

September 23, 2024

Dear 901 Members,

We are writing regarding the proposal to eliminate Queen's Graduate Awards for all incoming Master's Level Researchers. We are calling on all graduate students and community members to support calls for a walkout protest this Friday. We are calling on members of the Senior Leadership Team to resign in light of this proposal and a history of wrong-headed, discriminatory decisions.

[In a written statement shared Friday with all graduate students, SGPS President Emils Matiss went public with information learned in the course of SGPS' advocacy work.](#) With SGPS's statement, Matiss informed members that: **"On Tuesday, September 17th, 2024, the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) approved a series of cost-cutting and fundraising measures."** He shared that, as part of those measures, "the centrally funded Queen's Graduate Award (QGA), which currently provides an average of \$4,100 per student toward research master's stipends, is set to be eliminated for new master's students beginning in Fall 2025."

Once again, Queen's upper administration finds itself in the midst of a closed-door scandal that will have profound effects on this community for years to come. In what's become a theme for Principal Patrick Deane and his team, once again, those who will be most hurt by their decisions are among the university's most vulnerable members – this time new Masters students who had hope to attend Queen's University.

Matiss let the community know that during consultations with the Principal and Provost, SGPS "asked what evidence might be needed to reconsider this proposal." They were apparently told by Deane and Evans that "One area that has not yet been fully analyzed is the impact on diversity and equity." Apparently the pair of top administrators had not considered that cutting funding for those who are most in need of financial support could have an impact on diversity and equity.

As Matiss notes, "It seems clear ... that this cut would disproportionately affect those students who already face financial challenges, including first-generation graduate students and those from equity-deserving groups." The reason this seems clear is because it is clear. Despite the condescending way in which Deane, Evans, and other upper level administrators communicate budget decisions to faculty, staff, and students, this is a university, not a kindergarten classroom – we all know the disproportionate level of need in equity-deserving groups. We all already know who these cuts will most affect, just as Emils does, just as Deane and Evans do.

The Senior Leadership Team's challenge to SGPS – to empirically prove that their proposed policy is discriminatory when it so clearly is – echoes a familiar retort of bully's and bigots the world over when called out on unjust actions: "Oh yeah? Well, prove it."

For some, this unmistakably wrong-headed policy decision and inappropriate challenge may come as a shock, but for those of us who have fought against this university at bargaining tables, in boardrooms and grievance meetings – those of us who have pushed administrators for more protection on issues of discrimination and harassment, health and safety, assault and violence in the workplace – [this response is par for the course](#). For all it's good, Queen's University has a [horrific history of racism and discrimination](#) which unfortunately [continues to affect community members' experiences](#) and [shape the institutional decision making](#). Just last year, for example, we saw [the elimination of the International Queen's Graduate Student Tuition Award](#). PSAC 901 has been made aware that this loss in particular has caused several departments to stop accepting international graduate students altogether. Giving up on attracting promising young international scholars is unfortunately an inevitable, shortsighted and discriminatory reaction to a short-sighted and discriminatory mandate that, like this decision to cut Masters funding, came from the top.

A budget is not a set of facts. It is an aspirational document, a series of political decisions that reflect an institution's values; where, how, and when it chooses to spend its money reveals more than any statement can. Time and again, the leadership of this university has laid its values on the table: it has [chosen to leave millions of dollars of available money in Pooled Investment Funds](#); it has chosen to [remain invested in fossil fuels, war machines, and genocide](#); it has chosen to do these things while refusing to invest responsibly and reasonably [in the community we call home and in the workers who run this institution](#). It has chosen to allow [upper level administrators to live lavish, luxury lifestyles](#) while [postdocs are still without healthcare](#), [graduate workers rely on foodbanks](#), staff are overworked, underpaid, and under constant threat of [the next round of unnecessary and administratively devastating layoffs](#).

The decision to cut financial support to all future Masters students, whether purposefully or inadvertently, will further cement inequitable demographics in an institution with a long and storied history of racism and discrimination. The proposed policy will ensure that the only people who are able to receive a Master's degree from Queen's University going forward are those who have the means of securing private funding, those who win the tri-council crapshoot, and those who are privileged enough to be able to pay for an entire year or more of graduate school already. Those who will be harmed by this policy are working class people who had hoped to begin their academic careers at Queen's University. Full stop.

We applaud our colleagues at SGPS for reaching out to the PSAC 901 Executive to find solutions as a united front of elected representatives for Graduate Student Workers and Postdoctoral Fellows. We welcome the commitment to collaborate with other on campus groups and unions, and to calling out this administration for its harmful, discriminatory decision-making, which has once again gone too far.

We are heartened to hear that behind closed doors many have opposed this idiotic and harmful proposal and that there are those who are increasingly pushing against the Senior Leadership Team at every level. We stand in solidarity with all those who stand in solidarity with our members and we will not take lightly any attempt to silence or punish those who stand up for what is right. But we ask, who else is ready to speak out publicly and stand with the community and the growing solidarity movement on campus? We call on all on campus and community groups to join us.

This is a university, not a corporation. This is meant to be a bastion for knowledge and pursuits of truth, yet, we are left to sort through lies and subterfuge at every turn to determine what might and might not be real. Queen's University is not a sinking ship, it is a ship that is actively being sunk by the wealthy bureaucrats at its helm – folks who are so out of touch with the needs of this community that they cannot see past the price tags on the pitchforks that are prodding them off the plank.

Last Friday, our colleagues at SGPS took a principled stance against an administration that has been actively dismantling the university as we know it over the past year. Today, we call on the community to demand a new and equitable path forward.

[Before we finish, we would like to share Queen's stated values, as outlined on the Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor's website.](#) We call on our community to reflect on these values, and to reflect on the ways that the Senior Leadership Team has abandoned each and every one of them. We call on our members, colleagues, and friends to reflect on what a university should be, and what this one has become under the leadership of Patrick Deane and his team.

There is a clear need for those who have led this historic institution to the disastrous position it finds itself in to finally step aside. We have seen the impact this administration has had on our community to date, and we can see that the pattern will only continue if drastic measures are not taken.

We call on the thousands of students in our community to join those who are walking out in protest of these cuts on Friday. We call on those who are truly invested in this university – the students, the faculty, the workers, the alumni, and the public – to take it back from those who are poised to destroy it. We call on those who are poised to destroy it to step aside.

We call on Matthew Evans to resign.

We call on Patrick Deane to resign.

We call on Donna Janiec to resign.

In Solidarity,
PSAC 901