

SSMU Legislative Council Meeting #1 (of two)

1) Call to Order

6:16 pm

2) Approval of the Minutes

There was a motion to amend to amend the roll-call vote to read "Councillor Paterson" instead of "Vice-President Paterson."

The minutes of January 26th were adopted with one amendment.

3) Approval of the Agenda

President Knight said that neither guest speaker was able to come as it was not the most opportune moment. Please keep debate as concise and productive as possible. The motion to adopt the agenda was seconded and clearly passed.

4) Announcements

Vice-President Clare next week social justice days there are a lot of great workshops Monday Ed Lee will host "Creating a Student of Colour-Centred student movement."

Senator Crawford reminded everyone that library improvement committee is accepting submissions until the end of the month. Submissions can be sent by e-mail. The working group he is heading will be meeting next week so please apply by tomorrow if you would like to be a part of it.

Councillor Paterson said education will be hosting a Scholastic book fair Tuesday-Thursday of next week in the education building. Also, the first ever education town hall will be next Thursday and they are looking for people to talk about tuition hikes. Vice-President Pedneault will be there.

Councillor Bi announced that Conservative McGill is recruiting between March 2-4th so please contact her about delegates if you are member of the Conservative party of Canada.

Councillor Doyle said that the third CoffeeHAUS will be held next Monday

Vice-President Clare that there will be a smorgasborg with senate at Gerts from 6:30-8pm on Thursday.

Councillor Winer said that the philosophy journal Philosophic Fragments will be accepting submissions until early next week. E-mail philosophicfragments@gmail.com with your submission. His second announcement is that V-Day McGill is putting on its annual production of the Gagina Monologues tonight, tomorrow, and Saturday in Lea13. Tickets are being sold at snax at snax.

Councillor POTUS is holding a red carpet event Saturday and processed go to cancer research at the realto theatre. There is open bar for two hours and there will be desserts. Contact her for more information.

February 9, 2012

Senator Dinel said that Senate will be happening this Wednesday from 2:30-6pm and they will be discussing asbestos, QPIRG, and building occupations.

Jade Calver, President of the Arts Undergraduate Society, spoke from the gallery. She said that Arts Representative Burnett will no longer be holding his position as Arts representative on SSMU Council.

Councillor Winer asked if he could address a question to a member of the gallery. Chair Tong said that questions could be addressed after all announcements have been made.

Councillor Shahid read from an e-mail he received from a constituent. The e-mail expressed that student dialogue is more important than all else and student opinions should not be silenced. Students provide invaluable use to the administration and their voice plays a crucial role in the University. The author of the e-mail is concerned with the way that the 6th floor occupiers were making their words heard, and said that they should be unequivocally condemned. The author thinks that students should speak to their representative Senators to voice their opinions toward the administration. Students should be able to speak as a majority. These occupiers have disrespect for students and the process is blatantly silencing the voice of others. Acts of vandalism like urinating on the floors of the administration building should not be shown support. The student wrote "What is SSMU going to do in order to restore order so that progress can be made?" President Kngiht said that part of the plan is to have an open discussion on this issue that the gallery members will be able to participate in. The agenda should be amended to include this. She would like to hear as many different perspectives as possible when making a decision on how to take a stance. We should clarify it's not within our power to bring order to McGill and we can have that discussion but if people would prefer we can suspend the rules and amend the agenda to do that immediately.

Councillor Crawford made a motion to enter into committee of the whole for 10 minutes.

This motion passed. Chair Tong set the speaking time at 30 seconds and said he would alternate between Councillors and gallery members wishing to speak.

Councillor Crawford said that he would like to respond to the question. The questioner said that as a member of both occupiers and student senators in interesting position. He entered the building as a concerned student whose rights have been revoked. He would like to remind questioner that the rights of students to sit on senate was pursued and successfully implemented through occupation and demonizing a radical left is not necessarily helpful or representative of majority opinion.

Brendan Steven U2 Arts said that the last speaker is ignoring a later reality and an online event has garnered more than 1600 members in 2 days. There is a silent

February 9, 2012

majority saying that what the radicals are doing is not ok. One of his colleagues will be presenting a letter signed by over 100 students. A large number of constituents are looking for leadership, considering the harm that the action is causing for administration and its harm to political society. He hopes that Councillors take leadership and acknowledge that fact.

Councillor Paterson said that uninvolved members felt that this occupation precluded their rights to speech. She feels like it is our time and we are not representing everybody we can. This isn't ok, and we can't let this happen.

The Music Senator spoke from the gallery, saying that fellow student representatives should focus on not dividing our student body more than it already is. We're all fighting the same causes and the person said that we should try to stay away from labeling each other as inferior. We are all trying to fight the good fight.

Senator Dinel said that as per discussions in senate caucus, it is important to sufficiently communicate with the student body. She said she is sure students trust us more than they trust the McGill administration. We haven't done enough in this case.

Harmen Moon from the gallery read out an open letter signed by 181 students. This was e-mailed to everybody on Council. The letter reads "This occupation is illegitimate...the occupiers' demands are excessive ... we the undersigned feel strongly that this is not an appropriate way to express our political frustrations...they have failed [in representing the student body]...we refuse to acknowledge these demands...student occupying prevents constructive dialogue because they shift the focus from the actual issue..." and calls instead for students to "use the tenants" appropriate for democratic engagement on campus.

Zach Newburgh from the gallery asked if this committee of the whole is just on this topic or also on others.

President Knight said that we will go back into question period after this is finished and then other topics can be discussed.

Councillor Winer read out Masi's response to the referendum question is that "individual student groups do not have the right to change an opt-out system..." It is the understanding of QPIRG that Masi is not recognizing this. Councillor Winer proudly says that he was one of the parties and in no way wishes to avoid conversation on this issue. He will have to leave in 2 hours but will happily give out his e-mail address.

Katie Larson U2 Music said that there is a general feeling about the way that it affects student representatives, who ask for input or approach students. People directly don't respect other means. You are disrespecting administrators and this leaves a bad taste in people's mouths.

February 9, 2012

Councillor Clarke said that another problem he has been facing is that a lot of people have been confusing SSMU's unresponsiveness with tacit support from SSMU, especially because there are people involved here who actively endorse what's going on. He says it gets harder and harder for him to justify this and it is just another interest group putting forward their views. The least that he would want from this discussion is saying that SSMU in no way endorses what is going on.

Councillor Kryluk built on what Councillor Paterson said earlier. She said that the faculties that are apathetic usually don't have a lot to say. Students told her that they were embarrassed and what was happening was childish.

Zach Newbough is wondering how students who have been involved can hope to work in collaborative and meaningful ways with the administration after having worked at an event like this.

Councillor Fletcher read another e-mail from a constituent, Max Zidel. The letter said that it is important to understand how this weakens student governance. Students not always appropriate administration. Regardless of MOAs, this belongs completely in the jurisdiction of the group and the administration. He admits that the referendum question is unclear but it is not the administration's rights to decide that. It is election McGill's choice, the JBoard, and the group. The longer they represent a silent majority, the longer they will not support SSMU. We need to make mistakes with consequences if we have no administration to succeed. Administrations allowed students to get silent. Their tactics do not represent him. He is trying to explain how to get those those 85% back on board.

Brenden Steven said regarding letter from Zidel, whether the question was legitimate is not a settled question until Judicial Board publishes this. Legitimate tactics are questionable, and we are still waiting on the Judicial Board decision whether or not they say this is true. 1600 people have argued that it is a problem like the one Mr. Zidel is using. He said that he should look to himself and colleagues as to why students aren't participating.

Vice-President Plummer said that this resonated strongly with him and made him sad. There has been a lot of rhetoric on Council tonight and amongst different groups that if we are not among the 6th floor occupiers not with we are against them. These students did not ask for consultation, and the radical outburst which alienates more students than it helps is just sad.

Zach Newbough asked if the position of the SSMU is the same as that of the faculty association presidents. The Presidents of the largest faculty associations signed a letter together condemning these actions. In addition to releasing a condemnation, he is wondering whether SSMU will empower individuals looking to have their voices heard as a preventative action for this happening in the future.

February 9, 2012

President Knight said she doesn't think Council has decided whether they are going to do anything. There are a number of points she is going to clarify. Max Zidel did not participate. The Judicial Board Ruling should be released February 14th at 9am. A key part of student leaders' role at this point is to help people understand each other. There is a lot of rhetoric and there are groups not being willing to listen. One form of leadership we can have is that people are not going to have a consensus on this matter. We should think carefully about how we can promote not just dialogue but understanding. She understands frustration that channels are being disrespected. She said that student representatives are not always able to make the change that students want us to create. If there is a critique on our roles we bear some of the responsibility and the structure agrees with what we're doing.

Senator Briones said that they would like to urge Council that everything is in the spirit of productivity. Everyone is SSMU and there needs to be something that promotes unity. At this point, unity and productivity should be settled.

Councillor Parent-Racine said that this reflects the desperation of students feel with not having input. Their democratic ability to be heard is squashed and this indicated a need for a forum between the administration and students. There is a greater need for something that needs to be done that yields positive results.

Allison Cooper from the gallery said that she likes the things that have said most recently. It's the polarization of the campus that's upsetting her most of all of this. There is an event on facebook called "It's our McGill-It's time to come together". There needs to be discussion about this in a safe space and hopefully something constructive comes out of it."

Councillor Hernandez said that it's the 21st century and he does not see why we have to walk somewhere to get our refund.

Members of the Council raised concerns about the trajectory of the conversation. Zach Newburgh asked if the Committee of the Whole is to be had on any particular topic.

As a point of parliamentary inquiry, he said that the Council should be as open as possible to tangentially related issues.

Councillor Hernandez said that he wanted to share that, and is done speaking.

Robert Rees from the gallery, a science alumnus, said that students are feeling disconnected with the administration and don't feel any connection to the larger governing bodies or the processes of SSMU to represent themselves. GAs are notoriously problematic and he believes this is one of the reasons why they feel unrepresented. If there is a way to generally increase communication between students, administration, and representation for all students that would be great.

Councillor Kunev said that there has been a lot of negative remarks and does not want to be too negative. He says he feels uncomfortable having an open discussion

in such a way when Councillors were actually occupying and he feels like they hijacked their position on Council to represent radical student groups on campus.

Brendan Steven said that this Council has shown its willingness to participate in debate. It has been willing to endorse QPIRG and CKUT referendum questions. It would show a lack of leadership and political courage to not debate this now. The problem is that the occupiers are not willing to debate. They wanted to force the McGill administration to accept their position through the occupation of the space. He does not think that one side of the dialogue will be a safe space considering they were willing to occupy.

Vice-President Pedneault said that he wants to read the resolved clauses that the Art History and Communication Students Student Association put forward regarding the occupation. Their resolution stated that the occupiers should have access to food, medicine, and internet. All parties should work toward a peaceful resolution. He has worked on a statement modeled along the lines of the statement signed by the faculty association presidents. He would like to print that letter and bring it back to address the solid concerns that he has been hearing

Zach Newburgh said that occupiers have access to medicine and food outside of the administration building. They can feel free to get their food and medicine outside at their homes.

Vice-President Fraser said that she thinks this body should be careful of self-aggrandizing. There are many students, perhaps the 85%, who are apathetic. She finds it problematic that it is only when people want to criticize others' actions and speak up. She said that she thinks occupation is a legitimate tactic. It is something people use when they feel frustrated, when those elected don't represent them, and when they feel that they don't have another choice. Students voted and their vote was not recognized. She added that this may be the 21st century but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't have face to face contact. That can be part of a discussion about whether we should have GAs online or not. Dialogue is a very productive thing, but student leaders were not respected by McGill, and we do not have that much power.

Brendan Steven from the gallery said let's be realistic about the democratic aspects of SSMU. He said that 16% of students voted in favour of moving the GA online, so let's not be putting forward a democratic membership that doesn't exist. Student apathy on campus is a problem and the moment that students stand up and speak, the Council should respond in a way that represents students. Now is the time to respond to student concerns when they are saying that it is not ok.

Senator Dinell said just to answer that brief statement, it's really easy to click a button and say join an event. She received no e-mails. She is done pointing fingers. It is important to discuss these issues on behalf of students. Whether you agree or not, let's stop throwing rocks because it's time to be productive.

Katie Larson from the gallery said that the conclusion this is reaching is that this is a divisive issue so you should maybe not decide it necessarily but this should be about students being given channels through which to be proactive and access students in a productive manner.

President Knight says that not everyone has had the opportunity to read the letter from AUS, EUS, SUS, and MUS Presidents. She said that they are writing as four presidents from the largest faculty associations. The administration's approach to issues with students has resulted in a failure to consult with students. The occupation of the 6th floor hinders the work of student representatives. They have put forward a peaceful occupation. The Presidents' letter agrees with the goals but disagree with the means. They encourage the students occupying to engage with the administration. They hope that the occupiers extend themselves as constituents to discuss issues with them (the Presidents). They would like to strive to improve the daily work of student associations on campus.

A member of the gallery said that support cannot be determined by how easy it is to take a certain action. He said that it's important enough to him to speak about it, and he is here. Many may feel just as strongly as he does and took the same action of clicking a button. They are not here, they might be doing something else like writing an exam. People are judging how much support they have or do not have based on things that do not derive legitimate information.

Vice-President Patel said that it's important for us to remember not to label each other. Everyone is entitled to their opinions but if we want open dialogue with safe space we need not relate to each other with specific labels. We need to progress slowly and what's important to do is seek to discuss this with students individually and find out how students actually feel. It's important to go out on campus. He said secondly there was a comment on online opt-outs. He said it is quite ironic that many students find these questions very legitimate, and students also voted on QPIRG and CKUT motions and they answered quite clearly. It is important not to let our egos get in the way of this discussion. We are privileged to be here and have the right to speak up. You have a roof over your head and people around the world don't.

Zach Newburgh said there's something wrong with our student union when we represent the expressions of these students by not supporting the letter by the Presidents. These are Presidents from largest faculty associations. This is something which is not divisive and it is not appropriate at a university, it is not collegial and not respectful. This is a moment of leadership and if the SSMU is really concerned it should take a stance. If not, there is something very wrong with SSMU.

Vice-President Fraser put forward a motion to limit debate to ten further minutes. The motion passed.

Councillor Paterson asked if we can get students who have not spoken already to speak first.

Chair Tong said that is in order.

Councillor Bi said that she sees her campus divided and the occupiers divided with this. She does not think that it is appropriate for those involved in the occupation to be in this dialogue because they did not discuss with us.

Guy Maritius spoke from the gallery. He said that he has been involved in the occupation stuff and talking to people on campus. They were either neutral, thought it was entertaining and interesting, and in general increased the political discussion of anything on campus in a way that has not happened before. Online things attract certain people. People are more vocal or extreme online. He thinks it's a mixed bag and condemning the seems weird because it's a sub-group of people who represent themselves and who are trying to say something about democratic representation. He said that we should stay neutral on it.

Vice-President Clare said senate caucus is working on an open letter to be published in the Tribune on Tuesday. She said she thought it was important to hear what everyone has to say. It has been an extremely exhausting year and our ability to assess this is going to be hampered. It is interesting that we're taking about student representatives. All senators would not be here if not the occupation by students in 1968. She is torn about theme of the 6th floor but it is important to contextualize it with what's going on. People have issues, whether it's with SSMU execs, Council, or administrators. She would encourage everyone here to participate in the student-led discussion event on Monday. She will be optimistic. Sometimes their perfectly planned-out things happen. We want the best for everyone here so let's try to move forward.

Herman Moon said that the number of signatories has just reached 200, to be asked to put on this letter condemning the occupation. We're focusing a lot of the CKUT/QPIRG issue and the second issue about the resignation of Morton Mendelson. He is wondering why no one has approached the topic and cannot be something that is reflective of the SSMU body as a whole.

Councillor Shahid said that as a senator last year he found that the progress in previous years had been quite constructive. When he sees the sixth floor being occupied we should put good in everything so far. Future senators will not get the same tension they were getting. He thinks that admins may have lost faith in consequences and occupation has been detrimental to his work as senator.

Senator Briones wanted to say that people don't do extreme things for no reason. She said that their feelings are valid just as people. Condemning things is not productive and we are living in a divided, polarized campus. Feedback on the ground indicates that we all have a lot to learn as student representatives.

Councillor Kunev said he wanted to address the point about the silent majority clicking buttons not doing anything. They are a working majority and the number one priority is studying. It is not a priority for them to be informed about every issue. It should be up to us to make their life easier to encourage their opinion by doing things like online voting. It is not that they go online because they are apathetic, it is that they don't have time. He said about the proactive approach, but taking a position is always going to be political. If a majority of students want to take a position we should take a position.

Evan Jolie-Carl, from the gallery, asked Vice-President Clare to clarify what consultation they will do before forming the open letter. He asked what the view is currently on this whole issue. Vice-President Clare said an open letter is not about trying to say what constituents say. The senate caucus representatives represent each of their constituents to the caucus. What's happened for the past three days is part of systemic grievances at McGill. It has to do with many forms of disempowerment. Also, they spent 2 senate caucus meetings agonizing about many different issues and how to move forward. One of the strengths is that they want to move forward and stand behind each other. That is the spirit. Until it's finished being drafted she doesn't want to discuss specifics. The report says it's in regards to QPIRG, but asked if this will be about more. It will be about trust and accountability.

Brendan it would be a sad day if the feelings of 20-30 occupiers prioritized above the two hundred students who ignored Quebec law and decided. Divisiveness does not happen in a vacuum and divisiveness is going on when people occupy buildings that very few people subscribe to and trying to depose a speaker trying to institute Robert's rules of order. This letter is a response to divisiveness, not a cause of it.

Councillor Qin said that in Council for the past few days there were members of the Council on the 6th floor and main floor, and they found that they are supporters of their actions. The majority of science students she has talked to do not see the rationale of their actions. Some of them appreciate the spirit because they are passionate about what they believe in, but they do not think that this is a rational movement.

Cameron Butler U3 agricultural and environmental sciences said that he wrote part of the open letter. He does largely disagree with the occupation but thinks it would be counterproductive to SSMU Council to actively condemn it. By taking a stance on this and divisively condemning a group, it makes it difficult to include them at building a community and creating that sense rather than placing blame.

Committee of the whole ended so that people could gather their thoughts for question period.

5) Question Period

Zach Newburgh asked the Vice-President Finance and Operations to clarify that he did not participate in the campaign or referenda.

Vice-President Patel said he would have loved to campaign for them but he had his portfolio to take care of so he did not campaign for QPIRG or CKUT.

Zach Newburgh asked if he thought picture of the Yes Committee's poster meant that he was campaigning.

President Knight said that the CEO of elections SSMU said that she was not going to consider facebook pictures as campaigning, and this was already discussed at judicial Board hearing.

Councillor Clarke asked what would be the best way to create a motion to take a stance on a specific thing.

President Knight said that a Vice-President External has already drafted something which could be amended as we so choose. She is not sure that this should happen immediately and would like that Councillors have a chance to consider these concerns before voting right away.

Councillor Fletcher asked if it might not be a good idea to present a stance now because it will be reading week and the next meeting of Council will be later.

President Knight said that we have two Council meetings tonight and does not mean at the next meeting.

Councillor Paterson asked what is mob squad's affiliation to SSMU, if any, and whether it has used the equipment of the SSMU.

President Knight said it was fostered by last year's affiliation with Vice-President External and her understanding is that members of mob squad may use SSMU's resources to further campaigns. There were people who printed flyers for the AUS general assembly.

Councillor Bi directed her question to the Vice-President External. She said, due to the fact that two of political campaign coordinators are still dealing with occupation, do you believe that they can still give an objective report as SSMU employees?

Vice-President Pedneault said that did not discuss their participation with him beforehand. Their mandate is to work with SSMU's political mandates and some say that they should be objective some might not.

Zach Newburgh said that the SSMU's funds are there "to finance its activities in student association" and fees are "payable to each student represented by the alliance" according to the bylaws. He asked about the specific association with the group and their funds.

Vice-President Clare said we don't have the legal expertise to discuss the issue that specifically.

Newburgh said that the bylaws state that there can be a question and there shall be an answer at the next meeting of the Legislative Council.

The reason why there are referendum questions for this organization is that the administration forces them to have them and this question should be addressed.

February 9, 2012

President Knight asked him to submit this question in writing because none of us would have the expertise to provide this information right now.

Councillor Bi said that a facebook group and open letter has been read to this Council. She asked Councillor Crawford whether his actions represent constituents and how do you intend to represent them

Councillor Crawford said that his views represent the values upon which he was elected. He intends to represent constituents in future at Senate, Council, and person affairs. He is willing to have rational discussions with constituents who do disagree with his view.

Brendan Steven from the gallery asked about the Council meeting when the judicial board was suspended. He asked why that decision was made and what authority was used to determine that decision, and whether Councillors took the word of the executive (about the legality of the JBoard) at fact value.

President Knight said that obviously she is an executive, but in confidential session there was a written memo from legal Council that said this directly. In her time as a clubs and services rep she opposed the creation a board of directors but the SSMU is both a student union and corporation but there are inherent legal contradictions within that. Legal advice was provided. Members of SSMU Council are welcome to find that. It is unfair to assume that students would be able to seek their own Counsel when the SSMU's Counsel is supposed to find out what is in the best interest of students

Councillor Kunev asked how a motion could be adopted about the occupation.

Chair Tong said that a motion could be brought from the floor.

President Knight said that she'd like to wait to the next meeting of Council (happening tonight) but if any other member would like to start at another point that is within their jurisdiction.

President Knight said that there will be some changes in the agenda of the second Council meeting regarding the motions, which are not substantive but serve to make this question clearer.

Chair Tong said that substantive debate will happen later.

6) Adjournment 7:55pm