

PSAC 901

Dear Patrick Deane,

It may have been difficult for you to hear what Queen's Graduate Student Workers had to say to you on February 7th from behind the closed doors of your office. The decision to lock down Richardson Hall entirely, though impressively quick, probably didn't help. We trust that you received the #RamenReasons messages that security promised to bring to you and that you have had time to read them. We hope that you demonstrate the same prompt initiative you took at our visiting to respond to the poverty of graduate student workers living under your watch.

In reading those messages you will have learned that you have succeeded in creating a learning environment where graduate student workers **cannot afford any more thesis revisions because they can't afford rent**. Others have a tough choice to make about whether they **want to eat or visit parents or go to a conference**. The choice between food and education is not an obvious one, yet it's a stark reality for your graduate student workers who have had **to check my bank account balance every time I buy groceries**. Graduate student workers report that they are going into debt well beyond student loans: **the only reason I can buy groceries is because of credit: I have 11,000 dollars of credit card debt from the last 2 years of my PhD to make ends meet. I have no idea how I will pay this back**. The immensity of the financial stress experienced in grad school deprives the academia of those who cannot endure life in poverty: **Financial stress was a major factor in my decision to leave academia after my PhD**. Others are forced to find other sources of income which takes time away from their academic work: **If we have to take part time jobs to afford food, it negatively impacts our research and If I didn't supplement my income with sex work, I would be eating Ramen everyday**. It's truly shameful that instead of research we spend prestigious academic scholarships on paying tuition: **My SSHRC went to rent\tuition, not research!** And so, we ask, **Patrick, stop lobbying against us! Support Students! Stop the tips work! Stop the empty promises!** Remember, **Education is our right!**

Further, our families are put through more stress and financial hardship to help us! So many of us **wouldn't be able to afford grad school without parents' financial support**. One member **had to borrow \$2000 from their grandma to get by this year** we believe **Students should not rely on donations to survive!** And it's not just the other adults in our families that are affected by our dire financial situation - **I want to be more independent from my parents so they can help my younger siblings, but with the rent and inflation, this has been a very difficult task**. The constant stress of being told that we **have to accept poverty or be privileged to be highly educated** is why **when younger family members ask about grad studies, I have to give so many financial caveats. It is discouraging to future talent**.

It's also worth reminding you that **Queen's doesn't work unless we work**, even more, **Queen's is NOTHING without grad students. We run this school. Respect us! You need our labor!!!** So, Patrick, **Thanks for NOTHING. You speak of ending poverty. Actions speak louder than words. Why not lobby for better funding instead of raising tuition? How would Queen's feel if it became well known that many of their students who are also contract workers were hungry?**

You have united us in our financial precarity, but you can be sure of this, **we fought for our education rights in Quebec in 2012 and we won. We can do it again!** You can expect to continue to hear from us until there are no graduate student workers at Queen's living below the poverty line.

Sincerely,

Queen's Graduate Student Workers