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Subject: OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT GILLES PATRY: Campus arrests

Date: Sat, 12 Jan 2008 22:56:24 -0500

From: Denis Rancourt

To: Gilles Patry

OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT GILLES PATRY,
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

RE: Executive-ordered campus arrests of community members

Dear President Gilles Patry,

Recently the executive that you head has ordered the arrests of three community members on the campus. VP-Academic Robert Major and you both publicly confirmed this at the university town hall event of December 11, 2007.

The community members were barred by use of the Trespass to Property Act because they opposed the Dean of Science's repeated violations of Faculty of Science bylaws in chairing Faculty Council meetings, even though this was done peacefully and non-obstructively.

The University is a public institution and it cannot invoke the Trespass to Property Act to bar community members from its public venues, especially venues such as Town Hall, Council and Senate meetings and public meeting areas such as the University Centre that invite public participation, in line with its Vision 2010 mission statement.

Anti-poverty activist and former Ottawa mayoral candidate Jane Scharf and independent film-maker/journalist Karen Dawe were brutally arrested in front of Gendron Hall on December 6, 2007, in order to prevent them from attending a Science Faculty Council meeting that many community members have routinely attended in the recent past.

Mr. Bob Nye, an elderly gentleman in a wheel chair and a regular participant to campus events, was arrested at the student-organized Ecofair in the University Centre on December 8, 2007, while he was hosting the Sierra Club information table as a Sierra Club member and volunteer.

These arrests were reported in the national news web service rabble.ca:
http://www.rabble.ca/in_his_own_words.shtml?x=65482

The arrests of Jane Scharf and Karen Dawe involved both unnecessary use of force by a security guard and unnecessary police force, as these women offered absolutely no resistance. There were several witnesses, including myself, and much of the incident is recorded on film. Handcuffs were used causing cuts, bruising and swelling (to Jane

Scharf) that I and others have witnessed. Karen Dawe was taken in a separate car and reports abusive and demeaning verbal intimidation by police.

A student was threatened and escorted off campus simply for wanting to film the arrests.

Jane Scharf was arrested a second time on December 11, 2007, in order to prevent her from attending the university town hall meeting of that day, as my guest. During this arrest, a University of Ottawa security guard used force against her. Indeed, a police officer who was at the scene has started a police investigation concerning that use of force. Other community members were allowed and encouraged to attend the town hall meeting.

Both Jane Scharf and Bob Nye are to appear in court this month in relation to these events.

All of this constitutes abuse of power, in my opinion, since the premise used was unjustified seven-month-old trespass notices that cited attendance at a May 2007 Science Faculty Council meeting.

Under normal trespass procedures, if the person does not want to leave and does not offer resistance to police, a trespass ticket is issued and the person is escorted off the premises. The person can then contest the ticket in court.

The three trespass notices were presumably ordered by your executive. These constitute blanket and permanent orders of expulsion from campus that have not been justified or explained, that do not differentiate between different campus events, and that are politically motivated. They are intended to suppress community member participation in university collegial, democratic, and governance processes. Such suppression is in exact contradiction of the Vision 2010 mandate.

All three arrested community members have attended Science Faculty Council meetings in support of a motion to have a second-year science and society "activism course" created, that would follow the existing first-year course SCI 1101.

The dean of the Faculty of Science, André Lalonde, has repeatedly violated Faculty bylaws to block this agenda item and has cancelled the last four (4) Faculty Council meetings to prevent transparency and public participation at these meetings, again in contradiction to the Vision 2010 mandate.

I have reported the Faculty Council meeting cancellations and their circumstances here:

<http://uofowatch.blogspot.com/2007/12/u-of-o-limits-access-and-arrests.html>

The actions of your executive surrounding these arrests constitute serious affronts to the mission and purpose of the university in a free society.

I ask that you repeal the trespass notices immediately. These notices are unjustified and disproportionate measures and constitute unjust

treatment of community members that are integral participants in campus life.

For example, Mr. Bob Nye is distraught that he will not be able to attend the Ottawa Cinema Politica series that started on January 11th, that he has followed for the last two years.

I ask that your administration commit to not using such forceful methods as a means to suppress political expression regarding campus governance. Dialogue is better.

Sincerely,

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<http://www.science.uottawa.ca/~dgr/>

Vision 2010:
<http://web5.uottawa.ca/vision2010/home.html>