



SFU

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To: Marjorie Griffin Cohen, Professor, Political Science/GSWS,
and signatories to the petition on Louis Riel House

Thank you for your recent letter communicating your concerns about the impending closure of Louis Riel House (LRH), the hardship that this may cause student residents, and the need for affordable family housing options for SFU students.

I and others in the university administration share your dismay about the closure of LRH and the resulting reduction of on-campus housing for our students. It was a difficult decision, driven by the overriding need to protect the health and safety of SFU students and their families.

The main health and safety concerns that have arisen with respect to LRH stem from water penetration over the years and associated issues of air quality. These concerns became sufficiently pressing that an external consultant was retained last fall to conduct indoor air quality tests and visual inspections for mold throughout LRH. Based on the consultant's report and an assessment of the building's viability, a determination was made in February of this year that the building was coming to the end of its lifecycle and, in light of the health and safety risks identified, should be closed. As all of the existing license agreements (i.e. leases) expire on or before August 30, 2015, it was decided to inform existing tenants that these agreements would not be renewed. At the same time, we resolved to monitor the building and to undertake necessary remediation to ensure the safety of the occupied suites until that date, while helping current residents to find alternative accommodation.

The university administration recognizes that the closure of LRH poses both practical and emotional issues for residents and their families, and we are committed to assisting each resident to secure suitable alternative housing. To this end, we have invited all residents to meet with our staff to review their relocation needs on a case-by-case basis. More than one-third of residents are likely eligible for on-campus options within SFU Residence & Housing. In addition, we are actively engaged in assisting over thirty residents to find alternate accommodation. We are also working with residents on specific issues of concern such as those relating to childcare and schooling. Finally, we are aware of about twenty families who may require additional support to address their housing needs, and we will be helping these residents based on their individual circumstances.

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With respect to your call for affordable housing for SFU students and their families, I wholeheartedly agree. The University has for some years been pursuing options for the expansion of on-campus student residences. Unfortunately we are currently prohibited by the Province of BC from borrowing funds to build such residences, and our efforts to attract private partners prepared to finance affordable on-campus student housing have thus far proved unsuccessful. The University has also engaged in discussions with the SFU Community Trust regarding the possibility of the Trust developing low end of market family rental housing adjacent to the Burnaby Campus. We remain hopeful that these discussions will result in a project proceeding in the near future.

Like you, I and others in the university administration are deeply committed to the well-being of our students and their families. If you are aware of any students who currently live in LRH and are experiencing challenges regarding their relocation, please encourage them to contact Dr. Tracey Mason-Innes, Director of Residence & Housing. She will be pleased to work directly with the students and their families to assist them during this difficult and stressful time.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns on this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Petter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Andrew" and last name "Petter" clearly distinguishable.

Andrew Petter
President and Vice-Chancellor

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