



Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
John Deutsch University Centre, Room 021  
Queen's University  
Kingston, Ontario  
Canada K7L 3N6  
613-533-2924  
www.sgps.ca

## Briefing on the Proposed JDUC Renovation

Prepared for the November 1<sup>st</sup> Special Meeting of SGPS Council

---

### Overview

At the October meeting of the Queen's Board of Trustees, the Alma Mater Society (AMS) formally called for a large-scale redevelopment of the John Deutsch University Centre (JDUC). The AMS proposed that students would contribute half the costs if the university agreed to cover the other half. These costs would, in some form, also be offset by the support of donors to the project. In the proposed model, the student portion would be collected through a long-term student fee. The SGPS must now decide what role, if any, it should play in the redevelopment. Given the magnitude of this decision, the SGPS Executive is seeking the guidance of Council to help determine the best path forward for the Society and its members.

### History

In 2002-2003, the AMS and the SGPS began discussions with the University for a major athletics, recreation and life space project. These discussions led to the Queen's Centre, which was envisioned to be a three-phase renovation and construction project. However, the project went significantly over budget and nothing beyond the first phase (now the Athletics and Recreation Centre) was completed. The Queen's Centre was being funded, in part, through a long-term student fee. However, in 2012, the AMS Executive declared the fee ineligible since the Queen's Centre project was put on hold indefinitely. The failure to complete the Queen's Centre ultimately left the AMS with \$1.2 million to be put towards JDUC renovations (this money was negotiated for in 2011 and represents collected student fees that were not used). Recently, the residual of the \$1.2 million was used to develop a long-term vision and plan for the JDUC. Now, a feasibility study and Class D estimates have been completed, and the redevelopment hangs in the balance. It is important to note that a lasting consequence of the Queen's Centre failure is a distrust among the University administration of the reliability of student fees, even non-reviewable ones, as a funding source.

### The Need to Renovate

The JDUC is supposed to be the central hub for student life on campus. It houses the SGPS offices, AMS offices, Queen's University International Centre, Queen's Pub, Printing and Publishing Centre, Peer Support Centre, Student Advisor Program, as well as a variety of other key services and offices. The AMS argues that, despite the JDUC's significance on campus, it does not meet the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> century student body. Their argument is well supported, particularly when you consider that the JDUC was supposed to be renovated through the Queen's Centre project, as well as the amount of deferred maintenance that has accrued on the building. Notably, the JDUC has serious accessibility issues – there is only one ramp entranceway and

limited barrier-free travel throughout the building. The SGPS is directly affected by this limitation, as the Executive offices can only be accessed through stairs or a small service elevator. Additionally, the JDUC is poorly lit and has fire code issues. Beyond accessibility and structural limitations, the JDUC trails behind state of the art student centers at other Canadian universities. Although Queen's is well-known for its student experience, a failure to improve our student space bears the potential of threatening that reputation. A renovated JDUC would not only lead to improved and centralized SGPS office space, but could also include dedicated space that meets the specific needs of graduate and professional students.

### The Need to Remain a Partner

Management of the JDUC is currently governed by a "tri-party agreement" between the University, AMS and SGPS. As partners in the JDUC, we simply pay for the costs of our space and a contribution to shared operating costs (rather than a rent premium). Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, as partners through the tri-party agreement, the SGPS has a seat at the table regarding all JDUC-related decisions. Should the SGPS not contribute to the financing of a JDUC renovation, we would no longer remain a party to the current agreement. There are two significant concerns associated with this. First, the SGPS would become a tenant in the JDUC and pay rent accordingly. The renovations would make the JDUC a premium campus location, and rent would be extremely high in comparison to our current space expenditures. Second, we would have no control over the space we are allocated, nor would we be guaranteed space security year over year. Since this project will be moving forward with or without us, we must consider whether it is in our best interests – both from a cost management and an operational perspective – to remain as a partner.

### Project Costs

Total costs of the redevelopment are estimated to be between \$50-60 million. Thus, based on the AMS proposal, the student contribution would be between \$25-30 million (save possible offsetting by alumni and donors). Determining how much of the student contribution is the responsibility of the SGPS will be dependent upon a negotiation and agreement between the SGPS and the AMS. That decision should be treated distinctly from determining whether the SGPS should support the project and funding model together with the AMS when advocating to the University. If the SGPS' contribution was to be strictly proportional to its membership size relative to that of the AMS, the amount would be approximately \$6.5 million. However, it is the view of the SGPS Executive that other factors should be considered, including disparate utility of JDUC space, and benefits received from the renovation.

### Student Fee Funding

The size of any prospective SGPS contribution demands funding beyond the Society's annual operating budget – the only foreseeable and reasonable option is a mandatory, non-reviewable student fee. Collection of this fee would begin when construction does (projected 2019), and would continue until the SGPS contribution is satisfied. The length of the fee would determine its per-student price tag. Such a fee would need to be approved by SGPS membership through a referendum. The current referendum and student fee policy poses a serious obstacle to approving a fee as nuanced as the one in question. Last year's SGPS Executive changed the

threshold for a successful fee from a simple majority (50% + 1) to a 2/3 majority. The most immediate consequence of this change was the failure of the Walkhome fee, which continues to serve as an important safety service for the Queen's community. Given the complexity of a JDUC renovation student fee, and the consequences of it failing, Council should consider whether a 2/3 majority is an appropriate or overly burdensome threshold to meet.

### Questions

- Should the SGPS support the JDUC renovation in partnership with the AMS to the University?
- Should the SGPS pursue a student fee to cover our contribution and remain partners in the JDUC?
  - If so, what should our contribution be relative to the AMS? What is the most appropriate way to measure and justify our portion of the contribution?
  - What is the appropriate balance between length of the fee and annual cost per student?
- Is the 2/3 majority student fee policy too risky a threshold for this highly complex referendum question?
  - If so, would it be appropriate to implement a simple majority threshold for this fee?
- Given the complexity of the fee, should a special referendum be held outside the normal referendum period? (Note: the AMS is doing this, and we would have the opportunity to piggy-back off their marketing and promotion)
- What programming and/or types of space do you want to see in a redeveloped JDUC?
- Do you think the students in your department would be willing to support this fee? What factors would sway them in a particular direction?