

# McMaster University newspaper editor 'terminated without cause'

STEPHANIE SMITH  
*Excalibur*

TORONTO (CUP)—The editor-in-chief of McMaster University's largest student paper says he was fired "without cause" by the Students Union.

Chris Jaic of the *Silhouette*, McMaster's undergraduate student newspaper, wasn't given a reason for his removal from his position by representatives from the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors.

The MSU is the publisher of the *Silhouette*, though the paper's independence in terms of editorial content is guaranteed in the Students Union's policies.

On 3 November, Jaic followed MSU executives into an empty boardroom in the McMaster Student Centre.

Jaic said he entered the meeting light-heartedly, believing that the MSU reps were simply going to discuss a concern regarding fashion-related content that had upset the nursing community.

The real purpose of the meeting, however, was to dismiss him from his post at the *Silhouette*.

John McGowan, MSU business manager, said that Jaic's dismissal wasn't an editorial issue.

"It was strictly a personnel issue," he said. "It's our policy not to discuss human resources matters publicly."

Jaic's letter of dismissal stated, "You have been terminated without cause from your position as *Silhouette* executive editor with the McMaster Students Union."

"I am not aware of any reason why I should be terminated, and I was not informed of any situation that would lead to my termination," Jaic said.

Jaic alleges his termination was related to recent news coverage investigating improprieties regarding an MSU activity.

The MSU wasn't available for comment on this matter at the time of publication.

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**CHRIS JAIC,  
FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
THE SILHOUETTE**

Questions about the process that led to Jaic's dismissal have also arisen.

The policy on dismissals says "any paid staff member may be dismissed from the *Silhouette* by two-thirds majority vote of the *Silhouette* board of publication. This decision shall be subject to ratification by the MSU executive board." The board of publication includes three *Silhouette* editors, three Students Union members, the Students Union business manager, and the manager of the Students Union's ad and copy centre.

However the decision to terminate Jaic didn't go through the publication board.

But according to Jaic's hiring letter, the board of publication has the ability to terminate the editor for reasons including improper conduct, insubordination, disobedience and neglect of duty.

Jaic said his contract also stated "the Board of Directors may also terminate your employment, otherwise than for just cause, provided that notice or payment in lieu thereof be provided to you and shall be inclusive to any payments required" by Ontario's Employment Standards Act of 1990.

Jaic confirmed that he was given a severance package.

He has met with members of the Student Representative Assembly, a body that is superior to the MSU, which will make a decision as to whether policy was followed.

The *Silhouette's* editorial board said that the manner in which Jaic was terminated leaves them uncertain about their working relationship with the MSU Board of Directors.

The 17 editorial board members are putting forward a motion to reinstate Jaic.

The most recent high-profile termination of an editor of a Canadian university newspaper occurred last year in Saskatoon. Editor-in-chief Will Robins of the *Sheaf* newspaper at the University of Saskatchewan was encouraged to resign by fellow staff members after a controversial comic was published.

# Student sues over residence rent increase

MARK IHNATOWYCZ  
*The McGill Daily*

MONTRÉAL (CUP)—Residences at McGill have received a court notice for withdrawing money from a student's bank account to cover a rent increase she claims she didn't agree to pay.

Elena Allen-Lukawieki, a first-year student at McGill University in Montréal, filed a civil lawsuit 13 November with the Régie du Logement, Québec's lease tribunal. She's demanding that McGill Residences pay back the extra \$26.50 it has withdrawn from her account in each of the past three months to cover a higher rent than stipulated by her original lease.

Within two weeks of moving into Solin Hall this September, Allen-Lukawieki received a new lease in the mail informing her that her rent had increased because she had been assigned one of the residence's larger rooms, where rent is \$682. Room assignment is random, but students not able to afford the higher rent may ask McGill Residences to move them to a smaller room.

"They withdrew money without consent according to a lease I didn't sign," Allen-Lukawieki said.

The lease that Allen-Lukawieki did sign includes a supplementary clause stating that the minimal \$656-per-month rent is subject to change based on room size, but she never signed the second lease that McGill sent her when it informed her of the rent increase.

Instead, she approached McGill Residences to challenge the subsequent withdrawal from her account. According to Allen-Lukawieki, McGill Residences said that the increase is a standard one for all residences and has



KRYSTINA SULATYCKI

**RISING RATES** Rent increases have one McGill student pursuing legal avenues.

never before been contested.

But Allen-Lukawieki said it isn't the money driving her to go to court, but the chance to challenge McGill's policies.

"It's not really about the compensation. It's a precedent to be set; whether or not McGill's policies are legal is in question," she said. "How the Régie rules may change McGill's leasing policies to the benefit of students."

According to Régie spokesman Jean-Pierre LeBlanc, agreed-upon supplementary clauses in a lease are, in general, legally binding.

"On general leases, a landlord cannot increase rent. A previously signed supplementary clause, however, is akin to a verbal agreement; even if a new lease is not signed, the agreed-to contract can be put in place," he said, although he wouldn't comment on the specifics of the case.

LeBlanc added that, in most cases, the landlord is obligated to withdraw rent directly from the tenant unless the lease specifically states that rent will come from other sources.

Allen-Lukawieki, who has since moved into a smaller room with lower rent, said that she's also concerned with the rising rents at McGill housing units over the past three years. According to her research, rent at Solin has increased by \$56 per year.

Allen-Lukawieki also said she will bring up the rising rents in residences during a public meeting with McGill principal Heather Monroe-Blum on 22 November.

At the time of print, McGill Residences and Student Housing director Florence Tracy was unavailable for comment while other representatives of McGill Residences declined to comment.

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