

# The McGill Tribune

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Many McGill students were unable to retrieve their belongings from the coat check at the end of the night. (Photo courtesy of Le Windsor)

MCGILL, NEWS

## Police called to AUS/SUS Grad Ball to handle coat check debacle

Written by Regina Wung on March 30, 2016

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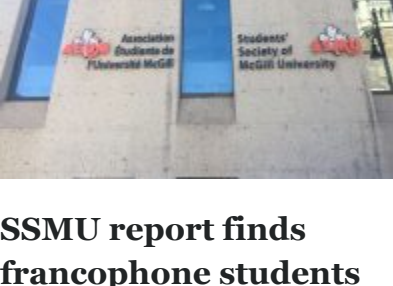
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The end of the sold-out 2016 Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS) and the Science Undergraduate Society (SUS) annual Grad Ball descended into chaos at coat check. Guests were unable to retrieve their belongings and around 2:30 a.m. the police were called to intervene. The event took place on the evening of Saturday, March 19, at Le Windsor Hotel in Montreal's Golden Square Mile and included dinner, dancing, and an open bar.

Hailey Krychman, U3 Arts, commended the general coordination and execution of the ball.

"The overall event was really fun," she said. "I think overall people were very classy, despite being super drunk, and I didn't really feel like anything was going wrong. The music was great and so was the venue. It was very well organized by the AUS and SUS. Of course because there were open bars, there were sometimes long lines but nothing unmanageable or excessively rowdy."

However, issues arose as the evening concluded. According to U3 Computer Science and Biology student Cassandra Rogers, with hundreds of guests, and only a few staff members manning the coat check, the night became disorganized as guests attempted to collect their belongings to leave.

"There was no security to speak of managing the crowd or creating a line, and there were only three or four people working behind the coat check desk," Rogers recalled. "At the counter, I was shoved and pushed down by other students trying to reach over me to attract the attention of the coat check staff. Some people were trying to climb over other people [...] More than a few men in the crowd were making inappropriate comments about being in such close proximity to so many women [...] The crowd was overflowing up the stairs and into the main hall by the time I was able to escape."

According to Cleona Tsang, U3 Psychology, coat check staff eventually stopped using the ticket system all together, leading to students' belongings being left out in the open.

"There were also just a bunch of coats and bags thrown out past the coat check room and my coat and my friend's coat and my bag were just on the floor up for grabs," she said. "Anyone could have taken that stuff. Plus, they gave up with the tickets [halfway through] and just yelled out, 'Whose is this jacket?' and whoever said, 'Mine' got to take it home. No organization whatsoever. I was lucky I found my stuff, but I was there for an hour and a half."

Douglass Luo, U4 Economics, also described a volatile situation at coat check.

"Everyone just crowded around the coat check, yelling at each other and trying to shove their way to the front," he said. "It felt like a riot was about to break out. I'm lucky I was near the front of the line, because I hear a lot of people didn't get their coats."

Rogers took note of several students who were inebriated but were unable to receive aid from the McGill Student Emergency Response Team (M-SERT).

"Some people were very drunk and ill, and it seemed like medics or M-SERT staff weren't really able to fight their way through the crowd to get to them," Rogers added.

Officers from the Service de Police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) ultimately responded to the scene and reportedly used harsh tactics to get through the crowd.

"People were screaming and shouting and cursing and someone yelled [that] she was going to punch someone if they didn't stop stepping on her toes," Tsang said. "The police arrived and someone—I think it was a policeman—just shoved a bunch of us back by brute force. It was very aggressive and rowdy and a lot of people tried to take control of the situation but the crowd was so unforgiving."

In a post on the Grad Ball Facebook event page, the AUS and SUS formally apologized and explained what had happened.

"Employees of Le Windsor felt unable to handle the crowd around coat check and decided to call the police," the Grad Ball Committee wrote.

At the time of publication, the SPVM had no report of the night's events, according to Marie-Élaine Ladouceur, SPVM media relations.

"I checked the events of that evening," Ladouceur said. "I didn't find any report."

In response to statements concerning police brutality towards guests, the Grad Ball Committee announced on its Facebook event that it would look into pursuing a formal complaint with the SPVM.

"[We] are considering filing a complaint with the SPVM regarding the events which took place on the evening of March 19 at Le Windsor on behalf of guests who felt harassed or mistreated by law enforcement officials," AUS President Jacob Greenspon said. "As stated on our Facebook post on March 21, we encourage anyone who wanted to provide a statement to email us."

Greenspon stated that no testimonies have yet been received to follow through with a formal complaint.

"Given that neither the Grad Ball Committee nor any Faculty Executives have received any reports from guests as of yet, it is unlikely that we will file a complaint with the SPVM, but we remain open to the possibility if students come forward," Greenspon said. "The [AUS] and [SUS] will be following up with Le Windsor to relay complaints we've received from our guests and to help find any lost belongings."

- AUS
- grad ball
- SUS

## One Comment

**The Shadow**

March 31, 2016 at 10:55 am · Reply

So drunk and disorderly students were pushing, shoving and assaulting other students...How the hell else are the police to respond? "Brute force"? You would rather that the police use pepper spray?

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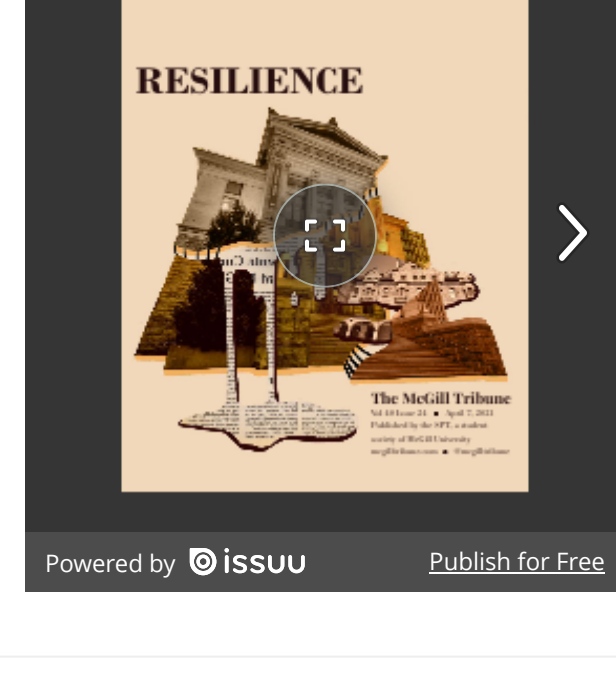
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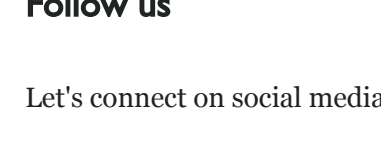
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