

Vancouver & District Labour Council



Professor Andrew Petter
President
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

Dear Professor Petter,

RE: Research is Work

I am writing on behalf of the Vancouver and District Labour Council, a regional labour central representing nearly 100 affiliated local unions and 60,000 unionized workers in the Vancouver area.

The VDLC stands in solidarity with Research Assistants (RAs) in their efforts towards unionizing at Simon Fraser University (SFU). It is our conviction that all RAs at SFU are employees of the University, and that all employees have the right to unionize and bargain for a collective agreement.

We support the efforts of Research Assistants at SFU in unionizing with the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU). We call on the University administration to recognize and in no way impinge upon the hundreds of RA's asserting their right to organize with a labour union.

Against the backdrop of a regional housing crisis and rising costs of living, it is an injustice that student workers at SFU, a publicly-funded and publicly-engaged institution, should face the level of insecurity and precariousness experienced by Research Assistants across all of the University's faculties and departments.

Meanwhile, SFU boasts that it "ranks among Canada's top universities in research impact." In 2018 alone, the university reported \$142,600,000 in research income. Despite the substantial value and prestige RA's produce for SFU, they are not granted the basic employment rights and protections of other workers at the University. Given their lack of a collectively bargained contract, RAs at SFU regularly report an inability to plan their lives financially due to inconsistent pay schedules, irregular employment, and unclear expectations of work. Only by unionizing can SFU's RAs win what they deserve: fairness in pay, dignity in the workplace, and respect from the University.

This organizing effort of SFU's RAs is part of an international movement of graduate employee unionizing their workplaces. This is a hopeful moment for the labour movement, signaling a dramatic challenge to a worldwide assault on funding for higher education that has characterized the last two decades. In addition to expressing our solidarity with SFU's RAs, we stand in support of this bold movement.

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SFU, we call on you to recognize all RAs as employees of the University, to voluntarily recognize the TSSU as their bargaining agent, and to speedily and fairly bargain a collective agreement with them.
Research is work!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen von Sychowski', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen von Sychowski
President, VDLC

CC: VDLC Executive Board, TSSU (researchiswork@tssu.ca)