



Student Union Building 3100
Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive,
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 1S6
Unceded Coast Salish Territories
sfss.ca

SFSS Membership,

We are writing to notify you of some urgent decisions made at yesterday evening's Simon Fraser Student Society (SFSS) Council meeting. It has been voted on and passed for the Student Union Building (SUB) to be closed from January 24th until February 18th, 2022. We want to outline some of the decision-making that happened before this vote and ensure that we are transparent to our membership, whom we are accountable to, throughout the process.

In regards to high COVID-19 cases across the province and the return to campus mandated by Simon Fraser University (SFU), the SFSS Council does not believe SFU is taking appropriate measures to protect our membership. The University is relying on students to keep other students safe and has thus abdicated institutional and personal responsibility.

On January 18th, 2022, the Executive Committee unanimously meeting passed this motion:

"Be it resolved that the Executive Committee approve the following measures until at least February 18th, 2022:

- *the Student Union Building shall continue to operate at reduced capacity;*
- *that all in-person services shall, where possible, continue be offered virtually*
- *that staff shall be encouraged to work remotely;*
- *that staff must complete the "COVID-19 Sign-In Form" before attending the Student Union Building In-Person;*
- *that staff working in-person shall be limited to one-person per office, regardless of physical distancing or wearing face coverings;*
- *that Executive Officers shall work remotely, where possible, and must complete the "COVID-19 Sign-In Form" before attending the Student Union Building In-Person;*
- *that no in-person meetings shall be held in any SFSS space;*

Be it further resolved that, before February 18th, 2022, the Executive Committee must decide on whether to extend these measures, or implement further measures."

The Executive Committee also unanimously voted to recommend to Council to close the SUB which required Council's vote at yesterday evening's meeting. Bringing this recommendation to Council, the SFSS Executive shared the results of the SFSS Learning Experience and COVID-19 Student Feedback Survey. After a thorough debate spanning over three and a half hours, 38 out of 42 Councillors voted in favour of the following motion to close the Student Union Building until February 18th, 2022:

“Whereas, the Executive Committee has implemented measures to reduce capacity in the Student Union Building, encourage staff and Executive Officers to work remotely, and move all in-person services to be offered virtually;

Whereas, COVID-19 cases, driven by Omicron, continue to rise, and present a significant safety risk to staff and members.

Whereas, there already exist a risk that the Student Union Building would need to close intermittently for short periods of time where there are COVID positive cases amongst the staff team or as a result of exposures from Members;

Whereas, the Executive Committee believes that the measures implemented up until now do not do enough to protect the health and safety of our Staff and Membership;

Whereas, the Executive Committee does not want to make such a big decision on its own, despite it being an operational decision within its jurisdiction, without involving the larger body of Council;

Be it resolved that Council approve a closure of the Student Union Building until at least February 18th, 2022;

Be it further resolved that, at its February 18th, 2022 meeting, Council decide whether to extend the building closure for an additional period of time, or revert back to opening the Student Union Building, with reduced capacity, as passed by the Executive Committee as its January 18th, 2022 meeting.”

This is not a decision that was made lightly. The SFSS Executive and Management has met daily since December 23rd, 2021 to discuss how to keep staff and membership safe during this time of increased precaution. Council not only took into consideration how this decision would affect the mental health of both staff members still expected to work in-person and those who work remotely, but also the mental health of the community members that regularly use the Student Union Building as a place of rest, work, community, and collaboration.

We continue to lean on existing and past Public Health Orders to determine the extent of use of the Student Union Building. Previously we have implemented mask and safety guidelines and reduced the amount of furniture to encourage physical distancing and reduce seating capacity.

The truth is, this is not and will not continue to be enough without SFU also doing their part. It is unfortunate that we have to make this decision, however, our concerns are the safety and health of those on campus. We fully acknowledge the importance of the Student Union Building to both the mental and social health of those who use the building. However, we cannot and will not risk the lives of our staff and membership. We are not willing to contribute to a potential increase in COVID-19 case numbers on campus, and will not bear the brunt of decisions made by the University.



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We cannot guarantee the safety of the community members that use our spaces. The Student Union Building is not a controlled environment and was built as an informal community and social space. We cannot justifiably put our members and staff at risk when SFU is determined to return to in-person learning, with no space for students' consultation. With the high transmissibility of the newest variant, we cannot guarantee *no* transmission of the COVID-19 virus in the SUB or SFSS location on Surrey Campus during this time. **To clarify, the SFSS location on SFU Surrey Campus will also be closed and will re-open in line with the SUB.**

We have discussed with, evaluated, re-evaluated, consulted, and surveyed the community members who use this space, including sub-tenants who rely on the SUB as a source of income. We understand that this decision affects many experiencing hardship at this time, so we assure you that all trauma-informed and community services will still be available to our membership, either virtually or by appointment. This includes the Women's Centre, Students of Caribbean and African Ancestry Black Students Support Centre, SFSS Out on Campus, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Students Association, Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance, and Member Services.

We call on our membership to contact Dr. Joy Johnson, President of Simon Fraser University at pres_office@sfu.ca or 778-782-3641 regarding return to campus plans, and/or email covid19@sfu.ca.

We stand in making the decision to close the Student Union Building and we ask that you **stand with us** in advocating for safe and accessible learning options for students at SFU.

This includes:

- Clear procedures for all classes for students who may be ill;
- Keeping accessibility at the forefront of decision making for students, while prioritizing the needs of disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent students;
- Technical support infrastructure to assist students and faculty throughout the pandemic and beyond;
- Further mental health support for those who have been affected by continued isolation throughout the pandemic; and,
- Increased access to personal protective equipment.



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The Simon Fraser Student Society will continue to put pressure on SFU to take precautionary measures to ensure our collective safety and well-being.

In Solidarity,

SFSS Executive and Council