



September 1st, 2006

Michael di Grappa
Vice-President, Services
Concordia University
Montreal, QC
E-mail: michael.digrappa@concordia.ca

Dear Mr di Grappa,

I am writing you in my capacity of Regional Executive Vice-President of Public Service Alliance of Canada, Quebec region (PSAC-Quebec), a union organization that defends freedom of expression both in Canada and internationally.

It has come to our attention that David Bernans, an author, Concordia graduate student and a Concordia-based researcher, has been prevented from holding a reading of his recently-released novel "North of 9/11" at the Concordia University campus on September 11, 2006. This, in spite of a successful book launch at the Simone de Beauvoir Centre at Concordia University on May 17, 2006.

According to our information, Mr Bernans sought to do some readings from his novel and share his thoughts about, in particular, the five years that the Concordia community has lived through since September 11, 2001. In mid-June, Mr Bernans filed a room booking request for September 11, 2006. He filled out all necessary applications. The following month, on July 20, he received an e-mail informing him that security had approved his event.

On July 23, Mr Bernans was sent another email informing him that security had denied approval for his event. No reason was given. When he enquired about which e-mail to believe, Mr Bernans was told that his event had been approved "by mistake". Apparently, it had failed a risk assessment by Concordia's risk management team. The assessment had been done to see what risks were involved in students and faculty hearing readings from a novel about 9/11.

To date, Mr Bernans has yet to receive an explanation for the decision by Concordia not to allow him to hold his event on campus. We find it troubling that a risk assessment committee exists – one that has the power to silence individuals, especially critical voices, who wish to speak freely in an academic setting, where it is generally expected that a range of opinions is allowed.

The action taken against Mr Bernans would constitute a violation of academic freedom and freedom of expression in general. PSAC respectfully asks that you provide a written explanation for the decision to reject Mr Bernans's application to hold a public reading. PSAC would also request that the mandate of the risk assessment committee be reviewed and that the possibility of silencing other individuals at Concordia University will not be repeated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Turcq', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jérôme Turcq
Regional Executive Vice-President
PSAC, Quebec region

c.c. D. Bernans
C. Lajeunesse, President, Concordia University