP 47), which may be found at <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/draft.html>, **before January 9, 2023 to [polasst@sfu.ca](mailto:polasst@sfu.ca)**.

SFUFA will work with other employee organizations to submit a statement on our opposition through the formal process; we have also written directly to President Joy Johnson outlining our concerns with the lack of transparency on this and other matters, and have indicated that our trust in this administration has been seriously eroded.

### **Collective Bargaining:**

SFUFA and SFU commenced collective bargaining on November 22nd, with a second meeting on November 23rd. Our initial conversations at the table have been relatively open and productive, but while we have now provided one another with the bulk of our proposals, we have yet to have substantive discussion on our key priorities.

SFUFA has proposed language to address all of the priorities identified by members, and more. The priorities in our mandate are:

1. Salaries and inflation
2. Workload
3. Benefits, and mental health benefits in particular
4. Teaching Faculty
5. Governance and collegiality

The University has presented a package including a number of minor and housekeeping issues that we believe we can address. They have, however, also brought forward proposals that cause us greater concern, including reductions in certain benefits and increased managerial oversight of members. We are still reviewing the specifics in order to fully understand each proposal, so will not provide any details at this stage.

It is normal to see both sides introduce proposals that will not be acceptable to the other, and we have found in the first conversations that both parties are relatively open to hearing the concerns of the other and establishing a bargaining table relationship that is collegial and productive, whatever the differences between us. We are committed to continuing on a collegial and productive track while also protecting the rights of faculty

members. Further bargaining dates are planned for late December and the first months of 2023, and additional updates will be provided as we progress.

### **Alternate Contacts:**

Finally, a reminder that SFUFA is collecting alternate contact info – email or phone numbers – for members. Given some of the issues we have faced with periodic unstable University communications, we are hoping to maintain alternate ways of reaching you in the event that SFU’s systems are not available and we need to communicate with members. Emails and/ or phone numbers provided will not be used for regular business, but would only be relied upon in the event that SFU’s systems are not functioning securely. To provide us with an alternate means of reaching you, please contact Executive Director Brian Green at [bsgreen@sfu.ca](mailto:bsgreen@sfu.ca)

### **CAUT Survey:**

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) has launched a **State of the Post-Secondary Academic Profession Survey**. The survey will build longitudinal information about issues facing faculty at Canadian universities and colleges, and help will CAUT and its member associations in our work.

All SFUFA members are welcome to participate in the survey,, which can be found [here](#).

The survey will be open until January 16, 2023.

Any questions should be directed to CAUT Research Officer Caroline Lachance at [lachance@caut.ca](mailto:lachance@caut.ca).