

HOJO



ANNUAL REPORT 2017-2018

HOJO

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING AND JOB RESOURCE CENTRE

We hope this report gives you a snapshot into what the CSU Off-Campus Housing and Job Resource Centre has been doing over the last 365 days and how we've been doing things.

We continue to react to trends we see including:

- Concordia's diverse multilingual student population, made up of international, out-of-province & local students of all ages, with their unique challenges regarding employment & housing.
- An increasing trust in and reliance on online sources for information.
- A lack of understanding of how to maintain online security and privacy when applying for housing and employment.

More than ever we want to speak face to face with students because it allows us time and space to have a conversation and ensure a more complete understanding of problems and possible solutions. Our informational services are different than typing a question online. In our face-to-face interactions, we aim to give students a more full understanding of housing and employment rights and responsibilities on all sides. HOJO provides support for students to find and maintain adequate housing and employment by providing information, resources and support to everyone that walks through our doors.

HOJO is a first stop for many students in their journey at Concordia, and a last stop for others in their job & housing struggles. Wherever you are in your housing and employment situation, we are here to inform, support and assist you. We hope this report will help in understanding the work we do, and we hope to connect with you again in the coming year.

Leanne Ashworth
HOJO Manager

And the HOJO Team of 2017-18

Alex Apostolidis
Shanara Eisan
Cleopatra Boudreau
Safrine Mouajou
Jiao Xie
Geerthikha Thankarajah
Danxi Huang

And our lovely 2017-18 HOJO Alumni:

Yasmine Samri
Kamden Biggart
Julien Johnson
Hannah Brais



MISSION

AND VALUES

The CSU Off-Campus Housing & Job Resource Centre works to empower, educate and support the Concordia community by providing reliable housing and employment information, resources and referrals. HOJO is a service that is centered on students' needs. We strive to support students in learning about and exercising their rights as tenants and employees.

The CSU Off-Campus Housing & Job Resource Centre is guided by the following core values:

- We respect the dignity and rights of all beneficiaries of HOJO services.
- We recognize that students have unique needs with respect to their time and budgetary constraints.
- The main means we use to achieve our objectives is our staff; the personalized interaction offered is a major strength in dealing with sometimes difficult situations.
- The transparent exchange of information, ideas, knowledge and values is essential to the achievement of our mission.
- The management of HOJO is done with openness and integrity; we are accountable to the students of Concordia University.
- We believe that continuous improvement enabled by client feedback is essential to maintaining the high quality of our services.
- We ensure the right to confidentiality and privacy with respect to information provided to us by students.
- We recognize that some government organization may have limitations of scope with regards to meeting the unique needs of students in both official languages. Therefore we cater our services with this in mind.
- HOJO is a service that is centered on students' needs. We strive to support students in learning about and exercising their rights as tenants and employees.



STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



“Not long after I started apartment hunting, I found a lease transfer, and it looked pretty ideal. Little did I know, that was the beginning of my three-week nightmare. The thing that touched me the most was how, throughout the whole journey, everyone at the HOJO office was so patient and sympathetic.

Being away from home and living in a country that speaks another language, I easily felt insecure. It is nice to know that I can always come to you guys for help and support. I feel like sometimes international students are literally being bullied by these rude landlords and their ridiculous demands, and students are just too vulnerable to protect themselves. Before HOJO helped me understand my legal rights, I was as blind as most international students. I strongly feel the need for your service.”

-International Student

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“Many thanks for the information and assistance you provided, I’m glad as an international student that we may reach such helpful and reliable source of information. I will state this again - this is the most helpful service, people, and place I have seen in Concordia.”

-International Student

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“I am very grateful for HOJO’s fantastic services. A fellow student and I were in a difficult, stressful and complicated legal situation and would have been lost in what to do without HOJO. HOJO was very thorough, informing us about rental laws in Quebec, and on the best course of actions to take. We were guided and rehearsed what to say in rental court and told what to expect. We were also accompanied and supported at our rental hearing. Thank you HOJO.”

- Fine Arts Student

Having a helpful and knowledgeable team, HOJO is the place for me to find answers to all of my questions about housing and jobs. Benefiting from the chance of consulting to well-informed assistants, I have not only solved my housing problems but also learned how to deal with any future situations. In my visits, I have gained more knowledge of my rights, how to exercise them and what to pay attention in a contract. For example, even changing my attitude with my landlord improved our communication a lot. Now I am a confident and aware tenant because of HOJO. In-between visits, I regularly check the job board and come across many good student jobs. After my referral, couple of my friends have also visited HOJO and been satisfied by both the process and the results. I appreciate all the contributions of HOJO and thank everyone involved in this great organization for making their help available to everyone.

-Basak Tozlu

PhD Candidate, Research & Teaching Assistant ENCS

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WHAT WE DO

AT HOJO

SERVICES & RESOURCES

HOJO's services are designed to empower students to take charge of their housing and job situations. Our primary service is our drop-in general & legal information service which is available five days a week in our office. HOJO assistants are trained in housing and job regulations and can assist students in finding the information they need. We also offer accompaniment to on and off-campus services. Our most common accompaniment is to the Régie du logement to support students in exercising their rights.

Our office distributes a wide array of informational material from: the Régie du logement; the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail; The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and a variety of local community legal clinics. We also seek resources from a variety of, related services and organizations to help students access the information most pertinent to their situation.

For questions that may arise beyond our opening hours we have devised a few online resources for students to help students: our main site Hojo houses our online information resources on job & apartment hunting and our site Like home shares information on student's rights as tenants & workers in Quebec. Like home is our most popular web resource.



WHAT WE DO

AT HOJO

LIKEHOME

LikeHome is a HOJO co-created multilingual (English, French & Mandarin) website aimed at newcomers and students alike that provides information on housing. The site has three sections that outline what to do when faced with common rental situations throughout the rental process.

HOJO collaborated with another local group, UTILE, an organization that works to develop solutions to students' housing needs. We both felt that there was a lack of accessible information available regarding Montreal's rental realities and so the goal of this web resource project was to make housing information available to Montreal tenants.

The first section called Housing is comprised of general how-to information regarding renting in Montreal. It provides the reader with resources and tips on what to do: when searching for an apartment; before signing a lease; as well as when moving in or out. Housing contains ten short articles aiming to provide a bite-sized overview to students looking for easy to understand information.

For those new to Concordia there is a helpful Neighbourhoods section based around an interactive map that details the price averages by neighbourhood and apartment size of all central Montreal areas. The site also rates areas public transportation frequency in the day and evening and the availability of a diversity of food options in each neighbourhood. When apartment hunting, whether in our office or on the other side of the globe, this is our recommended first stop as it can help give an in-depth view of the real Montreal.

Lastly, the Actions section of the website provides possible problems students might encounter and explains the step-by-step process to take in order to find a solution. This section is a great tool as it enables the reader to be equipped with the right information when faced with different situations.

This section addresses issues such as bedbugs, heating problems and privacy concerns amongst others by letting the reader know what documents are required in order for them to address any number of scenarios. It is a very useful resource for students searching online for answers and for HOJO assistants as it quickly outlines what needs to be done in 33 different possible situations.

The three parts of this site help to give renters a deeper understanding of their rights and the process involved in addressing rental issues. It can help apartment hunters to determine whether the apartments they see online are priced near their neighbourhood's average. We find this to be a powerful and accessible tool to help newcomers and first time Montreal renters quickly gain knowledge about the current landscape.



LEGAL INFORMATION

The Hojo team provides legal information for students facing difficulties with their housing or employment-related issues. Housing and job issues can be complex, and we research students questions in order to find answers to their questions. At times like students, landlords and employers are misinformed on housing and employment standards, and can result in the mistreatment of tenants and employees. Students are encouraged to share information they have learned with those they work with as well as neighbours and roommates. We also welcome inquiries from those renting or employing students as to what the norms are currently in these domains.

Our work aims to both prevent issues, when possible through informing students of their rights, responsibilities and options for recourse. We might assist a student in a variety of ways from finding a form online, reviewing a student's letter to their employer to help them express themselves clearly, translating French documents to them if they do not understand the language well or accompanying students to other on & off-campus resources for continued assistance.



A BRIEF HISTORY

OF HOJO

1984

The Concordia University Student Association (CUSA) Job Bank service was open only for the summer. Students could look at postings, or if a job needed to be filled the Job Bank contacted students. Opened as the Federal Student Employment Centre on Campus, the service was often criticized as bureaucratic and unresponsive to the needs of the majority of students.

1988

CUSA Housing Service opened in collaboration with the already running Off-Campus Housing Service of the Dean of Student's Office. The service's focus was on finding affordable--ll housing for students, offering apartment listings on a bulletin board and free phones to contact landlords. The same year the CUSA Job Bank was computerized.

1989

The CUSA Housing Service expanded to include promoting tenant rights information and assistance to students.

1991

CUSA Housing Service offered its first Housing Handbook. The CUSA Housing Service and CUSA Job Bank were offered in the same room, H-637.

1997

The CCSL provided funding to our services for the first time.

2006

The HOJO Classifieds were published online allowing for a more accessible resource for students.

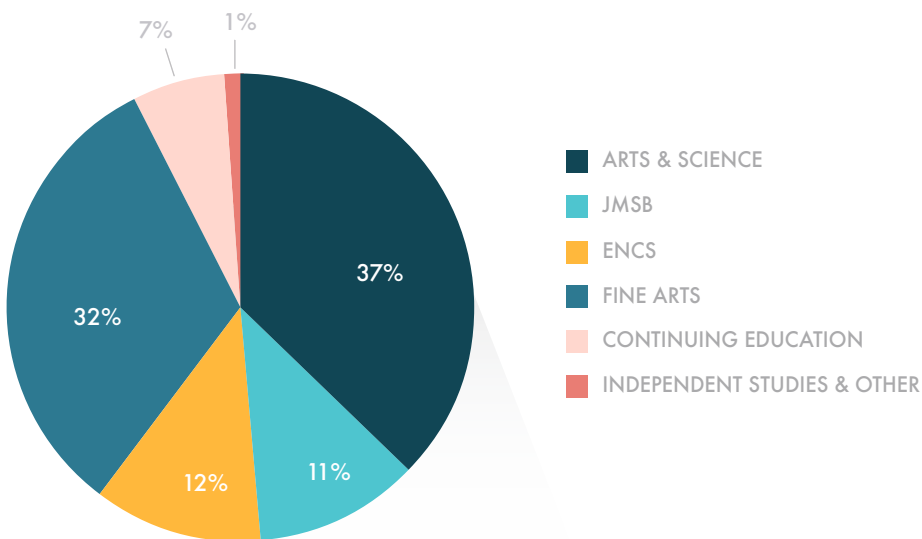
2017

HOJO moves across the mezzanine, and rebrands to the Off-Campus Housing and Job Resource Centre

OUR YEAR

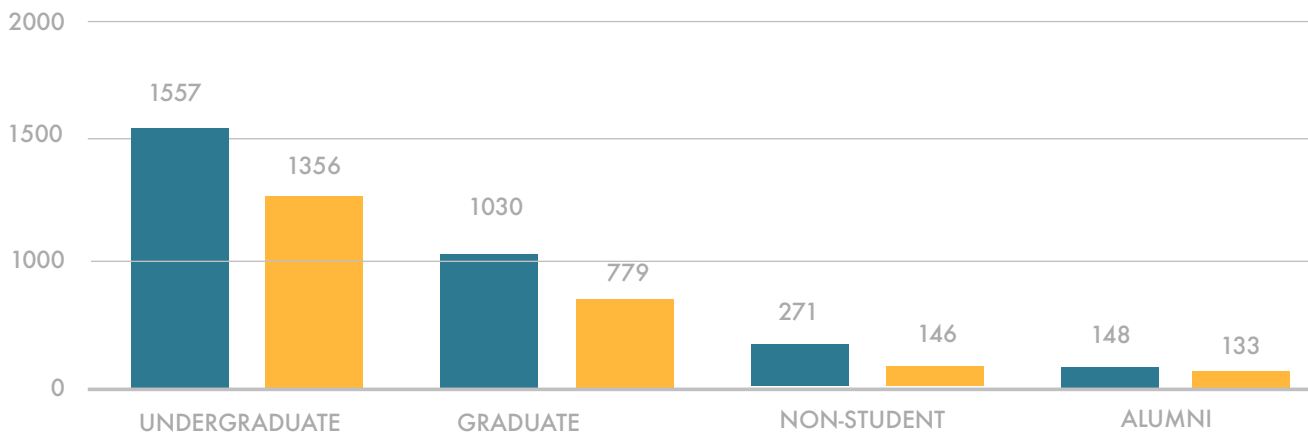
IN NUMBERS

STUDENT VISITORS BY FACULTY

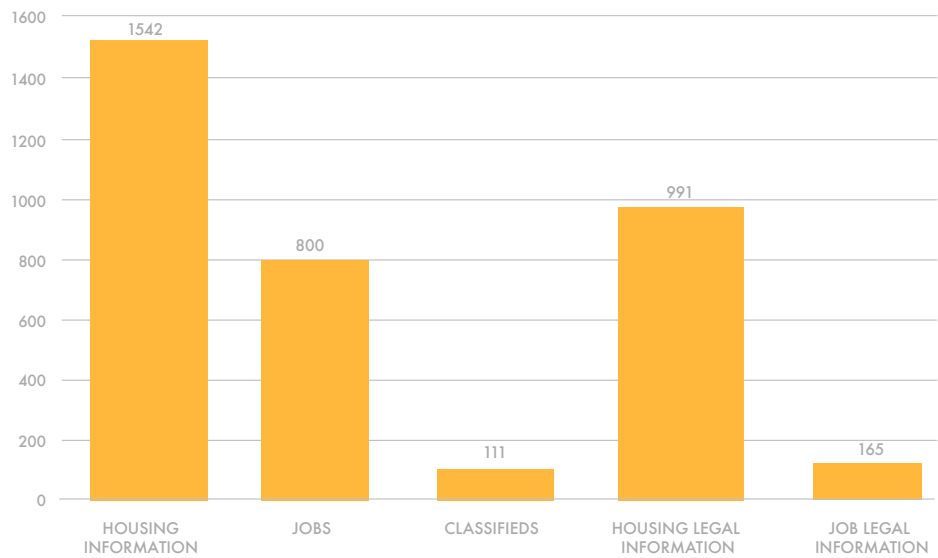


IN OFFICE VISITORS BY EDUCATION LEVEL

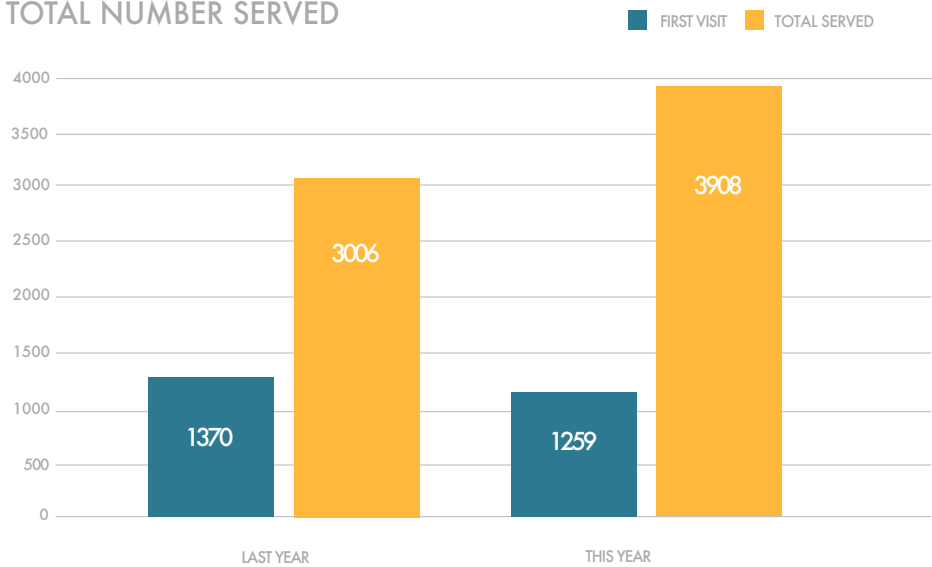
■ LAST YEAR ■ THIS YEAR



INFORMATION REQUESTS BY TYPE



FIRST TIME VISITS AND TOTAL NUMBER SERVED



Our New Office





After more than a year of planning, HOJO was lucky to move into a newly renovated office. Our new space is sleek and functional; it now has excellent sound insulation from the noise outside our walls. We remain in a highly visible high-traffic location on the second floor of the hall building. Our new office is larger than our old space and allows us to have two additional assistants' workspaces as well as a table where small workshops or group meetings with three or four roommates or families can meet with staff. This extra workspace allows us to better deal with the influx of students at the beginning of each semester. We are fortunate to have space for a office kitchenette, other highlights include plenty of storage for our informational materials, a closet to hang coats, a small printer/scanner/photocopier area, a working thermostat not to mention an office for the HOJO Manager. The improvement in the amenities associated with our fresh, bright and airy office have greatly improved the look and organization of our workspace on a day-to-day basis.

OUR YEAR

IN REVIEW

JUNE

- HOJO became the CSU Support Member for the Woodnote Housing Cooperative, and began collaborating and co-organizing student volunteer committee members to ensure the success of the project and continued student union input.

JULY

- HOJO presented at the new student mentor's training put on by the Student Success Centre to encourage wider knowledge of our services.

AUGUST

- HOJO tabled at the very busy Welcome International Students Event, hosted by the International Students Office.
- HOJO employees host a workshop on Housing & Gentrification at Canada Pride.
- Fresh branding introduces our new logo and name including: HOJO fidget spinners, pens and keychains.

SEPTEMBER

- We host several workshops in collaboration with the International Students Office. Including three Job Hunting in Montreal workshops and three Apartment Hunting workshops.
- HOJO tabled at both the CSU Community and Clubs Fairs.
- The GSA included HOJO in their campus-wide Scavenger Hunt

OCTOBER

- HOJO moves offices. We packed up our entire office at H-260 and moved across the mezzanine into our brand newly renovated space located at H-224.
- We attended the Concordia Open House to welcome new students and let them know about our services.

NOVEMBER

- Two members of the HOJO team and 3 CSU Housing Project volunteers attended and presented 3 workshops at the NASCO conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Through this trip we hoped to begin to connect our housing project to other student housing cooperatives across North America.

DECEMBER

- HOJO attends the RCLALQ protest: "Régie du Logement, Une Machine a Expose Les Locataires."

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JANUARY

- HOJO hires seven new staff members and begins our training of the next generation.
- HOJO attends the busy back to school events Discover Concordia and Welcome Internal Students Event.

FEBRUARY

- We gave two series of workshops this month: a total of three Moving out of Residence at both campuses and two Job Hunting in Montreal workshops for students beginning to looking for summer work.
- HOJO campaigns to discuss the importance of paid internships for students at tables across campus.
- Members of the HOJO team and Student Housing Project committee volunteers organize and attend their first training retreat in the Laurentians. Training on Facilitation, goal-setting, minute-taking, consensus decision-making, board responsibilities are amongst the topics covered in the retreat. A name for the housing project is chosen: The Woodnote/La note des bois!

MARCH

- HOJO hosts a workshop on refusing rental increases, and campaigns to inform students on their right to respond to their rental increase.
- The Woodnote co-hosts with CHNGR a co-op carnival in the LB building, resulting in over 200 Woodnote newsletter sign-ups!

APRIL

- HOJO hosts an Apartment Hunting workshop for new students with the International Student Office.

MAY

- We receive funding from SHIFT Concordia to hire two summer interns to work on the Woodnote Marketing and Communications.
- The Quebec minimum wage increases to \$12.00 an hour and HOJO updates its Workers Rights campaign to inform students about their right to receive this wage even when training.

THE WOODNOTE

AT HOJO

This was HOJO's first year sitting on the CSU Housing Projects' provisional committee as a representative. We have been working diligently to provide guidance and institutional memory to the student team of volunteers engaged with this innovative project. HOJO has assisted with recruiting and training new committee members, co-facilitating weekly meetings of the future cooperatives' board. As well, we have begun acting as a liaison between the CSU Executive team and the students who are involved in the process. This project has proven to be an inspiring leadership opportunity for the students who are working on developing the student community that we hope will thrive in the new building.

The committee was consulted throughout the year to help develop the design of the building itself, with leadership from a team including architects knowledgeable about regulations and best practice. The design is now finalized and will house 144 Undergraduate students; this apartment building will be unique due to its cooperative structure. The Woodnote community will have multiple cozy common spaces, a structure that gives the tenants' autonomy, and an amazing location in the heart of the Plateau.

The Woodnote Housing Cooperative will function differently than other apartment buildings because it will follow the seven principles of cooperatives. Instead of single landlord who likely doesn't live in the building making major decisions, a board of six elected student representatives, as well as a CSU Representative (a hojo team member specifically), a representative from our partner UTILE and a community representative will work together in a non-hierarchical structure to better meet the needs of residents as they arise.

OUTREACH

Our opening date has changed to 2020 due to the complexities of permits, funding, contracts and a million other variables that we were not previously aware of as we've never been part of such a large project. HOJO has continued to find ways to optimize student engagement. We set up tables at Orientation events (equipped with fun prizes), and conducted multiple interviews with student media to ensure that accurate updates about the project were being shared in a timely fashion.

ROOMS

The final layout of all of the rooms is now complete. The provisional committee is proud that their input has led to design that is bright and functional and suits their needs as students. The majority of the apartments in the building are self-sustaining studio apartments. They each will have a kitchenette and washroom. The larger apartments from 2-4 bedrooms have modestly sized bedrooms and common living rooms and kitchens to be shared amongst 2-4 students. All students living in the building will have access to the common indoor and outdoor common spaces, which consist of a multi-functional main floor space for studying, hanging out and also events, and large adjoining outdoor patio, a communal laundry room, and a bike parking lot in the basement of the building. There will also be a green alley, which will be publically accessible behind the building. All rooms and apartments' prices will be 10-20% below market value, and the rooms will have quality finishes. Many of the rooms have balconies, and the rooms will come equipped with a fridge and stove, which will create a simpler transition for out-of-province and international students.



**A VIBRANT STUDENT COMMUNITY
NESTLED IN THE PLATEAU....**



COMMUNITY

Community engagement will be an important part of the cooperative experience. Through discussions with neighbouring residents, the Green Alley aspect of the project was developed as a key part of the Woodnote property. This will create a space for members of the cooperative to connect with the community and each other. In the coming year the committee will continue to develop their input on this part of the project.

This year, members of the committee were invited to the North American Students in Cooperatives (NASCO) conference to present about our project, and topics related to the growing need for affordable student housing. This experience strengthened the committee's commitment to connecting to other campaigns, cooperatives and organizations on and around the Concordia campus. We hope to continue growing our network so that the Provisional Committee can have a strong connection to other exciting student housing alternative practices for many years to come.

SUMMER INTERNS

We are looking forward to the summer as we will hire two interns to research and create a campaign strategy around the upcoming application process. We hope to gain a better idea of what students want from their housing, how much they knew about the project, and to create a game plan that would allow the project to benefit a diverse range of student residents..

CAMPAIGNS

BEDBUGS

The bedbug problem in Montreal continues to disrupt student's lives. We distribute the Ville de Montréal's informational brochures. There is wider knowledge amongst tenants and landlords about the existence of bedbugs however the stigma of having an infestation is still strong. Awareness and knowledge of how to deal with the issue is the focus for HOJO. We provide resources and support to students on how to report the problem and how to ensure the correct protocol is followed when a demand for extermination is placed.



MINIMUM WAGE

In May 2017, the minimum wage in Quebec was raised to \$11.25 an hour for most workers. The wage of workers receiving tips for table service was increased to \$9.45. HOJO continued to raise awareness on campus of the basic rights workers have in Quebec including paid training, statutory holidays, workplace safety and security.

If a student visits us and they are not receiving the minimum wage for their work, we encourage them to file online with the CNESST. This requires collecting their pay stubs and a record of logged hours. This process will enable them to receive the retroactive amount that is missing from their pay, as well as an increase to their wage to the legal minimum.

PRIVACY

Each year HOJO discusses the importance of keeping confidential information safe especially arriving in Montreal to apply for an apartment. We also provide information on how students can try to retrieve and destroy their private information after the fact. This campaign continues to be relevant for Concordia students as private information is disproportionately demanded of certain students in certain neighborhoods. International students in particular are often asked to provide copies of their passport, study permits, and other travel documents. The right to privacy ties into discrimination as well, since the more private information a landlord or employer may have, the more reason they may have to refuse the student.



REFUSING RENTAL INCREASES

This ongoing campaign works to raise awareness amongst students that annual rent increase requests can be refused and that you can't be evicted for refusing a request. It is a common myth amongst students that you can't do anything if you receive a letter telling you that your rent is increasing and this is not the case. HOJO explains the refusal of rent increase process to students and hands out related documents. We disseminate the yearly averages that the RDL comes out with so that students can have an estimation of how much of an increase is reasonable. Furthermore many students are unaware of how to legally provide notice of non-renewal of the lease, and end up having to be responsible for the lease for an additional term. We try and circulate this information as well as provide documents of non-renewal.

CAMPAIGNS

RENTING IN A MONTREAL WINTER: HEATING PROBLEMS AND FREEZING PIPES

As winter approaches, HOJO begins its seasonal campaign on surviving A cold winter while renting. Mainly this involves distributing information on how to deal with heating issues. This problem becomes especially urgent when cold spells hit and too many students spend Montreal winters without adequate heating in their apartments. We provide the necessary information of how to record temperatures and help students in demanding necessary repairs. One of the useful tools we provide to students is a heating log template for them to record indoor and outdoor temperatures throughout their apartment over the course of a few days or weeks to illustrate their heating issue to their landlord and the Régie du logement if necessary.

As well, we inform students of the very real risks that turning off heat during prolonged vacations can result in. Pipes freezing and bursting can result in flooding and thousands of dollars worth of damage.



LOOKING FORWARD

CHALLENGES

- Students are increasingly comfortable with sending excessive private information and money online before they arrive in Montreal to secure an apartment. Students are not aware of widespread job scams and fraud and can be unwitting victims when looking for employment online.
- International and English-speaking students face barriers in the job market as they may have little Canadian experience and lack French knowledge, yet need part-time work to be able to study.
- Unfortunately, students are not aware of our service at Loyola campus.
- A lack of knowledge about employment and housing regulations leave students vulnerable to their rights not being respected
- Student-friendly priced apartments are not always well maintained and working to improve the conditions of an apartment can be time consuming and difficult.



PRIORITIES

- Reaching students before they arrive in Montreal when they are seeking housing & employment with a preventative focus on housing and employment rights. Increasing our social media presence to reach students where they are
- Strengthening relationships with services both on and off campus; with similar values that can assist students
Attending as many on-campus events as possible to raise the Concordia community's knowledge of our service.
- Supporting the work of the Woodnote housing committee, helping with building public knowledge and excitement about the CSU Housing project.
- Developing on campus marketing plan that will be enacted by HOJO as the Housing
- Creating a mobile friendly site that combines our many online resources into one location.

FAQ'S

Q: DOES HOJO HELP NON-STUDENTS?

A: Yes, we do! We never turn people away if they are in need of our services.

Q: CAN HOJO GIVE ME A JOB?

A: Since HOJO is not a matching service, we can only steer students in the right direction. We offer both on and off-campus resources, along with our Classifieds website job listing to help start the job-hunting process.

Q: WHEN IS THE BUSIEST TIME OF YEAR AT HOJO?

A: Except for in the summer, HOJO is generally pretty busy. Our peak season is at the start of any given semester when many new students arrive and are looking for housing. In those time periods, the wait times to speak with a HOJO Assistant may be longer, or you may be asked to make an appointment for the future.



THANK YOU!



CONCORDIA STUDENT UNION

CSU Designers Daniel Munoz Ortiz & Mairi Watson
CSU Administrative Coordinator Yu Yu hui
CSU Advocacy Centre Manager Stephen Brown
CSU IT Consultant, Jonathan Ng
CSU Legal Information Centre, Manager, Walter Tom
CSU Orientation Team
CSU communications Team

CONCORDIA

The Birks Student Centre
Career and Placement Services
The Concordian
Concordia International
Counseling and Development
Career Management Services
CJLO
The Financial Aid Office
Concordia Security
The Sexual Assault Resource Centre

The Graduate Students Association
International Students Office
The Link
The Multifaith Centre
Residence Life And the Residence Assistants
The amazing Campus Tour guides
Concordia Welcome Centre
The Dean of Students Office
The Office of Community Engagement

MONTREAL COMMUNITY

Arnold Bennett Housing Clinic
The Centre for Research Action on Race Relations
The Mile End Legal Clinic
Project Genesis
Ted Wright Housing Clinic
UTILE
Youth Employment Services



HOJO CSU Off-Campus Housing
& Job Resource Centre