

16 April 2008

Dear Professors and course instructors,

After more than a week of misinformation and pressure tactics by the upper administration, AGSEM would like to speak to you directly and correct the rumours spreading around campus. The administration's behaviour leading up to and during our strike has strained relationships between faculty and their students, instructors and TAs, friends and colleagues. They have intentionally created a culture of fear and intimidation that has no place in a university community.

**AGSEM has not issued a single statement threatening to sue professors.** In their *TA Strike FAQ for Instructors*, the administration suggested that legal action would be taken against professors individually. The Provost's Office responded to its own question by saying, "The University will defend any instructor facing an action taken by the Union for carrying out these duties, including bearing the costs." It seems that they suspected all along that they were forcing professors and course supervisors to engage in legally-questionable behaviour. AGSEM's statements, on the other hand, have been informational and the only actions we have taken have been to investigate the situation on campus. **We have no intention of targeting individual professors. Any legal action taken will be against the university and this administration that has shamefully intimidated and targeted its own faculty members.**

**The university has known from the very beginning that intimidating professors to complete our work contravenes our legal right to strike.** Why else would they take such an active effort *before* the strike to change pre-existing course and exam arrangements? Why else would they take such extraordinary measures to shut down all lines of communication about the issues at stake here? The administration would rather pay mountains of legal fees after-the-fact than negotiate a fair settlement that would benefit TAs, students, and the quality of education offered at our institution.

The university's "firm position" is that professors should continue doing the work of TAs. On Friday, an AGSEM representative and an investigator from the Ministry of Labour met with Line Thibault, the University's General Counsel, to discuss this position. They also inspected a science laboratory that would normally be supervised by teaching assistants. His report has been issued and the Union will now proceed with its case against the university for forcing this professor to complete our work.

We will come back to work—and be happy to help with marking—when the university decides to offer us a fair collective agreement. When we do, we will be working with the faculty and students, not the administration. The principal, provost and their legal advisors have nothing to lose by alienating us from one another. Yet we know all too well that when this is over, it will be us who will continue to work together in the classroom, in the laboratory, and in our day-to-day life as a university community.

Many of you have already spoken to our members and voiced your support. You have the heartfelt thanks of all of our 2,000 members. We have attached an overview and explanation of our demands, as well as some questions that have come forth from individual faculty members. As we have said, we know that you have been pressured, threatened and intimidated. We are providing this information so you can make a more informed decision than the one the administration is imposing on you.

In Solidarity,

The Association of Graduate Students  
Employed at McGill (AGSEM)