Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU)

Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU) is a public degree-granting undergraduate polytechnic university in B.C., with campuses in Surrey, Richmond, Cloverdale, Whalley, and Langley. KPU is one of the largest institutions by enrolment in the province, garnering a total of 20,000 students and 1,400 faculty members across its five locations.

The school operates largely as an undergraduate polytechnic university, but also serves as a vocational school offering apprenticeships for the skilled trades as well as citations, certificate, and diplomas for skilled technicians and workers in support roles in 140 programs.

Kwantlen Polytechnic was founded as Kwantlen College in 1981 (by separating it from Douglas College), as a response to the growing need for expanded vocational training across the Fraser Valley. In 1995 it became a university college. In 2008 Victoria amended the *University Act* to convert it into Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

Kwantlen Student Association

The Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) is an elected student body that allocates student funds to social, cultural and entertainment programs for students. It was founded as the Kwantlen College Student Society under the B.C. *Societies Act* in 1981. It is a member of the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), despite a very stormy legal relationship with it.

At a Special General Meeting held in 2011, Kwantlen students voted 352 to 0 to remove 13 directors of the KSA and place them into "bad standing" where they would be unable to run for future office. The vote was held over allegations of conflicts of interest in settling litigation, association with the reported misuse of $2 million dollars of student funds, and a 40% pay raise to the elected officials on their first day of office, among other problems.

Kwantlen Student Media

The Runner is Kwantlen's independent student newspaper. Since 2009, *The Runner* has added to Kwantlen student life by providing the community with "a freely distributed, year-round, multi-campus, student-owned, student-run news and campus culture publication." Much more detail on the controversies noted below can be found at its website.

It receives some of its funds from the Kwantlen Student Association under a levy; however, it is run as separate, autonomous incorporated B.C. non-profit society, Polytechnic Ink Publishing Society (PIPS), with its own Kwantlen student board of directors.

(The Kwantlen Chronicle, which was produced by journalism students as part of their coursework - much like the Langara *Voice* - ceased production in 2011. It is archived here.)

[SUMMARIES OF NEWS ARTICLES ON THE KSA]

= *Kwantlen student fund misspent, audit finds.* By Linda Nguyen, Vancouver Sun, Sept. 1, 2007

More than three-quarters of a million dollars in student funds was misspent, a forensic audit of Kwantlen University College student association finances by PricewaterhouseCoopers has found.

It says the bulk of the money - $620,000 - was allegedly loaned out by a former association executive as part of a high-risk investment, contrary to association rules.

Laura Anderson, chair of the Kwantlen Student Association, said the audit results reinforced suspicions that money was mismanaged when the Reduce All Fees student party was in office in 2005-'06. "It's been a pretty long process because the financial records from 2006 were 'lost,' " she said. "The whole thing was highly questionable and forced us to reconstruct [the records] from bank documents and receipts from the office."

The audit also revealed that $140,000 was paid to former executive members, including former RAF leader Aaron Takhar. Takhar was elected to the student association in 2005. Anderson alleges Takhar expelled rival student politicians from the association and created bylaws that would benefit his party.

= *Kwantlen student fees went to dubious loans, investments*. The Surrey Leader, Sept. 2, 2007

"It appears that the Prior Council were either not keeping proper records or they deliberately removed these documents from the KSA main office," reads the PricewaterhouseCoopers audit.

A series of e-mails contained in audit documents show Takhar repeatedly telling council members and executives to ensure they “Delete everything!" after reading. A computer forensic analysis found 4,495 e-mails had been deleted from the server on Oct. 31, 2006, the last day the prior council had control over KSA's computer system. [The emails were recovered from Kwantlen’s college server.]

= *Misplaced funds a case of history repeating itself.* By Frank Bucholtz, The Peace Arch News (White Rock), Sept. 6, 2007

If there is a reasonable explanation for all the issues raised by the audit, it has yet to surface. Former association executive members did not co-operate with the auditors and many questions remain unanswered.

It is unfortunate that the association had to spend another $100,000 on the audit to gain all the information about past payments. However, it is hard to question an auditor's word, so in that respect the money was well-spent.

The current executive deserves credit for trying to get to the bottom of the spending issue. While opponents will claim it is all politics, the facts remain that it is students' money, not the money of a few executive members.

= ***Drug suspect linked to questionable money moves.*** The Omineca Express (Vanderhoof, B.C.), Sept. 11, 2007

A man facing drug trafficking charges in Vanderhoof has been linked to mysterious loans, questionable investments and undocumented payments to former Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) executives and staff, according to a just-released independent forensic audit.

Aaron Takhar made headlines in May after he and two friends driving two separate vehicles were stopped by police near Vanderhoof. Takhar stopped, but the other vehicle didn't and plunged into the Nechako River. One passenger was pulled from the water, but Daljit Sandhu - who's mentioned in the audit report as receiving $8,000 in undocumented payments - drowned. The SUV had 170 marijuana plants inside. [Sandhu drove the SUV; the passenger, Pritpal Singh Virk, was murdered less than a year later. Story]

The KSA also gave a $200,000 loan to Inderjit Johal, which was paid out of the KSA health and dental account. The loan has since been repaid, but who Johal is and why he was loaned the money remains a mystery.

= ***Whistleblower Unearths Scandal; How one student exposed student association's diverted funds.*** By Doug Ward, Vancouver Sun, Sept. 15, 2007

*Laura Anderson, chair of the Kwantlen Student Association, said: "They were treating the KSA like it was their personal piggy bank and private club house."

Student societies like the KSA operate under the radar of regulatory oversight. The KSA is a self-governing association that operates independently of Kwantlen University College. It is registered as a non-profit society under the Society Act of B.C. *but the provincial Corporations Registry lacks the regulatory teeth to investigate alleged impropriety.

These societies offer a degree of influence to those who run them. The annual budget of the KSA, for example, is $1.3 million - a sum that can cover the cost of many salaries, loans and even, in the case the Takhar-led KSA, parties and boat cruises.

*Anderson believes that the KSA saga is a cautionary tale about how student societies at universities and colleges are vulnerable to being taken over by small groups of individuals. She said student societies at small multi-campus colleges such as Kwantlen, which most students attend for only two years, are especially exposed.

"Schools like Kwantlen don't have a common space for students to gather and build up a student culture," she said. "They are commuter schools: You drive there, you take classes, you leave." It's this apathy, said Anderson, that Takhar and his friends exploited when they won most of the seats in the KSA election in 2005 on the Reduce All Fees slate. The same apathy allowed RAF to run the society without regard to proper rules, she added.

For instance, in September 2005, Takhar's group held a special general meeting to change the KSA's bylaws in order to reduce the number of elected students on the executive from 20 to nine, double their terms of office to two years - and expel four rival members of the student association, including Anderson.

In order to attract enough students for a quorum, the RAF executive offered $13,000 in prizes, including MP3 players, TVs, DVD players and an $8,000 grand prize of a tropical vacation. Anderson alleged in court the grand prize was rigged to ensure a Takhar ally won it.

*Other recovered e-mails show that the RAF group was also interested in gaining influence in the student societies at Langara College, Douglas College and Simon Fraser University.

An e-mail in July 2006 from Takhar to KSA president Butt said: "Danish, aren't you going to register us at Langara SOON? we need to find out their structure and then register people accordingly. ... "And don't tell anyone our plans yet!! just ask around and act like you may be going there."

= *Greater accountability over student fees needed; Kwantlen student association*. Surrey Now, Sept. 21, 2007

*A group of Kwantlen students wants changes to provincial rules to provide tighter control of student association finances.

Laura Anderson, who chairs the Kwantlen Student Association, wants to see the Society Act changed to require groups like the KSA to file annual financial reports with the registrar in Victoria. The reports would be available to the public and could reveal any improprieties.

Anderson also wants KSA rules changed to require an auditor's recommendations with the financial statements presented at each of the association's annual general meetings. The recommendations would help interpret the statements for members and reveal any problems.

A number of Kwantlen students who spoke to the Now said the college should have some oversight authority in KSA affairs. "Obviously that should be," said Sonny Singh, a business student. "There should be a record for every transaction."

Pre-nursing student Karen Sangha agreed, saying it made sense to have the college administration or the Ministry of Advanced Education keep any eye on the KSA piggy bank. Anderson rejected the notion, citing the potential for "political interference" in the association's affairs. Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell was unavailable for comment.

= *Kwantlen student union sues former leaders for fraud, theft*. By Mary Frances Hill, Vancouver Sun, August 19, 2008

The Kwantlen University College Student Association has filed a lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court against a group that once dominated the organization, alleging it misused more than $2 million in student fees to commit fraud, mismanagement and theft.

The defendants include the leader of the Reduce All Fees party, former Kwantlen student Aaron Singh Takhar, who was active in the group in 2005-2006, said Steve Lee, the KSA's director of finance.

They allege Takhar and his slate, elected to run the KSA in 2005, mismanaged $1.3 million in student fees and $800,000 in a reserve fund for KSA members' health and dental plan, leaving few or no accounting records.

The claim says Takhar, Atwal and Khatri changed KSA bylaws to remove its financial checks and balances, approved unsecured loans of $620,000 from KSA funds for their personal benefit, and awarded themselves pay increases of more than 80 per cent.

In 2007, PricewaterhouseCoopers conducted a forensic audit of the KSA. It concluded that from December 2005 to November, 2006 the KSA executive made $144,500 in undocumented payment to its executives and employees.

This included $67,000 paid to a consulting firm called AST Ventures, which Aaron Takhar later confirmed to *Maclean's* that he was the sole director of upon incorporation." It found Takhar should have earned nearly $60,000, but received more than $115,000 a year.

= *Kwantlen Student Association sues former leaders.* By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, August 20, 2008

The *Kwantlen Student Association* is headed back to court yet again, this time suing five former executives over allegations of fraud, mismanagement and theft involving more than $1 million dollars in student fees.

The defendants listed on the statement of claim filed in B.C. Supreme Court include former Kwantlen student and Reduce All Fees (RAF) party leader Aaron Singh Takhar. KSA general manager Desmond Rodenbour said even though it's now been years since the alleged fraudulent activity took place, it's still worthwhile pursuing the lawsuit.

"If we don't ensure that there's a reckoning for what they've done, we've just opened the door for it to happen again," he said. "If the only penalty for this type of heinous act is 'you have to stop' then it's no deterrent at all."

= ***GM of student group receives death threat over college lawsuit.*** By Stuart Hunter, The Vancouver Province, September 18, 2008

The general manager of the Kwantlen University College Student Association says he and his family are living in fear after receiving a death threat. The letter was mailed to Desmond Rodenbour at his Vancouver home warning him to stop a lawsuit against former association brass.

The typed letter, riddled with grammatical and spelling errors and signed by "dook," reads: "Mr. Desmond Rodenbour you relay give hard time to our kids no good man, take stip back, don't be to sharp, other whys police well find another foot from Fraser river we give you 10 days for that if you try to involve RCMP, then bye bye son."

Rodenbour, who has no children, said the letter scared him but not enough to stop the suit that names former student association directors and employees as defendants. "At first, I thought the letter might be a joke," he said. "But then I read it over and I thought it could be serious. They did find my home address. It's totally scary -- it even scared my mom and she doesn't even live there."

Rodenbour said police and college security "are both taking it very seriously in light of the court case." Police have seized the letter, given Rodenbour 911 priority response status and advised him to change his parking patterns and work hours and keep his blinds closed. College security is escorting Rodenbour to and from campus.

Rodenbour said the suit will continue. "I couldn't stop the lawsuit on my own volition even if I wanted to - it's like a bowling ball already being halfway down the lane," said Rodenbour. "My friends keep calling me and joking that the countdown is on and I only have seven days left."

= ***Allegations fly at Kwantlen.*** By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Aug. 8, 2011

The Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) says recent speculation and conflict of interest allegations leveled against it are an attempt by former student executives to divert attention from prior mismanagement of the KSA going as far back as 2002.

The executive has now hired Deloitte & Touche to conduct a forensic review of the society from 2001 to 2011 to highlight what the current student group calls past "fraud, embezzlement and mismanagement."

= ***Kwantlen feud deepens; Legal action threatened.*** By Sarah Jackson, Richmond News, Aug. 12, 2011

A he-said-she-said controversy, alleging *Kwantlen Student Association* (KSA) connections to a former KSA official under investigation for possible mismanagement of over $2 million has escalated into threats of legal action.

An email issued Monday from the current KSA president Sean "Birdman" Bassi demanded a retraction and an apology from The Runner, an independent student-run newspaper covering Kwantlen Polytechnic University, for coverage of the currently-in-limbo court investigation.

Members of the KSA have called the RCMP twice to warn Runner reporters to essentially tread carefully. During one of those confrontations, the RCMP told reporters their camera would be confiscated if they tried to photograph a member of the KSA.

= *Student association in hot water; University board wants power to intervene to control how money is spent.* By Jennifer Saltman, The Province (Vancouver), September 19, 2011

*Kwantlen Polytechnic University is asking the province to change legislation so universities can intervene in student association business to protect the millions of dollars in student fees they collect.

John McKendry, president of Kwantlen, said the university needs some control of an association its students support with their hard-earned dollars. "It's the independence of the body that allows them to go off in various directions that the institution may not feel are in the best interests of the institution, its reputation and the students that come here for an education," said McKendry.

The university's board and administration doesn't have control over how that money is managed or how the association conducts its affairs because the student association is autonomous and governed by the Society Act.

*Twelve years ago [i.e., 1999], legislative amendments were made in response to requests from the Canadian Federation of Students and many B.C. student societies requesting more autonomy. Before that time, institutions had more oversight respecting the collection of student fees.

*Kwantlen's board has taken issue with the legislative restrictions before - in a letter to the province in 2008, and during submissions last year to the group currently reviewing the Society Act.

A lawsuit alleged KSA leaders had made more than $140,000 in unsupported payments and more than $820,000 in high-risk and unapproved loans. In August, the student association withheld funding from the student newspaper, The Runner, which has been a vocal critic of the association. The funds have since been restored and a mediator engaged.

= *Kwantlen Student Association settles lawsuit.* By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Oct. 17, 2011

A lawsuit against former Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) directors involving the alleged mismanagement of more than $1 million in student fees has been settled. In an online statement dated Sept. 30, KSA president Sean Birdman confirmed the current student group decided to dismiss the case, and that there would be no additional cost to any of the parties involved.

"This lawsuit had been a five-year process with absolutely no finish line in sight," wrote Birdman. "Kwantlen students have already funded the battle to the tune of $800,000 in legal fees and staff time, and there was a very low probability that our council would be victorious in the case to recoup the monies that went into it."

However, on a Facebook page called Concerned Students of Kwantlen - KSA Watch, negative response to the lawsuit being dropped was swift. Matt Todd, former KSA director of operations, said the settlement is part of a "long string of actions" that violate the KSA's own regulations, adding it is up to students to "rise up and hold these directors accountable."

= *Chaos erupts at Kwantlen; Pepper spray and fire alarms fill halls during unanimous vote to impeach divisive KSA board*. By Carolyn Cooke and Amy Reid, Surrey Now, Dec. 1, 2011

A pepper spray bomb wasn't enough to end a unanimous vote by students to oust the Kwantlen Student Association board of directors.

At about 2:20 p.m. Wednesday, more than 200 students had already registered for the special meeting in the gymnasium at the Surrey campus. Nearly that many more were still waiting in line for the meeting and vote when a pepper spray bomb was let off in the gym and the fire alarm was pulled.

A student who identified herself only as Christine said she was enveloped in the cloud of pepper spray and was still having stomach spasms more than half an hour later. "My whole stomach is hurting," she said. "I coughed for 20 minutes straight."

The scene immediately after the bomb was let off was chaotic, with a lot of racist chants, swearing and yelling, according to witnesses. Police were searching for three students seen running away from the scene - all dressed in black and wearing hoodies.

The current board members had hired private security for its meetings, as well as the one set up for the impeachment vote. Later, at 3:45 p.m., as the gym was refilling with students, the fire alarm was pulled again, setting off another round of pandemonium. Organizers then stationed a person at each fire alarm to ensure the meeting could go ahead.

There were three items on the agenda: to remove the board of directors from their positions, along with other members, to be put in bad standing so they couldn't run in future elections, and to replace the current bylaws with revised ones supported by students. Every one of the 397 registered students at the meeting voted to get rid of the 13 singled out.

A temporary board of directors was installed, with a vote set for the first week of February to elect a whole new permanent executive. "It was really overwhelming. It was amazing to see students get together and unanimously impeach those members that were elected," said one, especially after all the drama that took place earlier that afternoon. Ironically, she thinks the pranks gave students a stronger will to vote.

= *Ousted KSA directors vow to take fight to court*. By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Dec. 5, 2011

Members of the Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) board who were impeached at a meeting on the Surrey Kwantlen Polytechnic University campus last week say they plan to take their fight to the Supreme Court of Canada if the "botched" and "unfair" situation is not resolved.

But Jennifer Campbell, Langley Campus Director for the KSA, said students are finally having their voices heard. "Over the past months students have attempted to attend council meetings to have their concerns heard only to be met with intimidation through private security at council meetings and public reports that vilify them," Campbell said.

= *Ousted board members say they're still in charge.* By Amy Reid, Surrey Now, Dec. 6, 2011

Kwantlen Polytechnic University president John McKendry said he is "not surprised" at the events that unfolded on Nov. 30, which included pepper spray being set off and the fire alarm being pulled twice. "We anticipated disruption from a group not willing to go on their own," McKendry said in an email to the Now.

"The university is mostly concerned with the safety, security and well-being of the students. Allegations as such are a serious matter and the university takes them very seriously."

The Society Act, not the university, governs the KSA, like all student unions. But McKendry did say the university has asked the Ministry of Advanced Education to review the Act and make changes that would allow for the ministry to step in if there were allegations of misappropriation of funds.

= ***Kwantlen student leaders settle dispute out of court.*** By Sheila Reynolds. Surrey Leader, Feb. 17, 2012

A civil lawsuit against the KSA launched by two ousted directors has been settled out of court. Gary Singh Dhaliwal and Balninna (Nina) Sandhu filed a civil suit in B.C. Supreme Court last month saying that a special general meeting Nov. 30, during which they were impeached, was improperly called, unfairly conducted and should be declared null and void.

Still, the resolution says, the 26 former directors and others "have voluntarily agreed not to participate in the affairs of the KSA in any manner for the next three years, including seeking office as directors of the society." All parties have agreed not to engage in further litigation regarding past KSA events or speak further about the settlement.

Over 500 students banded together in a gymnasium in 2012 to vote to remove the Kwantlen Student Association board of directors.

Kwantlen: a history of controversy

The KSA has had their share of troubles, some leading to student outrage and gov't change

By BONNIE LEE LA MADELEINE

For students and faculty with deeper connections to the college system at Langara, Desmond Rodenbour's termination by a new student union board may sound familiar.

It was, in fact, the third time Rodenbour's contract was terminated by a newly installed student government. The first two times the scenario played out, he was the general manager for the student union group at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

By the second termination in 2011, Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) was at the centre of several court cases, boycotts and firings. As a result, the KSA became fodder for the other schools in the Lower Mainland to mock. They were also on the line for nearly $750,000 in unsecured loans.

According to a report in the *Ubyssey* on Feb. 1, 2012, by the time the KSA had called a special general meeting to impeach every member of the elected student body, it was in court more than it was in session.

Jeremy McElroy, the current general manager of the KSA, was hired after that general meeting.

"When a group gets elected and then unilaterally decides to terminate the student's senior leadership which was the case here, that's not good governance, that's very much political," McElroy said.

The scenario he outlined is not uncommon, especially when students are not engaged in campus issues.

A group of students may run for office under an unofficial slate or party platform, a practice that is not allowed on most campuses.

If this group secures a majority of seats on a student council, they can control the direction of student union funds and representation for more than one academic school year.

They could, until recently, change the bylaws to reduce transparency and communication with staff.

Lack of transparency and mismanagement of funds at student unions is not uncommon throughout Canada. For Concordia University, 2012 was not a good year.

"It was an extraordinarily dysfunctional year for us," said Lucinda Marshall-Kiparissis, general coordinator for the Concordia Students' Union.

It was in that year that student elections happened during a student strike on campus. It was also the year that one of the elected representatives wrote cheques to herself.

Over the course of the year, she took more than $200,000 from student funds.

Marshall-Kiparissis said the campus reaction was swift. "We can no longer write cheques to ourselves," she said.

The student union also took steps to increase its transparency in reporting and finances.

Twice burned, Kwantlen Polytechnic University took steps to protect student funds and the KSA from further exploitation by group run councils.

McElroy said they have changed the way elections are run, the power of the executive, and how staff interacts with student representatives and students.

"We have much more comprehensive written financial policies and procedures," he said. "Everything is posted online. We've been pushing the envelope in terms of good governance, best practice since then."

Langara also had scandals in the past. Four years ago, five per cent of the Langara student body voted the entire student population out of LSU board meetings, effectively excluding themselves from the democratic process on campus.

This year, Langara students voted in a set of student representatives who appear to be following a similar path of the two KSA administrations.

> "...that's not good governance, that's very much political
>
> JEREMY MCELR
> GENER MANAGER KWANTL STUDE ASSOCIATI

(Langara Voice, Dec. 2, 2016)

= ***Muzzling Student Media*.** By Chahira Merarsi and Jake Wray. Langara Journalism Review, April 27, 2017. Full text

"In 2005, 2006, there was a group that ran for the Kwantlen Student Association called Reduce All Fees," says Connor Doyle, the managing editor of KPU's magazine *The Runner*. "Soon after their time in office it was claimed that they embezzled up to $2 million of student fees."

According to Doyle, the student association in 2011 tried to take legal action against Reduce All Fees (RAF), but dropped the case due to high legal fees. It was later discovered that the two student councils were colluding.

"It was uncovered by a *Runner* reporter, Matt DiMera, that the 2011 KSA had ties to the initial RAF group including one of the directors of the [2011] KSA being the sister of one of the lead defendants in the case, which was never disclosed."

Doyle says that those were tougher times for Kwantlen reporters. "This [student union] was also trying to do the stuff like trying to prevent recording devices at council. It withheld funding from *The Runner*. The money is levied from the university, from the students, to the KSA and then handed to us; they tried to hold onto the cheque and not deliver it to us."

Doyle says that although the KSA is much more receptive to their inquiries today, they could be better. *"I imagine you'd be hard pressed to find any student editor that would call their student union sufficiently transparent," Doyle says. "Every generation is different than the previous one, although what we've found in common is that they always seem to tighten up and become less transparent the longer they're in office."

==========

[FULL TEXTS]

= ***College election settled in court: Kwantlen has new board in place, By Brooke Larsen, Surrey Now***, May 14, 2005

An ugly election battle at Kwantlen University College ended in court this week. Justice Frank Maczko ruled Thursday that members of the Reduce All Fees (RAF) slate are the rightful winners of the *Kwantlen Student Association* elections held in March.

Kwantlen administrators changed the locks at the student association building in Newton two weeks ago, handing the keys over to the newly-elected RAF board. The old board had refused to leave office, claiming the election results were invalid because a ballot box was stolen. They sought an injunction against the school and members of the RAF board last week, but were denied.

"The elected members of the RAF were properly qualified and properly elected," wrote Justice Maczko in his reasons for judgment.

Aaron Takhar, finance minister of the RAF board, said although he's relieved by the decision, he's not surprised. "We knew there was never any reason to panic. We felt comfortable about it," said Takhar. "Right now we're just happy to be able to provide services to students and that's our first priority."

But Laura Anderson, former chair of the old board, said she's disappointed by the decision. "We were pretty shocked. I guess we feel the judge erred," said Anderson, adding that her group probably won't appeal the decision because they can't afford the legal costs. "A lot of us are basically unemployed now."

Anderson said she was disgusted when Kwantlen administrators locked them out the student association building.

Kwantlen spokesperson Peter Chevrier said the school is pleased with the decision. "It's good that they've worked this out and the students know who their council members are," said Chevrier.

Takher said justice was served and the right party won. "We feel great. We won the votes and the election. The biggest factor was that the students voted us in and that we stuck with it."

Takher said his party would focus on settling into office and handling internal functions. The first student event the RAF party has planned will be at the start of the fall semester.

= *Kwantlen student fund misspent, audit finds.* By Linda Nguyen, Vancouver Sun, Sept. 1, 2007

More than three-quarters of a million dollars in student funds was misspent, a forensic audit of Kwantlen University College student association finances has found.

The 50-page document, released Friday, says the bulk of the money -- $620,000 -- was allegedly loaned out by a former association executive as part of a high-risk investment, contrary to association rules.

The audit was ordered by current executives of the student association in November 2006. It was carried out by PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Laura Anderson, chair of the Kwantlen Student Association, said the audit results reinforced suspicions that money was mismanaged when the Reduce All Fees student party was in office in 2005-'06.

"It's been a pretty long process because the financial records from 2006 were 'lost,' " the 26-year-old philosophy student said. "The whole thing was highly questionable and forced us to reconstruct [the records] from bank documents and receipts from the office."

The association operates as a non-profit legal entity separate from the school and represents 17,000 students at campuses in Richmond, Langley, Surrey and Cloverdale.

The audit revealed that the $620,000 was loaned to Apex Communications, a Surrey-based company, during a closed-door meeting without any consultation with the student body.

The documents show that the loan -- which is to be repaid by 2011, according to B.C. Supreme Court documents -- was only partially secured by a second mortgage on another Apex property. This type of "high-risk" transaction is prohibited according to student association by-laws, Anderson said.

The audit also revealed that $140,000 was paid to former executive members, including former RAF leader Aaron Takhar. Now a Simon Fraser University student, Takhar, 22, could not be reached at his Surrey home Friday.

Takhar made headlines last May when he was arrested on drug charges after RCMP found 170 marijuana plants in a car that he had rented. His friend, 18-year-old Daljit Sandhu of Richmond, was discovered dead in the Nechako River near Vanderhoof after he drove the rented Ford Escape off a side-road and into the water.

Police had initially pulled over Takhar on May 12 and were about to pull over Sandhu when the SUV plunged into the river.

Takhar was elected to the student association in 2005. Anderson alleges Takhar expelled rival student politicians from the association and created bylaws that would benefit his party.

Titus Gregory, a policy analyst with the student association, said Friday the association will now ask RCMP to conduct a criminal investigation.

= *Kwantlen student fees went to dubious loans, investments*. The Surrey Leader, Sept. 2, 2007

Hundreds of thousands of student dollars were doled out in mysterious loans, questionable investments and undocumented payments to former *Kwantlen Student Association* (KSA)executives and staff, according to a just-released independent forensic audit.

The audit, by PricewaterhouseCoopers, was ordered by the KSA on itself after the defeat of the RAF (Reduce All Fees) party in a court-ordered election last October.

The document reveals that during the 10-month period between December 2005 and November 2006, KSA executives, under the leadership of former chair and executive advisor Aaron Takhar,

made $144,500 in undocumented payments to KSA executives and employees - including more than $67,000 to Takhar, $20,000 to past-president Danish Butt and $17,000 to former CEO Yasser Ahmad.

The audit found the student association loaned $620,000 to Apex Communications, a Surrey-based telecommunications company. According to auditor Mary Ann Hamilton, the investment was considered high risk as it was only partially secured with a second mortgage on Apex property. KSA regulations prohibit high-risk investments.

The KSA also gave a $200,000 loan to Inderjit Johal, which was paid out of the KSA health and dental account. The loan has since been repaid, but who Johal is and why he was loaned the money remains a mystery.

"I could not locate any KSA Council minutes or other documentation approving or indicating the reasons for this loan," Hamilton writes in the 50-page audit.

"It's really nice to have it all in hard evidence," said Laura Anderson, current chair of the KSA who, along with other student politicians, have been engaged in a two-year legal battle fighting what they viewed as corruption, alleged voting irregularities and fraud by RAF.

"It's students' money. But also, these are the people that are going to be the businessmen and politicians in your community."

The KSA has an annual operating budget of about $1.2 million, the majority of which comes from student fees. The KSA is a self-governing association that operates independently of Kwantlen University College.

The audit documents also showed AST Ventures, a company in which the auditor believes Takhar either controlled or had an interest in, was paid $103,000 from February to August 2006.

While all but three of the cheques were signed by both past KSA chair Danish Butt and treasurer Jatinder (Joey) Atwal or CEO Yasser Ahmad, three dated Aug. 3, 2006 each for $4,240, were signed only by Ahmad. KSA regulations require three signatures on cheques over $3,000.

"It appears that the Prior Council were either not keeping proper records or they deliberately removed these documents from the KSA main office," reads the audit.

A series of e-mails contained in audit documents show Takhar repeatedly telling council members and executives to ensure they deleted e-mails after reading.

A computer forensic analysis found 4,495 e-mails had been deleted from the server on Oct. 31, 2006, the last day the prior council had control over KSA's computer system.

Repeated calls and e-mails to Takhar from The Leader have not been returned. Most of the prior council members refused interviews with the auditor.

A March e-mail from Butt, however, said he requested that all questions be e-mailed to him - something he argued never happened. In response to financial allegations, Ahmad argued none of the payments made were unsupported and he was not involved with the investments. Another e-mail from Joey Atwal said he followed procedure to the best of his ability.

Takhar made headlines in May after he and two friends driving two separate vehicles were stopped by police near Vanderhoof. Takhar stopped, but the other vehicle didn't and plunged into the Nechako River. One passenger was pulled from the water, but Daljit Sandhu - who's mentioned in the audit report as receiving $8,000 in undocumented payments - drowned.

The SUV had 170 marijuana plants inside and Takhar is facing trafficking charges. The audit cost the KSA $100,000 - money Anderson believes was well worth it. The KSA has asked the RCMP to investigate and plan to launch a lawsuit.

= *Forensic audit biased, says former student leader.* The Surrey Leader, Sept. 5, 2007

The former chairperson and executive advisor of the *Kwantlen Student Association* (KSA) says a forensic audit covering the period when he was at the helm of the non-profit student organization is politically driven and poorly done.

The audit, conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, was ordered by the KSA on itself following the defeat of the RAF (Reduce All Fees) party in an election last October.

As reported in The Leader on Sunday, the document showed more than $140,000 in undocumented payments to RAF executives and employees, a $200,000 personal loan that was paid out of the KSA Health and Dental account and a $620,000 loan to Apex Communications which auditor Mary Ann Hamilton said was high-risk and only partially secured.

But Aaron Takhar, who led the KSA from the end of 2005 to 2006 - the period covered by the audit - says not only was the report motivated by political and personal interests, it was poorly researched.

"The perception the audit gives is we were up to no good ... which is not the case at all," said Takhar, saying the auditors failed to contact a number of people and did only surface research into loans and investments made by him and his staff.

He said had PricewaterhouseCoopers spoken to those involved, they would have seen the so-called unsupported payments to executives were to cover out-of-pocket expenses such as conferences, office supplies and rental fees.

He also said the Apex loan was made after a resolution was passed at a regular board meeting and that student associations have the right to invest their money. He said the loan is far from risky, noting the company's owner has millions in assets, wrote a personal guarantee and has made every payment, earning the association a six per cent return on the investment.

The separate $200,000 personal loan, Takhar added, was an attempt to invest student money more wisely and was fully repaid with interest.

Throughout the 50-page document, however, auditor Hamilton repeatedly refers to a lack of documentation for payments, loans and investments.

"They have destroyed the files, if anything," said Takhar of the current executives. "When we left office, everything was documented."

Laura Anderson, current chair of the KSA, said Nov. 1, 2006, a day after the election, was the first time the new directors entered the office and that a PricewaterhouseCoopers representative was with them. The audit documents confirm the entrance to the offices, but Takhar believes someone else got in earlier.

Anderson, who has been involved in a series of lawsuits against RAF members since they took office 2005, said the audit was not about politics. "It's not about power, it's about responsibility," said Anderson, who also defended the $100,000 spent on the audit. "You can't put a price tag on holding people accountable."

Takhar views the situation differently, calling the document a "complete waste" of student money. And he's not concerned about the current KSA's threats to ask the RCMP to investigate, saying they've already approached the police four or five times and nothing's ever come of it. Takhar, who's now a Simon Fraser University student, said he's also speaking to lawyers about pursuing his own legal action.

The KSA is a separate legal entity from Kwantlen University College and the college therefore has no authority over the student group.

= *Misplaced funds a case of history repeating itself*. By Frank Bucholtz, The Peace Arch News (White Rock), Sept. 6, 2007

History is repeating itself at Kwantlen University College. An audit by PriceWaterhouse Coopers shows that hundreds of thousands of dollars under the management of the *Kwantlen Student Association* are unaccounted for.

The association is not part of the college -- it is an association made up of the college's students and most of its money comes from student fees. Unfortunately, this type of situation is far too common in universities and colleges.

The executive of student associations or alma mater societies are elected by a relatively small number of people, yet have access to a lot of money, as all students are required to pay fees.

In some cases, they do a reasonably good job of managing the money they are entrusted with. In others, the money becomes an opportunity to go hog wild.

*A similar situation took place at the Langara campus of Vancouver Community College (now Langara College) when I was a journalism student there in the late 1970s. Work by several of my fellow students for our newspaper uncovered the fact that the student association president and business manager were using a great deal of fee money to pay their personal expenses.

As is often the case, the president was a "permanent student," taking one course each semester to qualify as a student, and spending the rest of his time in his president's role.

The Kwantlen situation appears to be even more of a problem. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have gone out in questionable loans, some cheques were not properly authorized and e-mail records have been destroyed. Payments to several members of the former executive appear to be unduly high.

Former association president Aaron Takhar is now facing charges of production of a controlled substance, possession for the purpose of trafficking and trafficking a controlled substance, after he was pulled over near Vanderhoof in May and 170 marijuana plants were found in one of the two vehicles he and a friend were driving. One of the vehicles went into the Nechako River and occupant Daljit Sandhu drowned. Sandhu was one of the recipients of KSA funds, receiving $8,000.

The current association executive is planning legal action and is also asking for a police investigation. This is the right thing to do, given the extent of the questionable financial management.

If there is a reasonable explanation for all the issues raised by the audit, it has yet to surface. Former association executive members did not co-operate with the auditors and many questions remain unanswered.

It is unfortunate that the association had to spend another $100,000 on the audit to gain all the information about past payments. However, it is hard to question an auditor's word, so in that respect the money was well-spent.

The current executive deserves credit for trying to get to the bottom of the spending issue. While opponents will claim it is all politics, the facts remain that it is students' money, not the money of a few executive members.

This entire episode is a good lesson for all of us. When most of us don't bother to pay attention to those who are running our affairs and spending our money, whether at the municipal council or student council level, we ensure that the smaller number of people who do vote have too much sway.

Voting is one way we can exercise some measure of control. Students (just like taxpayers) are often very busy managing many aspects of their lives. However, student fees that they pay should be used for their benefit -- not to line the pockets of a few.

Frank Bucholtz writes weekly for the Peace Arch News. He is the editor of the Langley Times.

= *Drug suspect linked to questionable money moves.* The Omineca Express (Vanderhoof, B.C.), Sept. 11, 2007

A man facing drug trafficking charges in Vanderhoof has been linked to mysterious loans, questionable investments and undocumented payments to former Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) executives and staff, according to a just-released independent forensic audit.

Aaron Takhar made headlines in May after he and two friends driving two separate vehicles were stopped by police near Vanderhoof. Takhar stopped, but the other vehicle didn't and plunged into the Nechako River. One passenger was pulled from the water, but Daljit Sandhu - who's mentioned in the audit report as receiving $8,000 in undocumented payments - drowned. The SUV had 170 marijuana plants inside.

The audit, by PricewaterhouseCoopers, was ordered by the KSA on itself after the defeat of the RAF (Reduce All Fees) party in a court-ordered election last October.

The document reveals that during the 10-month period between December 2005 and November 2006, KSA executives, under the leadership of former chair and executive advisor Takhar, made $144,500 in undocumented payments to KSA executives and employees - including more than $67,000 to Takhar, $20,000 to past-president Danish Butt and $17,000 to former CEO Yasser Ahmad.

The audit found the student association loaned $620,000 to Apex Communications, a Surrey-based telecommunications company. According to auditor Mary Ann Hamilton, the investment was considered high risk as it was only partially secured with a second mortgage on Apex property. KSA regulations prohibit high-risk investments.

The KSA also gave a $200,000 loan to Inderjit Johal, which was paid out of the KSA health and dental account. The loan has since been repaid, but who Johal is and why he was loaned the money remains a mystery.

"I could not locate any KSA Council minutes or other documentation approving or indicating the reasons for this loan," Hamilton writes in the 50-page audit.

"It's really nice to have it all in hard evidence," said Laura Anderson, current chair of the KSA who, along with other student politicians, have been engaged in a two-year legal battle fighting what they viewed as corruption, alleged voting irregularities and fraud by RAF.

"It's students' money. But also, these are the people that are going to be the businessmen and politicians in your community."

The KSA has an annual operating budget of about $1.2 million, the majority of which comes from student fees. The KSA is a self-governing association that operates independently of Kwantlen University College.

The audit documents also showed AST Ventures, a company in which the auditor believes Takhar either controlled or had an interest in, was paid $103,000 from February to August 2006.

While all but three of the cheques were signed by both past KSA chair Danish Butt and treasurer Jatinder (Joey) Atwal or CEO Yasser Ahmad, three dated Aug. 3, 2006 each for $4,240, were signed only by Ahmad. KSA regulations require three signatures on cheques over $3,000.

"It appears that the Prior Council were either not keeping proper records or they deliberately removed these documents from the KSA main office," reads the audit.

A series of e-mails contained in audit documents show Takhar repeatedly telling council members and executives to ensure they deleted e-mails after reading.

A computer forensic analysis found 4,495 e-mails had been deleted from the server on Oct. 31, 2006, the last day the prior council had control over KSA's computer system.

Repeated calls and e-mails to Takhar from The Surrey Leader have not been returned. Most of the prior council members refused interviews with the auditor. The KSA has asked the RCMP to investigate and plan to launch a lawsuit..

= *Whistleblower Unearths Scandal; How one student exposed student association's diverted funds.* By Doug Ward, Vancouver Sun, Sept. 15, 2007

Laura Anderson was a Cassandra at Kwantlen College through much of 2005 and 2006, warning everyone who would listen that something was rotten in the school's student association.

The part-time horticulture student complained that the new executive of the *Kwantlen Student Association* was abusing democratic procedures and playing fast and loose with the KSA's million-dollar budget.

"They were treating the KSA like it was their personal piggy bank and private club house," Anderson recalled in an interview this week. The KSA executive became dominated in May 2005 by the Reduce All Fees (RAF) slate.

"We now refer to the RAF period as the 'dark time,' " Anderson said. "We had directors who were either failing to report financial information or falsifying it."

The leader of this new group was Aaron Takhar, a young, charismatic Kwantlen political-science student who was chair of the KSA during 2005 and then became a paid executive adviser in 2006. Takhar's focus was more on finances and less on policy. In a March 2006 e-mail, he urged other RAF executive members "to focus on the money makers."

The reception Anderson received when she criticized the Takhar- led KSA wasn't always positive. Many people didn't believe her or didn't care.

"I was like the crazy person who stands at the corner, yelling that horrible things are going on while people walk by discounting me as being crazy."

A forensic audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers released earlier this month confirmed that Anderson's warnings weren't crazy. The audit provided her some vindication, uncovering a maze of financial impropriety one current student leader described as "Enron Lite."

The $100,000 audit found that during the period from December 2005 to November 2006 the KSA executive made $144,500 in undocumented payments to KSA executives and employees, including $67,000 to Takhar, $20,000 to past KSA president Danish Butt and $17,000 to former KSA CEO Yasser Ahmad.

The audit, by auditor Mary Ann Hamilton, also found that about $620,000 of student money was loaned out as part of what she called a "high-risk" investment strategy to Apex Communications, a Surrey- based telecommunications company.

She learned that the KSA had paid $1,776 to a security firm called Dolo Investigations for undisclosed surveillance work.

Hamilton also recovered deleted e-mails showing that Takhar's group paid out $5,000 to a federal Liberal activist and organizer in Michael Ignatieff's unsuccessful leadership campaign.

The auditor also complained that the RAF regime was not transparent in its governance: "It appears that the prior council were either not keeping proper records or they deliberately removed these documents from the KSA main office."

The KSA ordered the Pricewaterhouse-Coopers audit after a group led by Anderson defeated Takhar's RAF group in a court-ordered election in October 2006.

Takhar last week described the PricewaterhouseCoopers audit as a "surface investigation that didn't look into any of the matters in great detail."

He said that the audit was compromised because it had been ordered and financed by Anderson and her new KSA executive. "These people were defeated in consecutive elections and they hold a vendetta."

DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES LAID

Takhar also said that Anderson is a professional student (she has attended the school, which most people complete in two years, for seven years) who was simply upset that she and her friends no longer controlled the society and wanted back in the driver's seat.

A lawsuit isn't the only legal problem Takhar faces. Earlier this year he was charged with drug trafficking after police found 170 marijuana plants in an SUV that he had rented.

The driver of the car, Daljit Sandhu, who had also attended Kwantlen and campaigned for Takhar's RAF slate, drowned when he drove the vehicle into the Nechako River to escape the police. Police had initially pulled over Takhar in a separate car and were about to pull over Sandhu when the SUV plunged into the river.

Student societies like the KSA operate under the radar of regulatory oversight. The KSA is a self-governing association that operates independently of Kwantlen University College. It is registered as a non-profit society under the Society Act of B.C. but the provincial Corporations Registry lacks the regulatory teeth to investigate alleged impropriety.

Students typically pay little attention to how the student society spends their fees. (At Kwantlen, the annual student society fee is $80.) Voter turnouts in student elections are generally low.

But these societies offer a degree of influence to those who run them. The annual budget of the KSA, for example, is $1.3 million -- a sum that can cover the cost of many salaries, loans and even, in the case the Takhar-led KSA, parties and boat cruises.

Anderson believes that the KSA saga is a cautionary tale about how student societies at universities and colleges are vulnerable to being taken over by small groups of individuals.

She said student societies at small multi-campus colleges such as Kwantlen, which most students attend for only two years, are especially exposed.

"Schools like Kwantlen don't have a common space for students to gather and build up a student culture," she said. "They are commuter schools: You drive there, you take classes, you leave."

It's this apathy, said Anderson, that Takhar and his friends exploited when they won most of the seats in the KSA election in February 2005 on the Reduce All Fees slate. The same apathy allowed RAF to run the society without regard to proper rules, she added.

For instance, in September 2005, Takhar's group held a special general meeting to change the KSA's bylaws in order to reduce the number of elected students on the executive from 20 to nine, double their terms of office to two years -- and expel four rival members of the student association, including Anderson.

In order to attract enough students for a quorum, the RAF executive offered $13,000 in prizes, including MP3 players, TVs, DVD players and an $8,000 grand prize of a tropical vacation.

ASSOCIATION MADE HIGH-RISK LOANS

Documents filed in the B.C. Supreme Court in mid-2006 by Anderson and her group alleged that not only were the prizes not authorized by student council, but that the grand prize was rigged, "with the grand prize not being drawn randomly but rather drawn in a manner designed to ensure that a friend of the (then student association) chair, Aaron Takhar, won the grand prize."

Despite the controversy over the special meeting, RAF won re- election in January 2006. Takhar didn't seek re-election but was instead appointed executive assistant to the KSA.

Months later, Anderson and others launched a court action to nullify their expulsions at the 2005 special meeting. They also sought to have the results of the 2006 election declared void because Takhar had appointed the chief returning officer, Amar Randhawa, a federal Liberal activist.

The Anderson group won an out-of-court settlement in the summer of 2006 that included their reinstatement to the KSA and a court- ordered election. Anderson won re-election and is now chair of the KSA and director of external relations.

She and her allies took control on Nov. 1, 2006. They entered the KSA offices accompanied by the audit team from PricewaterhouseCoopers. The accountants found that 4,495 e-mails had been deleted from the KSA e-mail server on Oct. 31, the last day of the previous council's term in office.

They retrieved an e-mail, sent by Takhar to a colleague when he was KSA executive adviser, that said: "Delete everything!"

Various records, including the 2006 electronic accounting records for the KSA and supporting documentation for payments made out of the KSA bank accounts, could not be found.

Former KSA CEO Ahmad, according to the audit report, said that the 2006 accounting records were kept on a portable laptop that he left on his desk in the KDA office. The laptop was never found by the auditors.

Takhar said it's normal for outgoing administrations to delete e- mails. "There was nothing that we were hiding." Takhar also said that "when I was at the helm of the organization, we always kept proper records." The PricewaterhouseCoopers team was able to retrieve most of the deleted e-mails from the KSA's server.

The auditor found that Takhar should have received, according to his contract, $45,643 while employed as KSA executive adviser. Yet documents show that Takhar received about $113,436 between February and August 2006.

PricewaterhouseCoopers found that most of this money was paid to AST Ventures, a consulting firm that invoiced KSA for Takhar's services and which bears his initials.

The audit found that the KSA in December 2005 loaned $580,000 to Westlund Properties Corp. and $40,000 to Apex Communications Inc. Auditor Hamilton described these loans as high-risk because they were only partially secured by a second mortgage against a commercial property in Surrey.

Hamilton also found out that a company called Kultak Financial Inc. had previously loaned $150,000 to Westlund. She said the shareholders of Kultak are Alan and Kuldip Takhar, who she believed are relatives of Aaron Takhar as they share the same home address.

Takhar denied that the Westlund loan was high-risk, calling it a legitimate business investment that earned six-per-cent interest. "We have nothing to hide. We are very happy about that loan."

NO RECEIPTS FOUND FOR MONEY SPENT

Hamilton also found that the KSA had loaned $200,000 to Inderjit Johal out of the KSA's health and dental plan. She could not find any documentation approving or indicating the reasons for the loan. The loan was repaid eventually with interest by Johal, about whom the auditor was unable to find any information.

The auditor also found that the KSA paid $20,500 to three different people and one company to fund an event called the "After Party." But she could not locate any receipts for this event or documents indicating approval by the KSA board.

The investigation also learned that the previous executive paid $5,000 to Bilal Cheema in August 2006 for strategic communications advice -- just two months prior to the court-ordered student election. Cheema has served as special assistant to a number of federal Liberal ministers and was a key organizer in B.C. for the Ignatieff campaign.

Hamilton could find no supporting documents for the amount paid to Cheema or approval in the minutes of the board of directors. Hamilton said Cheema told her his work for the KSA between March and August 2006 amounted to meetings with former KSA president Butt at a Surrey Starbucks. Cheema said he gave verbal advice and never provided a specific report, letter or press release.

But KSA e-mails indicated that Takhar and Butt wanted Cheema to influence the student election by persuading another federal Liberal, Jacques Leger, to become the election's chief returning officer. Jacques Leger was president of the New Westminster-Coquitlam federal Liberal association and, along with Cheema himself, an organizer in the Ignatieff leadership campaign.

An e-mail from Takhar to Butt referred to the upcoming election and said: "keep updated, read below ... our final surprise will be, guess who ... Jacques (sic)!! DELETE THIS E-MAIL RIGHT NOW, and from your trash folder!!"

In another e-mail to Butt, Takhar said: "We gave Bilal $5,000 so what the [expletive] is he going to do for us? Lets sit down with him closer to the election, but make sure you make clear to him NOW instead of later, that we simply need man power come election time, and that he should have at least 4-6 people campaigning as students (even if they don't go to school) during the three polling days!!

"Make this point very clear!! and THEN we will make his 'contract' for the $5,000 and what services he performed!! tell him to clear schedules of his people for those says in particular! give him notice! DELETE THIS E-MAIL."

Questioned by Hamilton, Cheema denied he had any dealings with Takhar and said he did not perform any work for the KSA during the October elections. Leger said he was very busy at the

time of the KSA election and so presented an "outrageous bid" to do the job of chief returning officer. Leger said he never heard back about his bid.

*GROUP SET SIGHTS ON OTHER COLLEGES

Current KSA chair Anderson said the e-mails show that the previous executive wanted Cheema to improperly influence the 2006 election by finding a friendly chief returning officer and by recruiting non-students to come on Kwantlen campuses to campaign for its group.

Other recovered e-mails show that the RAF group was also interested in gaining influence in the student societies at Langara College, Douglas College and Simon Fraser University.

An e-mail in July 2006 from Takhar to KSA president Butt said: "Danish, aren't you going to register us at langara SOON? we need to find out their structure and then register people accordingly. ... "And don't tell anyone our plans yet!! just ask around and act like you may be going there."

In a March 2006 e-mail, Takhar told Butt, "Let's crush all this other bullshit and move quickly! douglas and langara await, not to mention perhaps SFU."

Takhar, now 22, is a political science student at Simon Fraser University. Despite the controversy that surrounds his term at the KSA, he appears to remain interested in student politics -- and the role of slates.

Takhar wrote a letter to The Peak, the SFU student newspaper, in March of this year attacking a decision by the SFU student council to ban slates in elections.

"What a blow to democracy and everything our political systems stand for!" the letter said.

= *Greater accountability over student fees needed; Kwantlen student association*. Surrey Now, Sept. 21, 2007

*A group of Kwantlen students wants changes to provincial rules to provide tighter control of student association finances.

Laura Anderson chairs the Kwantlen Student Association, an organization that provides a number of services to students and advocates on their behalf.

When Anderson and the current executive took office late last year, they ordered a forensic audit of the association's finances, which revealed big problems and led to allegations of fraud against their predecessors.

The Reduce All Fees Party ran the association from May 2005 to November 2006. The audit found nearly $145,000 in unaccounted-for payments to former KSA staffers, executives and

suppliers. It also revealed loans totalling $820,000 made in apparent violation of KSA rules and missing financial records for 2006 that have never been found.

The association is funded through mandatory fees paid by Kwantlen students when they register for classes. While the college collects the fees on behalf of the KSA, it has no authority to monitor how the money is used.

The KSA, like other student associations, is an independent organization registered as a non-profit under the Society Act of B.C. The act doesn't require the associations to file financial reports with Victoria.

"This is a problem for any non-profit group. If someone wants to take over and steal all their money, there's nothing you can do except take them to court."

That's exactly what the KSA intends to do, Anderson said. A $1 million lawsuit against the former executive is in the works.

She accused the RAF executive of ignoring KSA rules to conceal improper financial dealings until it was too late to stop them.

Anderson wants to see the Society Act changed to require groups like the KSA to file annual financial reports with the registrar in Victoria. The reports would be available to the public and could reveal any improprieties.

Anderson also wants KSA rules changed to require an auditor's recommendations with the financial statements presented at each of the association's annual general meetings. The recommendations would help interpret the statements for members and reveal any problems.

A number of Kwantlen students who spoke to the Now said the college should have some oversight authority in KSA affairs. "Obviously that should be," said Sonny Singh, a first-year business student. "There should be a record for every transaction."

Pre-nursing student Karen Sangha agreed, saying it made sense to have the college administration or the Ministry of Advanced Education keep any eye on the KSA piggy bank. Anderson rejected the notion, citing the potential for "political interference" in the association's affairs.

"We don't want them saying, 'You can't spend money on that.' It would affect our independence. These problems aren't unique to the KSA. It's the act that needs to be changed."

Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell was unavailable for comment.

= *KSA sues former student leaders.* By Erin Millar, Maclean's Magazine, Aug. 18, 2008

If you asked ousted Kwantlen student leader Aaron Takhar, he'd probably accuse the current Kwantlen crew of throwing away student money with frivolous lawsuits. At least that's what he suggested in an interview with *Maclean's* last year when he was threatened with a lawsuit for allegedly making "generous" payments to himself and his friends courtesy of the students of Kwantlen College.

"They have threatened to sue us a number of times and nothing has happened," he said in an August 2007 interview. "If they try to take it to court, they will just be wasting more student money."

Well, that day has come. The Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) commenced a lawsuit Monday against Takhar and three of his former cronies. The Writ of Summons filed with the B.C. Supreme Court alleges that Aaron Singh Takhar, three other former student politicians, and AST Ventures (notice a pattern?) made $140,000 in unsupported payments and entered into $820,000 of unapproved, high risk loans between May 2005 and October 2006.

KSA general manager Desmond Rodenbour is optimistic that the KSA will recover the missing funds. He estimates that the KSA's damages have been in the $500,000 range, including costs for the investigation, which included a PricewaterhouseCoopers forensic audit. The suit will also seek punitive damages.

This is just the latest of Takhar's legal troubles. In May 2007, he was charged with possession for the purpose of trafficking after he and two friends traveling near Vanderhoof, B.C. in two vehicles were pulled over for a routine check. Although Takhar stopped his car, his friends' SUV — rented in Takhar's name, according to police, and containing 170 pot plants — fled police and plunged into the Nechako River, killing Daljit Sandhu.

According to a forensic audit, Sandhu had received $8,000 in undocumented payments from the KSA. Then in February, Pritpal Singh Virk — who was the second person in the doomed SUV — died in hospital after being shot on a Vancouver street.

Read *Maclean's* coverage of Takhar's alleged improprieties at Kwantlen College below.

> ***The ugly side of student politics***
> *How one university's council collapsed into chaos, corruption and threatened lawsuits*
> Erin Millar, August 30, 2007

*Aaron Takhar was not your standard student politician. While most focus on organizing marches for lower tuition or representing students in academic disputes, Takhar saw financial opportunity in student politics. And when he came to power as president and executive adviser of the Kwantlen University College Student Association (KSA) in Surrey, B.C., in May 2005, he was determined to "focus on the money-makers," as he wrote in an email to his fellow KSA employees in March 2006.

Now, with a new student council in place, allegations of financial impropriety and malfeasance are swirling around Takhar's ousted administration, and his critics are vowing legal action. According to an audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Takhar dispensed almost $150,000 in unsupported payments in just the 10-month period audited.

The forensic investigators hired by the new student government say that hundreds of thousands in "high risk" loans were handed out in violation of the union's policies. As part of its investigation, PricewaterhouseCoopers recovered thousands of deleted emails detailing Takhar's tenure — emails that critics say point to widespread corruption and improper spending.

Takhar, who studied political science at Kwantlen for two years before transferring to Simon Fraser University in 2006, says he decided to run for office because he felt that the previous student council wasn't doing its job. The sleepy university-college campus struggled with low student participation, and a sometimes strained relationship between the KSA and the school's administration. Thanks to his efforts, "people actually noticed the student association for once," he says.

Laura Anderson, however, tells a very different story. She says Takhar's brief time atop the KSA was characterized by political manipulation and rampant overspending. "It made me sick to my stomach. I couldn't stand it," the criminology major says of Takhar's council. "They were basically gambling with thousands of students' money." And that is why she fought in court for two years to get her job on student council reinstated and is now planning to sue over the forensic audit she and her fellow council members ordered when finally back in office.

*According to Takhar's critics, he was willing to do whatever was necessary to get hold of the KSA and its $1.6 million in revenues. Anderson alleges that he hired a private investigator to spy on rivals, and meddled with ballot boxes during elections. According to auditor Mary Ann Hamilton, after asserting his control, Takhar allegedly paid KSA execs and staff to do little verifiable work, made payments to a company she believed he had an interest in or controlled, and collected more than $100,000 in salary and various payments from the KSA. Takhar claims that the audit is full of inaccuracies and is biased in favour of the current council members who commissioned it.

There is no question, however, that soon after Takhar got involved in KSA politics, the student government devolved into acrimony. One of the first things Takhar did upon taking office was to call a special annual meeting to make significant changes to the society's bylaws. Anderson says that Takhar and his supporters on council lured students to the meeting with $13,000 in prizes, including MP3 players, TVs, DVD players, and an $8,000 tropical vacation. Not only were the prizes not approved, but the draw was also rigged, "with the grand prize not being drawn randomly but rather drawn in a manner designed to ensure that a friend of the chair, Aaron Takhar, won," according to court documents filed by Anderson.

Among the changes voted in at the meeting: reducing the number of elected students from 20 to nine; doubling their terms to two years; and expelling four rival student politicians who had also been elected to council, including Anderson. Takhar's opponents insist the vote was not properly run, but the KSA stopped recognizing the four elected students opposed to the new regime.

In the beginning of 2006, the KSA council hired Takhar to take on the additional role of executive adviser. His employment contract shows his annual salary as $58,200, but Anderson's court documents claim that he was actually being awarded over $115,000 per year. The PricewaterhouseCoopers audit found that in addition to his regular paycheques, the KSA was also making significant payments to a consulting company called AST Ventures.

AST are Aaron Takhar's initials, and auditor Mary Ann Hamilton wrote that she believed that Takhar had an interest in or controlled AST. He confirmed to Maclean's that he was listed as the sole director when the company was incorporated in February 2006, and the current director of AST, Jaideep Pannu, told Hamilton that the company's business with the KSA involved Takhar. In an interview with Maclean's, Takhar said he is no longer involved with AST.

*Generous payments were also made to several of Takhar's associates, with little or no documentation. The audit estimates that five employees were each paid as much as $20,000 more than their salaries. Takhar says that because the KSA does not have a company credit card, they paid suppliers out of their pockets and were reimbursed. But auditors were able to find little documentation to back that up. Takhar has repeatedly accused the current KSA council of deliberately destroying those records.

In addition to these payments, auditors also found that the KSA under Takhar doled out $800,000 in "high risk" loans to various companies and individuals, many of which are unsecured. One loan was issued from protected funds to be used only for Kwantlen students' health and dental expenses. Another went to a company that appeared to have a prior business relationship with Takhar's family, according to the audit.

*Eventually Takhar's empire started to fall apart. His emails paint a picture of an organization in disarray. He warns one of his executives to "stay off the phone (you know what I mean). Calls to the Middle East are too expensive for us," and he scolds the staff for "secretly 'borrowing' money." Auditors found that the association racked up over $11,000 in cellphone bills during the 10-month period. Even Takhar's own staff were raising red flags toward the end.

The audit discovered several emails among KSA officials, warning about uncontrolled spending. "I matched up the 2006 source documents with the vendors sheet. Things arent [sic] looking good," says one email addressed to Takhar. "From AST ventures alone, we have approximately $32,000 unaccounted for … u dumb bastard [sic]."

*Unfortunately, Hamilton never got to view the day-to-day accounting records in question. The laptop that apparently contained the KSA's bookkeeping files mysteriously went missing from its offices. "It appears that the prior council was either not keeping proper records or deliberately removed these documents from the KSA main office," Hamilton wrote. Takhar blames the missing records on Anderson's clan.

In the summer of 2006, Anderson pursued a court order to reinstate her to council and force another election. Rather than argue the case in court, Takhar's group agreed to another election last October. Takhar says that he agreed to the election because further litigation was just a waste of students' money.

Evidence in the audit suggests that Takhar tried to manipulate the October election. One questionable payment was to Bilal Cheema, who is unknown to the current KSA, for $5,000. In an interview with Hamilton, Cheema said that the payment was for image-consulting work not connected to the election, but he could produce no specific evidence of his work.

*Emails recovered by PricewaterhouseCoopers suggest that Cheema was actually brought on board to secure a chief returning officer who would be friendly to Takhar's team, and people to pose as campaigning students during the election.

The KSA also paid Dolo Investigations $1,776 for surveillance work conducted on the last day of the October 2006 election. When a current staff member asked Dolo for a copy of their report, they refused. The invoice was addressed to Takhar directly but he denies responsibility for the expenditure.

Despite these efforts, Takhar's colleagues lost the election. Takhar says the vote was marred by irregularities on the other side, but he and his colleagues didn't have the energy to continue the fight and decided it was time to move on. He was put on paid leave and fired with cause two months later after failing to attend meetings discussing his employment status.

These days, Takhar has more pressing legal problems to deal with. Last May, he and two friends were driving two vehicles near Vanderhoof, B.C., when police pulled them over for a routine traffic check. Takhar stopped, but the other SUV (which, according to police, was rented in Takhar's name) turned down a side road and plunged into the Nechako River.

One passenger was pulled from the water, but Daljit Sandhu — who received $8,000 in undocumented payments from the KSA and was one of Takhar's party who had lost the October election — drowned. When the SUV was pulled from the river the next day, the RCMP discovered 170 marijuana plants. Takhar is now facing charges of possession for the purpose of trafficking.

The current council of the KSA is planning to launch a lawsuit against Takhar and other former KSA executives. They have also asked the RCMP to investigate. "These people came into the KSA and treated it like their own candy jar without any consideration for who they are supposed to be serving," says Anderson.

But Takhar is not worried. "They have threatened to sue us a number of times and nothing has happened," he says. "If they try to take it to court, they will just be wasting more student money."

= *Kwantlen Student Association sues former leaders.* By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, August 20, 2008

The *Kwantlen Student Association* is headed back to court yet again, this time suing five former executives over allegations of fraud, mismanagement and theft involving more than $1 million dollars in student fees.

The defendants listed on the statement of claim filed in B.C. Supreme Court on Monday include former Kwantlen student and Reduce All Fees (RAF) party leader Aaron Singh Takhar, former association president Danish Butt, Jaivin Khatri, Yasser Ahmad and Jatinder (Joey) Atwal. The company AST Ventures Ltd., which the KSA alleges Takhar used to funnel money from the student organization to himself, is also listed in the suit.

Though each of the individuals is responsible, said KSA general manager Desmond Rodenbour, the focus of the claim is Takhar, who "appears to us ... is the de facto leader."

The lawsuit stems from findings of financial audits and a forensic audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers last year concluding there were thousands of dollars in mysterious loans, questionable investments and undocumented payments made to KSA executives and staff between December 2005 and November 2006.

This week's suit claims during their time at the KSA's helm, the defendants orchestrated $820,000 in unsecured loans, attempted to use $1 million in the KSA's health and dental plan to profit personally, paid $20,050 for a party that didn't happen and paid more than $140,000 in unsupported payments to RAF affiliate executives and employees.

Legal wrangling with the RAF party and Takhar began after a KSA general election in May 2005 was declared null and void in B.C. Supreme Court due to procedural irregularities. Thirteen of 20 new court-appointed directors were affiliated with RAF, including Takhar as director of finance and Atwal as director of events and student life. Takhar was then elected chairman of the organization by the executive and within a month, the board doubled their own salary without consultation, the KSA alleges.

In August 2006 the court stepped in again, ordering a new election, which RAF lost. The KSA claims in October 2006, the day before the newly elected council took office, one or more of the defendants had e-mail records, expense reports, meeting minutes and accounting records destroyed.

Takhar did not respond to The Leader's request for an interview Tuesday. After the forensic audit last year, he said the findings were biased and the allegations were politically motivated. Takhar argued the investments and loans made during his time with the KSA were legitimate.

In an e-mail early Wednesday morning, former Kwantlen president Danish Butt said Takhar and the other defendants were out of town.

"We strongly refute the allegations made by Desmond Rodenbour and the KSA," Butt said on behalf of the group, noting a statement of defense would be filed. "We intend to vigorously fight this case in order to bring to light the true facts."

Rodenbour said even though it's now been years since the alleged fraudulent activity took place, it's still worthwhile pursuing the lawsuit.

"If we don't ensure that there's a reckoning for what they've done, we've just opened the door for it to happen again," he said. "If the only penalty for this type of heinous act is 'you have to stop' then it's no deterrent at all."

The bulk of the KSA's budget comes from student fees. Full-time students pay a maximum of $47 per semester. There are 17,000 students at Kwantlen Polytechnic University campuses in Surrey, Richmond and Langley.

= *GM of student group receives death threat over college lawsuit*. By Stuart Hunter, The Vancouver Province, September 18, 2008

The general manager of the Kwantlen University College Student Association says he and his family are living in fear after receiving a death threat. The letter was mailed to Desmond Rodenbour at his Vancouver home warning him to stop a lawsuit against former association brass.

The typed letter, riddled with grammatical and spelling errors and signed by "dook," reads: "Mr. Desmond Rodenbour you relay give hard time to our kids no good man, take stip back, don't be to sharp, other whys police well find another foot from Fraser river we give you 10 days for that if you try to involve RCMP, then bye bye son."

Rodenbour, who has no children, said the letter scared him but not enough to stop the suit that names former student association directors and employees as defendants. "At first, I thought the letter might be a joke," he said. "But then I read it over and I thought it could be serious. They did find my home address. "It's totally scary -- it even scared my mom and she doesn't even live there."

Rodenbour said police and college security "are both taking it very seriously in light of the court case." Police have seized the letter, given Rodenbour 911 priority response status and advised him to change his parking patterns and work hours and keep his blinds closed.

"We would take anything like that seriously," said Const. Jana McGuinness. "We treat it as a credible threat and do a follow-up investigation." College security is escorting Rodenbour to and from campus.

The student association is suing five former executives and staff alleging they are responsible for almost $1 million in financial irregularities, including theft and fraud. The statement of claim

filed in B.C. Supreme Court alleges the five defendants, members of the Reduce All Fees Party, made $820,000 in high-risk and unapproved loans and made more than $140,000 in unsupported payments to party-affiliated executives and employees.

Rodenbour said the suit will continue. "I couldn't stop the lawsuit on my own volition even if I wanted to -- it's like a bowling ball already being halfway down the lane," said Rodenbour, GM since November 2006 and a student association staffer since '99. "My friends keep calling me and joking that the countdown is on and I only have seven days left," he said.

= ***Allegations fly at Kwantlen.*** By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Aug. 8, 2011

The Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) says recent speculation and conflict of interest allegations leveled against it are an attempt by former student executives to divert attention from prior mismanagement of the KSA going as far back as 2002.

Last week, it was revealed that one of the newly elected members of the association, Justine Franson, is the sister of a former KSA member named in a 2008 lawsuit alleging theft and fraud involving thousands of dollars while he was in office. Because the new board changed lawyers - thereby putting the legal action on hold - critics have said Franson is in a conflict of interest because of her family ties to one of the defendants.

In a press release sent out late Friday, current members of the association said though they did fire lawyer David Borins, the legal counsel handling the lawsuit, shortly after taking office, but claims it was because he is a close friend of longtime former KSA general manager Desmond Rodenbour, who was terminated early this year. Although the lawyer has changed, the legal position regarding the 2008 lawsuit has not, said the student group.

The KSA said the conflict allegations against it are intended to divert attention from prior long-term financial fraud. Among other things, the association claims Rodenbour and former chairperson Laura Anderson had an intimate relationship that renders their decisions and spending of million of dollars of student fees questionable.

"These positions are central to the balance of power, ensuring checks and balances, and accountability. This is a clear form of corruption..." the KSA alleged in last week's press release.

The executive has now hired Deloitte & Touche to conduct a forensic review of the society from 2001 to 2011 to highlight what the current student group calls past "fraud, embezzlement and mismanagement." Justine Franson was elected the KSA's director of operations in the spring.

Aaron Takhar, her brother, was leader of the Reduce All Fees (RAF) party, which took power of the KSA in a controversial 2005 vote and then was subsequently ousted in a court-ordered election. Takhar, as well as former association president Danish Butt, Jaivin Khatri, Yasser Ahmad and Jatinder (Joey) Atwal were sued by the subsequent student executive. At the time,

the plaintiffs said the focus of the lawsuit was Takhar, who was considered the leader of the group.

The lawsuit stemmed from findings of financial audits in 2007 concluding there were thousands of dollars in mysterious loans, questionable investments and undocumented payments made to KSA executives and staff between December 2005 and November 2006. None of the allegations have been proven in court.

= *Kwantlen feud deepens; Legal action threatened*. By Sarah Jackson, Richmond News, Aug. 12, 2011

A he-said-she-said controversy, alleging *Kwantlen Student Association* (KSA) connections to a former KSA official under investigation for possible mismanagement of over $2 million has escalated into threats of legal action.

An email issued Monday from the current KSA president Sean "Birdman" Bassi demanded a retraction and an apology from The Runner, an independent student-run newspaper covering Kwantlen Polytechnic University, for coverage of the currently-in-limbo court investigation.

In response, Paul Li, chairman of the Polytechnic Ink Publishing Society Board (which publishes The Runner) posted a public statement rejecting the demands and condemning the lawsuit threats which would see student funds used against students. Li closed the letter inviting Bassi and KSA executives to speak directly with The Runner reporters to comment on the allegations.

Disagreements stem from a story published by The Runner on July 29, claiming reliable evidence that Justine Franson, the current KSA director of operations, is the sister of Aaron Takhar, the former KSA director of external affairs, who is being pursued through the civil courts by the KSA for embezzlement. Nina Sandhu, now director of finance for the KSA, is also mentioned in the article as being Takhar's cousin.

The relationship allegations raise questions about the status of the pending Takhar case. On April 1, Franson's first day in office, the KSA passed a resolution ordering the lawyer on the case to cease all related activity until further notice. The KSA simultaneously named Franson as the sole liaison with their legal counsel.

But the KSA is adamant that this does not mean the lawsuit has been frozen or paused. "On August 2, 2011 the Executive voted unanimously to reaffirm decisions of our Society since taking office, including matters relating to this case. The Directors of Operations and Finance had no involvement in the decision and noted their abstentions.

Therefore, this conflict issue has now come to a close," Bassi wrote in an email to the News. This, however, does not explain why links on the media releases page of the KSA website, which included links to a PricewaterhouseCoopers' forensic audit findings following the original Takhar scandal, have been removed.

Nor does it explain KSA's reticence, argues Li. "They refused to comment, they slammed doors in our faces. That letter (referencing legal action) from Mr. Bassi is as close to a response from the KSA as we've been able to get," said Li.

An alternate message, however, has been loud and clear. Members of the KSA have called the RCMP twice to warn Runner reporters to essentially tread carefully. During one of those confrontations, the RCMP told reporters their camera would be confiscated if they tried to photograph a member of the KSA.

"They have not addressed the idea that they [Franson and Takhar] are related, they're just simply denying that there is a conflict of interest," said Matt DiMera, the Kwantlen student and Runner news editor who broke the story.

Meanwhile, Kwantlen staff are looking into actions available to them should the allegations prove true. It's more complicated than simply disbanding the KSA, as the university and the KSA function as two separate business entities, said Kwantlen spokesperson Joanne Saunders.

"We know the allegations. We're taking them very, very seriously. We are doing what we can to gather information on our end to support the students."

Saunders noted that, generally, only the current KSA members would be in a position to address the potential conflict of interest, but that the governing Society Act may come into play if allegations prove true. The Society Act requires directors of societies to disclose conflicts of interest.

DiMera hopes students will voice their concerns to expedite a resolution. "Students can keep asking questions, they can show an interest, they can show they care," he said.

And it appears they do care. One 365member Facebook group, the Concerned Students of Kwantlen - KSA Watch, is already tracking the news closely.

The supposed embezzlement is still fresh in the memories of some, who saw Takhar and his Reduce All Fees (RAF) party make headlines in 2007, and then in 2008 for being sued by the next round of KSA officials to recoup theft and fraud losses.

Takhar was again in the news in July 2008 after a pot-filled SUV he rented and was driving in front of caravan-style, according to police, fled from an RCMP road check and plunged into the Nechako River near Vanderhoof, killing the driver, Richmond's Daljit Sandhu. The passenger of the SUV, Pritpal Singh Virk, was murdered less than a year later.

= Student association in hot water; University board wants power to intervene to control how money is spent. By Jennifer Saltman, The Province (Vancouver), September 19, 2011

*Kwantlen Polytechnic University is asking the province to change legislation so universities can intervene in student association business to protect the millions of dollars in student fees they collect.

The *Kwantlen Student Association* has a history of financial problems and is involved in three active lawsuits - two of which were filed in August.

Recent allegations about how money is being spent, how the student association is operating and ties between the current executive and a former board member who is accused of mismanaging funds has the university concerned.

John McKendry, president of Kwantlen, said the university needs some control of an association its students support with their hard-earned dollars.

"It's the independence of the body that allows them to go off in various directions that the institution may not feel are in the best interests of the institution, its reputation and the students that come here for an education," said McKendry.

All students who take credit courses are required to be members of the *Kwantlen Student Association* and three years ago their annual dues totalled about $2.3 million. That amount has increased, but neither the university or the student association were able to give a new figure.

The university's board and administration doesn't have control over how that money is managed or how the association conducts its affairs because the student association is autonomous and governed by the Society Act.

*Twelve years ago legislative amendments were made in response to requests from the Canadian Federation of Students and many B.C. student societies requesting more autonomy. Before that time, institutions had more oversight respecting the collection of student fees.

In an emailed statement, Advanced Education Minister Naomi Yamamoto confirmed that student societies in B.C. operate independently.

McKendry said the administration's associate vice-president of student life is in constant contact with the KSA. "Unfortunately communications haven't been as timely and as complete as they need to be, period," McKendry said. "We have found ourselves with a few difficulties as a result of it."

Nina Kaur, director of finance for the student association, said communications will be smoother now that the school year is under way.

"I stand by our rules, and I think we have good checks and balances in place. I think people can feel very confident in the operations of this council," Kaur said.

The association's credibility problems began in May 2005 when the B.C. Supreme Court appointed new directors after a botched election. In August 2006, the court ordered a new election after complaints about bylaws and the expulsion of association members.

Two years later, the association sued former directors Aaron Takhar, Danish Butt, Jatinder Atwal and Jaivin Khatri and ex-senior employee Yasser Ahmad, alleging they made more than $140,000 in unsupported payments and more than $820,000 in high-risk and unapproved loans.

The student association has been accused of deliberately holding up the case - the last case-planning conference took place May 9 - because Kaur and the former director of operations, Justine Franson, are related to Takhar. Franson resigned Aug. 11. Kaur said she has no plans to resign.

In a presidential update on the association's website, Sean "Pac Birdman" Bassi said that in April the executive voted to change their general legal counsel and noted Franson and Kaur's abstentions from matters dealing with the lawsuit because of the "perceived" conflict of interest.

Within the space of a week, two more lawsuits were filed last month. On Aug. 26, former general manager Desmond Rodenbour sued the association, followed five days later by a suit filed by the association and Kaur targeting the anonymous owner of a critical website called ksatruth.ca.

Kwantlen's board has taken issue with the legislative restrictions before - in a letter to the province in 2008, and during submissions last year to the group currently reviewing the Society Act.

"It is a concern, it has been a concern in past years," McKendry said. "We have tried to act responsibly in advising the government." McKendry said Kwantlen is consulting with legal counsel about its options.

In August, the student association withheld funding from the student newspaper, The Runner, which has been a vocal critic of the association. The funds have since been restored and a mediator engaged.

Some students are also skeptical of how the association does business - there are Facebook pages dedicated to critiquing its operations. "There's a lot of stuff that's going around right now," Kaur said. "It's just important to remember to be open and transparent and do what we were brought in to do."

A leadership consultant is doing a document review of operations between 2007 and 2011 because of "deficiencies" in the council operations during that time. Kaur said the current council has good staff.

"This council has taken steps to follow through on what it thinks is proper procedures," she said. "We have one year in office and we want to make sure we get something accomplished with this governance review."

= ***Kwantlen Student Association settles lawsuit.*** By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Oct. 17, 2011

A lawsuit against former Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) directors involving the alleged mismanagement of more than $1 million in student fees has been settled. In an online statement dated Sept. 30, KSA president Sean Birdman confirmed the current student group decided to dismiss the case, and that there would be no additional cost to any of the parties involved.

"This lawsuit had been a five-year process with absolutely no finish line in sight," wrote Birdman. "Kwantlen students have already funded the battle to the tune of $800,000 in legal fees and staff time, and there was a very low probability that our council would be victorious in the case to recoup the monies that went into it."

The settlement comes just two months after conflict of interest allegations erupted at Kwantlen over decisions being made by KSA members who were elected earlier this year. The new members of the student association were accused of postponing the civil suit because two directors were related to one of the defendants, Aaron Takhar.

In fact, Justine Franson, who served as director of operations but has since resigned, is Takhar's sister. Nina Kaur is Takhar's cousin.

The 2008 lawsuit, which named Takhar, Danish Butt, Jaivin Khatri, Yasser Ahmad, Jatinder (Joey) Atwal and AST Ventures Ltd., stemmed from findings of a financial review in 2007 that concluded there were thousands of dollars in questionable loans and investments and undocumented payments made to KSA executives and staff between 2005 and 2006. It was alleged the defendants orchestrated $820,000 in unsecured loans, attempted to use $1 million in the KSA's health and dental plan to profit personally and paid $20,050 for a party that didn't happen.

Takhar was leader of the Reduce All Fees (RAF) party, which took power of the KSA in a controversial 2005 vote and was then ousted in a court-ordered election. He and the other defendants were sued by the subsequent student executive, which included then-chairperson Laura Anderson and longtime KSA general manager Desmond Rodenbour.

Kaur and Franson were directors in April when the lawyer handling the lawsuit was let go, spurring the conflict allegations. However, they argued the dismissal was because the lawyer was a friend of Rodenbour, who was terminated earlier this year after an independent review found "substantive abuses of his position."

In August, current KSA members said the conflict-of-interest allegations were nothing but a ploy by former student directors to divert attention from prior longterm financial fraud and embezzlement.

The current KSA has hired Deloitte & Touche to conduct a forensic review of the society from 2001 to 2011 in hopes of setting the record straight.

However, on a Facebook page called Concerned Students of Kwantlen -- KSA Watch, negative response to the lawsuit being dropped was swift.

"As a Kwantlen student, I hang my head in shame today," said Katie Walker. "I cannot believe the actions of the council, nor the lack of options provided to the students to oust such a destructive KSA. That it would even be legal for a council with such a conflict of interest be allowed to make such a decision disgusts me."

Matt Todd, who was once a White Rock councillor and is former KSA director of operations, said the settlement is part of a "long string of actions" that violate the KSA's own regulations, adding it is up to students to "rise up and hold these directors accountable."

"Wow, just wow," said Daniel McCully. "I hope the students get angry enough to demand something be done about the situation."

= ***Kwantlen students vote to oust KSA directors.*** By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Nov. 30, 2011

Interim directors will be appointed and a new election called in the new year after Kwantlen Polytechnic University students voted to oust the current Kwantlen Student Association at a special meeting Wednesday afternoon.

Scheduled to begin at 2 p.m., the meeting was delayed for more than an hour after someone pulled the fire alarm and a hallway full of people was pepper sprayed. The meeting finally resumed, and after the fire alarm was pulled a second time, the vote finally proceeded.

More than 350 students - well above the minimum quorum of 250 - voted for the removal of five executives and eight voting council members (one of whom has already resigned).

The Special General Meeting (SGM) was called after a 277-name petition was presented earlier in November, demanding the removal of the five executives and eight other voting council members from office, placing them in bad standing so they may never run for the KSA again, and to install a new set of bylaws.

Prior to the meeting, student Arzo Ansary said a "bunch" of students were disheartened by what they saw going on and didn't feel they were getting any answers.

"They felt this is the only avenue they had left," Ansary said, adding there are fears the controversy is harming Kwantlen's reputation.

Much of the opposition began after it was discovered the association had put a lawsuit involving former director Aaron Takhar and others on hold. At the time, it was revealed at least two of the newly elected directors are related to Takhar - his sister Justine Franson and cousin Nina Kaur. Franson has since resigned.

The longstanding lawsuit, which involved the alleged mismanagement of more than $1 million in students fees, was subsequently dismissed without costs. There are also allegations the current executives raised their pay by 40 per cent, spent $100,000 on a concert and spent thousands of dollars on legal fees.

Prior to the SGM, the KSA's director of finance Nina Kaur said the meeting was invalid for several reasons, but, in respect to the students who showed up, hoped to have an open forum to hear their concerns. Kaur said she and other elected directors spent Tuesday handing out pamphlets and speaking to students on campuses.

"A lot of our membership has been provided with false information that's led students to believe the KSA is acting in a ridiculous manner, spending recklessly," she said.

Kaur said she's unsure why she and other KSA members have been targeted, but suspects it's politically motivated. Many longtime directors were unseated in the April student election, which saw a huge turnover and large margin of victory for those now in power, she said.

Kaur noted Deloitte & Touche has been hired to do a full governance review so the KSA can move forward and ensure its practices are in order. There was no answer at the KSA office Wednesday afternoon.

= Chaos erupts at Kwantlen; Pepper spray and fire alarms fill halls during unanimous vote to impeach divisive KSA board. By Carolyn Cooke and Amy Reid, Surrey Now, Dec. 1, 2011

A pepper spray bomb wasn't enough to end a unanimous vote by students to oust the *Kwantlen Student Association* board of directors.

At about 2: 20 p.m. Wednesday, more than 200 students had already registered for the special meeting in the gymnasium at the Surrey campus. Nearly that many more were still waiting in line for the meeting and vote when a pepper spray bomb was let off in the gym and the fire alarm was pulled.

A student who identified herself only as Christine said she was enveloped in the cloud of pepper spray and was still having stomach spasms more than half an hour later. "My whole stomach is hurting," she said. "I coughed for 20 minutes straight."

The scene immediately after the bomb was let off was chaotic, with a lot of racist chants, swearing and yelling, according to witnesses. Police were searching for three students seen running away from the scene - all dressed in black and wearing hoodies.

Adam Heffey, who was seated inside when the incident happened, said he first heard the fire alarm and assumed it had been pulled to disrupt the meeting.

But then the pepper spray forced everyone out into the parking lots and open spaces outside. Another student said dozens of people were coughing hard for about 20 minutes, and some tried to wash their eyes with water to reduce the burning.

The battle consuming the student body has included lawsuits, allegations of corruption and conflict of interest that has its roots in a previous board from a few years back.

The current board members had hired private security for its meetings, as well as the one set up for the impeachment vote, according to students waiting to be allowed back in for the meeting. And it was cited as yet another example of how badly disconnected the board was from its members. Many speculated the pepper spray bomb and fire alarm was tied to those about to be voted out.

"I wouldn't even say I'm surprised (by the antics)," said Leah Godin. Tessa Wickel agreed. "This just further solidifies how I feel about the whole thing," she said.

"It made me proud to be Kwantlen today to see so many people stand up for what they believe in," she added as she surveyed the hundreds of students patiently waiting for the firefighters to allow them back into the gym.

Later, at 3: 45 p.m., as the gym was refilling with students, the fire alarm was pulled again, setting off another round of pandemonium. Organizers then stationed a person at each fire alarm to ensure the meeting could go ahead.

Arzo Ansary, a student organizer for the meeting, said there were three items on the agenda. The meeting had three aims, she said: to remove the board of directors from their positions, along with other members (totalling 13 in all), to be put in bad standing so they couldn't run in future elections, and to replace the current bylaws with revised ones supported by students.

One of the meeting organizers and concerned student Reena Bali was in line when the pepper spray was released. "I got a whiff of it and covered my face," she said. "It was a frenzy."

While Bali said she couldn't comment on who was responsible for the pepper spray or pulling the fire alarms, she said when it happened, it looked like more than the needed 250 students had come out to vote.

"This is a symbol of hope," Bali said, holding up her blue wristband, which students were given after registering for the meeting. "I have deadlines tomorrow and Friday, but I've given up my own time to be here. I want to mobilize students. We have to hold them accountable," she said of the KSA.

Every one of the 397 registered students at the meeting voted to get rid of the 13 singled out, although Karamveer Dhillon - the director and Surrey representative - resigned.

A temporary board of directors was installed, with a vote set for the first week of February to elect a whole new permanent executive. "It was really overwhelming. It was amazing to see students get together and unanimously impeach those members that were elected," said Bali.

Especially after all the drama that took place earlier that afternoon, she added. Ironically, Bali said she thinks the pranks gave students a stronger will to vote.

"It was frustrating," she said of the events, "but students figured it was to try to get them away, so most of them tried their best to stick around."

= *Ousted KSA directors vow to take fight to court*. By Sheila Reynolds, Surrey Leader, Dec. 5, 2011

Members of the Kwantlen Student Association (KSA) board who were impeached at a meeting on the Surrey Kwantlen Polytechnic University campus last week say they plan to take their fight to the Supreme Court of Canada if the "botched" and "unfair" situation is not resolved.

Last Wednesday afternoon, at a special meeting that was delayed by fire alarms and pepper spray, more than 350 students voted for the removal of a dozen of 16 KSA directors. The Special General Meeting (SGM) was called after a 277-name petition was presented earlier in November, demanding the members of KSA be removed, placed in bad standing so they may never run for the KSA again, and a new set of bylaws installed. The vote passed unanimously. Interim directors were also appointed and a new election called for early in the new year.

However, the ousted group called the meeting "botched" and said due process was not followed. They say the general meeting was actually called for Monday, Dec. 5 and that they had rallied their supporters to show up on that day, not Nov. 30.

KSA president Sean Birdman said his group sent a complaint to the university noting the rising tensions and a perceived racism as all 26 of the targeted students are south Asian.

"The University did nothing to protect us," Birdman said. "Shockingly, they responded by banning our councillors from campus altogether, changing the locks on our office doors, and handing the keys to the opposition group purportedly appointed on November 30."

Birdman and his colleagues want last week's meeting declared null and void. If not, the fight will proceed to B.C. Supreme Court, the group vowed this week.

Much of the initial opposition to the executive elected early this year began after it was discovered the association had put a lawsuit involving former director Aaron Takhar and others on hold. At the time, it was revealed at least two of the newly elected directors are related to Takhar - his sister Justine Franson and cousin Nina Kaur. Franson has since resigned. The longstanding lawsuit, which involved the alleged mismanagement of more than $1 million in students fees, was subsequently dismissed without costs. There are also allegations the current

executives raised their pay by 40 per cent, spent $100,000 on a concert and spent thousands of dollars on legal fees.

Jennifer Campbell, Langley Campus Director for the KSA, said students are finally having their voices heard.

"Over the past months students have attempted to attend council meetings to have their concerns heard only to be met with intimidation through private security at council meetings and public reports that vilify them," Campbell said.

"Students took the first steps to building stronger student governance at Kwantlen," said Ehssan Ghahremani, one of five Interim Directors of the Society, appointed last week.

The ousted group of students planned to rally Monday afternoon to demand the university "recognize and resolve what are blatantly unfair practices" by some students and university officials and grant the "rightful" board of KSA directors access to their offices.

= *Ousted board members say they're still in charge.* By Amy Reid, Surrey Now, Dec. 6, 2011

After tensions came to an all-time high at Kwantlen Polytechnic University last week when a special meeting was called to impeach more than a dozen members of the *Kwantlen Student Association*, those who were ousted say they are still on the executive.

Nearly 400 students voted unanimously to oust the members last Wednesday, Nov. 30. Nina Kaur, who was the chairperson of the KSA board before the vote, said she and several others have been suspended from the university.

University officials couldn't confirm or deny the suspensions, but did say an investigation in the matter is underway. The battle consuming the student body has included lawsuits, allegations of corruption, and conflict of interest that have their roots in a previous board from a few years back.

The impeached officials sent out a press release Dec. 4 saying 400 students signed a petition recognizing the meeting was to be held on Dec. 5 at 3 p.m.

The press release sent by those who were ousted called the Nov. 30 meeting "purported" and "botched."

"We sent an official complaint to the university before our supporters were pepper sprayed and barred from entering that meeting. The university did nothing to protect us. Shockingly, they responded by banning our councillors from campus altogether, changing the locks on our office doors and handing the keys to the opposition group purportedly appointed on Nov. 30," said Sean Birdman in a press release.

He is the KSA president voted out by students on Nov. 30. The press release said if the issue was not resolved Monday, the "rightful board of directors" would take its fight to the B.C. Supreme Court.

The press release said the meeting was to recognize the Nov. 30 meeting as "null and void and to remove the students who stormed and ransacked the KSA offices last Wednesday purporting to be newly appointed directors."

The Dec. 5 meeting didn't materialize. A witness at the school said that at 3: 45 p.m. Monday, a group of about 20 people were protesting in the university's courtyard, led by former student Aaron Takar. He was elected to a KSA executive while a student at Kwantlen and has ties to some of those just ousted.

"We're here because they're not able to speak for themselves," Takar said. Interim KSA director of external affairs Arzo Ansary said the current board cancelled the room booking for the Dec. 5 meeting.

"Their meeting is out of order," she said. Ansary said the ousted members claimed the Nov. 30 meeting was invalid because they were the ones who were supposed to choose the meeting time and date. Ansary said the KSA board wouldn't set a date for the meeting, which allowed for petitioners to set the date themselves - and they did so on Nov. 30.

Kwantlen Polytechnic University president John McKendry said he is "not surprised" at the events that unfolded on Nov. 30, which included pepper spray being set off and the fire alarm being pulled twice.

"We anticipated disruption from a group not willing to go on their own," McKendry said in an email to the Now. McKendry said the impeachment of several KSA members was to be expected. "Students have spoken, and we look forward to them making some positive steps forward.

"The university is mostly concerned with the safety, security and well-being of the students. Allegations as such are a serious matter and the university takes them very seriously."

The Society Act, not the university, governs the KSA, like all student unions. But McKendry did say the university has asked the Ministry of Advanced Education to review the Act and make changes that would allow for the ministry to step in if there were allegations of misappropriation of funds.

= *Kwantlen student leaders settle dispute out of court*. By Sheila Reynolds. Surrey Leader, Feb. 17, 2012

A civil lawsuit against the *Kwantlen Student Association* (KSA) launched by two ousted directors has been settled out of court.

Gary Singh Dhaliwal and Balninna (Nina) Sandhu filed a civil suit in B.C. Supreme Court last month saying that a special general meeting Nov. 30 at Kwantlen Polytechnic University (KPU), during which they were impeached, was improperly called, unfairly conducted and should be declared null and void.

On Thursday (Feb. 16), the KSA released a resolution document showing that the student association and Dhaliwal/Sandhu have agreed that the meeting was "validly called, convened, and held" and that the resolutions expelling former directors and electing new directors and bylaws were also valid.

However, the parties also agreed that a special resolution which placed more than two dozen individuals in bad standing - meaning they could never run for the KSA again - was not legitimate because it did not meet notice requirements laid out in KSA bylaws.

Still, the resolution says, the 26 former directors and others "have voluntarily agreed not to participate in the affairs of the KSA in any manner for the next three years, including seeking office as directors of the society."

Student politics heated up at KPU shortly after an election last spring that saw a large turnover of directors. Allegations of overspending and corruption against the new student leaders soon followed.

The controversy intensified when it was discovered two of the newly elected - Nina Sandhu and Justine Franson - were related to former director Aaron Takhar, against whom the KSA had a longstanding lawsuit. The suit was dropped in October by the new group. Franson, Takhar's sister, had resigned prior, but anger amongst students continued to simmer.

More than 350 students attended the special meeting last November at the Surrey campus - during which fire alarms were pulled and pepper spray was used - voting unanimously to have certain directors expelled and other individuals placed in bad standing.

This week's out-of-court resolution states the agreement was motivated by a "desire to resolve all outstanding issues from the past in order to allow the KSA to move forward and focus on serving the students."

All parties have agreed not to engage in further litigation regarding past KSA events or speak further about the settlement. The KSA will also compensate Sandhu and Dhaliwal for legal costs.

==========