

the journal *extra*

Saint Mary's University's Independent Student Newspaper

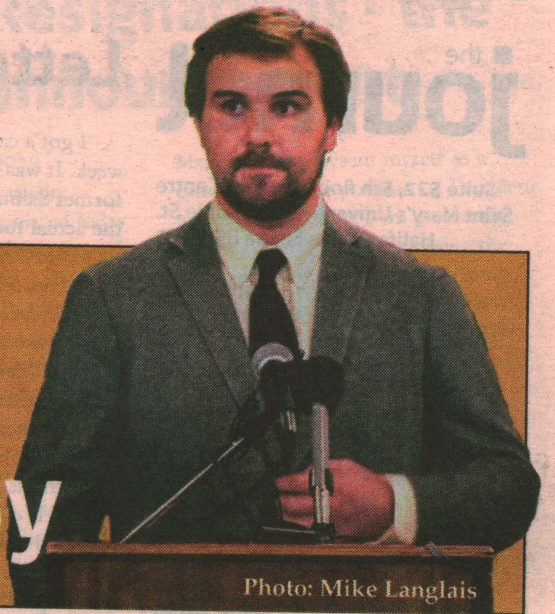


Photo: Mike Langlais

SPECIAL REPORT

Frosh Week Chant Controversy

As it happened

A timeline of the controversy
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"Rape chant" rocks campus



An offensive chant taught to freshmen during Saint Mary's University Orientation Week in Halifax is causing a stir both on and off campus.

Cydney Proctor

An Instagram video was captured during the school's annual TURFBURN event Monday, Sept. 2, wherein 80 frosh leaders led new students in a chant singing "Y is for your sister, O is for 'oh so tight,' U is for underage, N is for no consent, G is for grab that ass – Saint Mary's boys we like them young."

According to Saint Mary's University Student Association President Jared Perry, this is a chant that has been taught to frosh for years.

Lewis Rendell, a representative from the SMU Women's Centre, a space on campus that holds an event in collaboration with Dalhousie Women's Centre each year called ConsentFest, said that this is "appalling, clearly, and perpetuating wider ideals that are not exclusive to the university. It's just a manifestation of rape culture, in a really obnoxious and brazen way."

Perry has said that this year it might be "a good idea" for SMUSA to sponsor ConsentFest, which it has not done in the past.

As of 5 p.m. EDT, Thursday, Sept. 5, #chant and other terms related to the incident were trending on Twitter in Halifax as students, alumni and the public responded to the 15-second clip

of cheering leaders.

In a statement, SMU's president, Dr. Colin Dodds, said "My colleagues and I were shocked by this incident and are deeply sorry that our students, and now the community at large, were exposed to disturbing sexually charged material. The University regrets that this was allowed to occur and we apologize unreservedly. I am taking measures to ensure it does not happen in the future."

Perry, president of SMUSA, has stepped down from his position of chair of the board of directors at StudentsNS, a provincial post-secondary student association federation, with Executive Director Jon Williams saying in a written statement "StudentsNS, its members, and all of the students we represent unequivocally condemn the SMU chant. There is not, and has never been, any place for this sort of culture on our university campuses."

When asked why he wasn't stepping down as president of SMUSA, Perry said that his new goal would be to work with members of the Student Association and the University to target sexism that he feels is pervasive on campus. He did however point to SMU not being an

isolated incident, citing support he has been receiving from other Student Association presidents nationwide.

Last week the student group, with the collaboration of the provincial government, announced the beginning of projects spread over several campus to educate and prevent sexual assault, an investment of \$41,156.

Frosh leaders have been ordered to take sensitivity training and the student association executive are being sent to a conference next week at Saint Francis Xavier University to attend a conference about sexual violence and consent. Rendell said that that is a good start, but that SMUSA should let the student body know who is giving the sensitivity training. Perry and other students have said that this chant and others have been a part of frosh weeks past, at least since 2009, with chants alluding to rolling a joint and masturbation, as well as the rivalry between Dalhousie, Acadia and Saint Mary's.

Perry says that none of the frosh leaders, Orientation Week facilitators or the 300-400 students on the turf that day "saw the message" that was in the chants, and are committed to "turning it around."

Reaction from Dr. Dodds, SMU President

Press Release, Sept 5 2013

A recent Orientation Week event involving student leaders chanting inappropriate and offensive lyrics is completely inexcusable and violates our University's commitment to upholding the values of equality and respect.

My colleagues and I were shocked by this incident and are deeply sorry that our students, and now the community at large, were exposed to disturbing sexually charged material. The University regrets that this was allowed to occur and we apologize unreservedly. I am taking measures to ensure it does not happen in the future."

While Orientation Week is a student-led initiative, the Senior Director of Student Services Keith Hotchkiss, and others, including an HRM Community police officer met with the Orientation Week leaders prior to the event and spoke with them specifically about the issue of sexual assault and sexual consent.

However, I accept that I and the University administration have a role to

oversee and guide student leaders. We failed in that responsibility.

As immediate steps to address that issue, I have called for a special meeting with the executive and board of the Student Association, asking them to account for their actions.

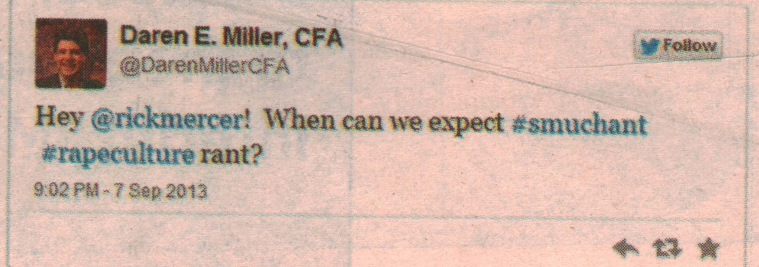
As well, the 80 student leaders involved have already been mandated to take a sensitivity seminar that will be put on by specialists and University staff before the end of the month. The SMUSA executive have also been mandated to attend a conference at STFX University on the subject of consent and sexual assault.

I am initiating a Presidential Council to review and implement the best ways forward to prevent sexual harassment and assault on our campus and ensure Saint Mary's is always a place where our students can feel safe and respected.

The membership of the Council has not yet been finalized, but will be campus wide, including a representative of Saint Mary's Women's Centre.

Social Media Explosion

Here are two samples of what people are saying about #smuchant:



the journal

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Letter from the Editor

I got a call from Finland this week. It was a friend of mine and former Saintamarian, asking "What the actual fuck?" about the goings on at SMU this week. This story has blown up, it has gone viral, global.

The eyes of the country, the eyes of the world have been fixed on Saint Mary's University the past week. Journalists were crawling the campus, there were tears, some people lost their jobs - and frankly in many ways, this is just the beginning. The Journal is committed to being a paper for SMU students, and reporting the news that matters to them; everyone on campus has been affected by what

has been going on. Whether you think that the chant was inappropriate or something that has been blown way out of proportion, it has been the central news on campus for much of the last week, and the fallout is going to change some of the very fabric of the university.

So here you go, SMUdents, The Journal's Special Edition on the Orientation Week chant. A roundup of news, photos, press releases, opinions, and where we can go from here.

Cydney Proctor
Editor-in-Chief

I support you Jared Perry, only if you take a crisis-management class

Kwon Lee

In the past week, Saint Mary's University has made a mark in the national media, with the now-infamous "rape-chant" putting the reputation of the university is at stake. Most recently, notable members of Student Union, Jared Perry and Carrigan Desjardins resigned under the public pressure created by media and negligence of Saint Mary's University administration.

Before I continue on with this piece, I'd like to state that there is no way to defend such behaviour of frosh leaders and rightful actions must be taken to draw a distinct line between what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. The reason why I am writing this article is to examine whether or not the blame should be put on Mr Perry himself as a Student Union leader.

In the past few days, national media and social media have depicted this incident with Mr Perry at the centre. It was amplified to such degree because of his incompetence in handling sharp questions from veteran journalists and his ego, making him pledge to run in an upcoming by-election.

Let's take a breather for a second. If you were in his shoes, how would have handled this issue? I can only imagine the pressure of speaking

in front of national media only to be quoted selectively and made fun of. The fact of the matter is, regardless of what came out of Mr Perry's mouth, it was all predetermined that he was to be taking the blame and the fall for this unfortunate act of foolish and idiotic young frosh leaders.

In past few days, Mr Perry has taken quite a blow to his reputation as well as his dignity. Numerous threats and discussions regarding his future career have thrived on social media, and the truth of the matter is that this incident will hurt his future career prospects as well as his personal relationships with many people.

The question I think we have to ask ourselves is "What was SMU administration's role in this? And was it Mr Perry's sole responsibility to oversee the activities taking place at Saint Mary's University during frosh week? If not, is it really fair for Mr Perry to take sole blame for this action?"

Whether Mr Perry likes it or not, he will be remembered as the student president who promoted the rape of young females. Mr Perry is nothing but a figurehead that media has decided to pin its focus on, and the university has failed to defend its student, which just in turn correlates with its interest. By creating a figurehead, it creates an

Personal reactions from SMU and beyond...

I would just like to voice my disgust and disappointment over the recent chant controversy. I believe that all students knew what they were chanting and how wrong it was but for their own reasons chose to follow the crowd.

I also believe that the university administration knew or should have known and taken appropriate action based on the fact that apparently this chant or similar chants were used in passed years. Shame.

Philip Melanson
Class of 1970

Regarding the recent chanting of vulgar and demeaning message by the SMU frosh leaders; they themselves are even victims. Even young women were chanting vulgarities. Our materialistic society has sold out the value of youth long ago for a cheap thrill of a few dollars. We sell our daughters and sons out every waking moment. I suggest the youth get together on a class action suit and sue the daylights out of the businesses that make billions selling their dignity down the drain. The behaviour of the frosh leaders does not come out of a vacuum. It is simply the spot of sickness on the skin. The real diseased cancer are the ones who make their living from the destruction of the dignity of the youth. You can not ask more of them than you feed them. We feed them sugar water and whip them for having a cavity? It is us who are sick not them when we expect a rose of dignity to grow

from the filth we water it with. The fact that so many youth out there are mature, are respectful, are leaders is a commendable testimony to their true value not ours. It is amazing that we do not see more behaviour like we saw from SMU, as we have done our best at trying to ensure that we do. The youth have been let down by the lack of true leadership in society. I hope more of them reject the poison we sell to them.

Will King

SMUSA has shown itself to be an organization that follows its guidelines at its own convenience. It's worth remembering that, under SMUSA's own policies, Jared Perry would never have been eligible for the presidency in the first place. Before running for office for the first time, Perry sat on the Election Committee and even interviewed the CRO. He then resigned from the board and announced his own candidacy -- talk about the fox guarding the hen house! The issue of a conflict of interest was raised at the debate and in the pages of the Journal, with the CRO on record as saying her selection process had "felt sketchy". Nevertheless, the board of directors accepted his candidacy without hesitation. He went one to win with an abnormally large turn-out in his favor. SMUSA has since learned the hard way that disrespect for their own rules has severe and lasting consequences.

Samuel Hammond

illusion that justice has been served, but there were no direct interviews, or apologies from idiotic frosh leaders that actually coerced freshmen into chanting such terrible verse. Perhaps it's in best interest of Saint Mary's university to further silence students and members of administration about the issue. Given the circumstances, keeping the university's reputation is closely correlated with the future financial prospects of the institution.

Let's not forget Mr Perry is just

another young, foolish student in his 20s with limited life experience. There was no winner in this incident, certainly not the community of Halifax, SMU, and certainly not Jared Perry. As of now, we have two choices. We can either choose to ignore the real problem that lies behind the curtains and burden this young man, or we can take a closer look at how orientation activities are run, improve them, and move on knowing that right course of actions have been taken. The choice is yours.

	Monday, September 2	Tuesday, September 3
<h3>Timeline</h3> <p>A day-by-day summary of the events as they unfolded, from Turfburn to the appointment of an Interim SMUSA President</p>	<p>TURFBURN, where then chant was first sung, held on campus. Instagram video was made.</p>	<p>O-Week continues, with fund-raising activities for Shine Day and other scheduled events</p>



Carrigan Desjardins and Jared Perry at the 2013 TURFBURN event on campus; Photos: Mike Langlais

Perry, Desjardins resign from SMUSA

Cydney Proctor

Jared Perry, the SMU student under fire after the inappropriate frosh chant that has been causing a stir nationwide has resigned his post as president of the Saint Mary's University Student Association (SMUSA). The announcement was made via a press release.

Vice President Student Life Carrigan Desjardins has also resigned her position. Desjardins was the SMUSA executive who was in charge of Orientation Week and the event at which over 80 leaders and 350 or more new students were singing an offensive chant.

A video was posted on Instagram of students chanting "Y is for your sister, O is for 'oh so tight,' U is for underage, N is for no consent, G is for 'grab that ass,' - Saint Mary's boys, we

like 'em young."

The university has announced simultaneously that disciplinary action has been called for against two student leaders involved with the frosh week chant. Those names have not been released, in line with university policy. The students will go before a disciplinary panel (as in keeping with the Code of Student Conduct) within the next 10 days. Disciplinary action is wide ranging, from fines to expulsion from the university. The panel is comprised of a disciplinary officer, a student and a university administrator.

Any member of the Saint Mary's University community — student, faculty or staff — can call for disciplinary action against another.

Perry announced his intention to run again in the by-election that is to be called by the Board of Directors,

and says he is "personally deeply committed to addressing the damage incurred this week by being part of a long-term change commitment."

Desjardins could not be reached for comment.

James Patriquin, the student poised to take over the position of Vice President University Affairs after the resignation two weeks ago of the former VP, says he had not signed a contract and started the position, and for the moment will be retaining his role as Communication Coordinator of SMSUA. When asked if he will run for the role of president, Patriquin said no, saying that he is "committed to supporting Jared in his next campaign."

The Board of Directors appointed Craig Walsh, Marketing and Events Manager of SMUSA as interim President on Sept 8.

University announces disciplinary action

Press Release, Sept 6 2013

Two student organizers will face disciplinary action following an orientation week event involving a sexually inappropriate chant at Saint Mary's University.

A formal complaint was received Friday, September 6. The complaint alleges violations of the Student Code of Conduct for the use of abusive or offensive language or gestures at University sponsored functions.

The code states that non-academic standards of behaviour are as important as academic standards.

Under the code, any member of the University community (i.e. students, faculty, administrators or employees) may lodge a complaint within five days of the complainant having become aware of the misconduct.

The disciplinary hearing is intended to be held within ten days.

If Code violations are substantiated,

potential disciplinary penalties range from fines to suspension or expulsion. The disciplinary committee conducting the hearing may consider other appropriate penalties.

The disciplinary panel is composed of the Disciplinary Officer, a student representative, and a University administrator.

As per University policy, the names of the individuals involved will not be released.

SMUSA Resignations - the official announcement

Press Release, Sept 6 2013

The Saint Mary's University Student Association announced today the resignation of Jared Perry from the position of President. The SMUSA Board of Directors will be meeting over the weekend to discuss the appointment of an interim President. As well, a by-election will be called to elect a new President.

"It is with deep reflection that I tender my resignation," stated Mr. Perry, "however, I believe this action is in the best interests of the students, the Association and the University at this time. My stepping down allows the Association and its leaders to focus exclusively on the work of re-mediating the damage earlier this week to the reputation of the Association and Saint Mary's University. My first priority is that remediation and to allow my team to focus directly on their work. It has been an honour to serve the students of Saint Mary's."

"It is also my intention," continued

Mr. Perry, "to present myself as a candidate for the position of President in the next election. I am personally deeply committed to addressing the damage incurred this week by being part of a long-term change initiative. Also I believe it is important for the students of Saint Mary's to directly assess my leadership through the electoral process."

Ms. Carrigan Desjardins also tendered her resignation from the position of VP Student Life. Ms. Desjardins was responsible for the 2013 Saint Mary's Student Association Frosh Week program.

Both Mr. Perry's and Ms. Desjardins' resignations are effective immediately.

The Saint Mary's University Students' Association is a not-for-profit organization that exists to provide services, support, advocacy and representation to all Saint Mary's students.

Responding to a sexual assault

With all the "no consent" and rape talk going around, here is a reminder about what consent is and why it's important.

Any sexual activity without consent is illegal. It is a crime.

To consent is to give permission without coercion. Consent should be active and enthusiastic. The absence of "no" doesn't mean yes. Consent can not just be assumed. A person who is severely intoxicated cannot give consent.

If you have been a victim of sexual violence, Avalon Sexual Assault Centre in Halifax says the following:

If you just experienced a sexual assault you have several options to address any immediate physical or medical needs.

Your options include:

Call 911 if you are in an emergency situation and would like medical care and/or police assistance. You also have the option to contact the police either immediately after the assault or later on.

Call the 24 hour, seven days a week

Avalon Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Response Line (425-0122) to speak to a nurse examiner. You may also arrange for a medical examination and/or forensic evidence collection by a nurse examiner if the assault occurred within the past 72 hours.

Proceed to the emergency departments of the QEll Health Sciences Centre, Dartmouth General Hospital, TWK Health Centre or the Cobequid Community Health Centre. SANE responds seven days a week, 24 hours a day to male, female and trans-identified people who have experienced sexual assault/abuse in the past three days.

At Saint Mary's, between 11-4 the Women's Centre is staffed by volunteers who have sexual assault first response training from the Avalon Centre and can offer support and referrals to those who have experienced sexual violence. They are located on the 5th Floor of the Student Centre.

Wednesday, September 4	Thursday, September 5	Friday, September 6	Saturday, September 7	Sunday, September 8
CBC first reports about the chant, links to the Instagram video on their website	12:27 pm - Colin Dodds released the University's official statement 12:30 pm - StudentsNS announces Jared Perry's resigns his position at Chair of StudentsNS 1:30 pm - Perry holds press conference, surrounded by Orientation Week Leaders	11:20 am - University appoints Wayne MacKay to lead the Presidents Council 6:45 pm - Jared Perry and Carrigan Desjardins' resignation announced 7:15 pm - University announces disciplinary action being taken against two students involved with frosh week chant.	A similar 'chant' incident at the University of British Columbia's Sauder School of Business prompts an investigation by school officials	Over 64 000 views of the original video on YouTube. Craig Walsh, SMUSA Marketing and Events Coordinator is appointed Interim SMUSA President



Education, prevention programs essential in light of recent controversy

Cherise Leston – CUP Atlantic Bureau Chief

An Instagram video showing about 400 St. Mary's University students chanting a sexist cheer is an example of a culture campuses need to change, says StudentsNS executive director, Jonathan Williams.

The video, shot on Monday, Sept. 2, shows the students of the Halifax university chanting "Y is for your sister, O is for 'oh so tight,' U is for underage, N is for no consent, G is for grab that ass – Saint Mary's boys we like them young."

"We're shocked that this took place. It's very disappointing. It's completely unacceptable to have this kind of thing occur on one of our campuses," said Jonathan Williams, executive director of StudentsNS, an advocacy group made up of student unions.

Williams said StudentsNS was not aware of the chant. He said it was remarkable that the chant, which has been used for years according to some SMU students, could have carried on for so long. He said the incident is an example of a passive culture on campuses.

"I think it speaks to a culture where we don't intervene when we hear things that are unacceptable which is a problem and that's a culture that needs to change," Williams said.

On Aug. 28, StudentsNS announced a \$46,156 partnership with

the Nova Scotia provincial government to help prevent sexual assault on campuses. The initiative will include two separate reviews of student union policies around alcohol and sexual assault prevention and will help student unions implement changes. There will also be an awareness campaign. Williams said the projects will help prevent such situations from happening again.

"That's all about giving student unions expert advice on what they can do, to having activities that are safe as possible and promoting a healthy culture," Williams said. "[To create] a culture on our campuses where people are looking to help each other out if they're in danger or could be at risk and certainly this [chant] is not supportive of that."

Nova Scotia isn't the only province that's been aiming to prevent sexual assault on campuses. The Fredericton Sexual Assault Crisis Centre also started a project on the University of New Brunswick, St. Thomas University and New Brunswick Community College campuses with the same goal. Maggie Crain, the project's coordinator, said SMU's chant is not an isolated incident.

"For me, it's not about SMU. It's about all universities and colleges. A lot of other colleges and universities have been reprimanded for similar things like this, unfortunately my first

response to that was not surprised," Crain said.

Though rape culture is existent on many campuses, Crain said the fact someone pointed the chant out this time around is sign things may be changing.

"We must be making some headway, some movement that if this chant has been around for so long that finally someone stepping up and saying 'This is not right. We need to change this and hold those accountable,'" she said.

Crain said in order to change the culture on campuses, there needs to be an open dialogue about it that engages everyone.

"That's part of what [we're] doing on campus ... we've been striving over the past year and will continue for this coming year to bring awareness to campus about the issue and try to open discussion and break that silence and hopefully bringing this issue out to light," Crain said.

She said the incident at SMU is something campuses need to reflect on moving forward.

"This isn't about St. Mary's University, this is about culture and how we look at this issue now from this perspective with this incident," Crain said. "To address it as a culture and as a society and be able to talk about this issue in a more wide way with more awareness."

By the Book: Excerpt from the Student Code of Conduct for SMU

MISCONDUCT:

Misconduct for which students of the University will be subject to discipline includes but is not limited to:

- conduct which threatens or endangers the health, safety or well-being of anyone in their capacity as a member of the university community on or off campus.
- the use of abusive or offensive language or gestures at University sponsored functions,

DISCIPLINARY COMPLAINTS

Any member of the University community (i.e., students, faculty, administrators or employees) may lodge a complaint with any of the Disciplinary Officers alleging that a student has engaged in a misconduct. Any such complaint shall set out the facts of the alleged misconduct and shall be made within five (5) days of the complainant having become aware of the misconduct. A Disciplinary Officer shall have the power to extend the time for filing a complaint if he/she deems it appropriate having regard to all the circumstances surrounding the alleged misconduct.

DISCIPLINARY PENALTIES

The Student Disciplinary Board shall, on completion of the hearing, have the power to dismiss the complaint if the Board concludes that the student respondent did not engage in the alleged misconduct, or to impose any of the following penalties if the Board concludes that the student respondent did engage in the misconduct:

- to suspend the imposition of any penalty upon the student respondent, either conditionally or absolutely,
- to order restitution to any person or organization offended, or to the University,
- to order that the student respondent reimburse the University for administrative costs associated with the matter. Ten (10) dollars will be the amount normally levied in respect of administrative costs, but the University reserves the right to levy such amount as is appropriate in the circumstances of each case,
- to levy such fine or penalty as the Student Disciplinary Board deems appropriate, but no monetary penalty in excess of the actual monetary amount of damage caused by the student respondent plus a fine of \$100.00 shall be levied in a case where the student respondent admits to the misconduct,
- to recommend to the Appeal Board the suspension and/or expulsion of the student respondent from the University, and/or
- to impose any other penalty that is deemed appropriate having regard to all the circumstances surrounding the complaint.

"Presidents Council" struck on examination of sexual violence

Cydney Proctor

The fall-out from the Saint Mary's University Frosh Week chant is affecting all facets of the university and being criticised by the country.

On September 5, Wayne MacKay, professor at the Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie, was appointed to lead the taskforce named the Presidents Council, with a mandate to examine sexual violence prevention and the fallout from the frosh chant from Orientation Week.

Mr. MacKay has held many notable positions around the province including as the Executive Director of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission and the Vice-Chair of the International Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, not to mention former President and Vice-Chancellor

of Mount Allison University. Most recently, MacKay was the chair of Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying, which formed after the Rehtaeh Parsons suicide earlier in 2013.

The council hopes to have recommendations ready for mid-December, but Lewis Rendell, spokeswoman for the SMU Women's Centre says that "it's a start. I'm interested to see the makeup of the council, specifically who they select as their 'feminist' voices."

The appointment of MacKay, "is telling of the gravity of the situation," continued Rendell, "The appointment of someone so well-versed in law and social justice certainly makes me hopeful that there'll be real action."

Shortly before the resignation of

Jared Perry and Carrigan Desjardins, along with Communications Coordinator James Patriquin, met with the Women's Centre, which was, by all accounts, overwhelmingly positive. "I can't wait for a year from now, when we've done all of this work," said Patriquin, "and we can be proud of SMUSA again."

The overwhelming message moving forward though, is that something went wrong, somewhere, and that education is the answer. Says Rendell "I'd love to see a bold educational campaign surrounding sexual violence and consent, considering it seems to be those campaigns met with the most adversity from the student's association. Because, really, it might seem basic but the first step is education... A student government should do more for their peers than Coors Light parties."

Have your say...

Have a comment about one of our articles? Want to have your say about this controversy? Send your opinions to editor.thejournal@smu.ca and you might see it published in our "Letters" section. Letters should be 300 words or less and be persuasive but well-written. In order to publish your letters, we require your full name, but will never publish or distribute your email address to anyone. Let us know what you think!

