



“The trouble is that excellence is meaningless when it comes to key decisions [...] ‘So to say that excellence is a criterion is to say absolutely nothing other than that the committee will not reveal the criteria used to judge applications.’”

- David Harvey (quoting Bill Readings)

Report to Legislative Council

September 29th, 2011

External Affairs

TaCEQ/Quebec Student roundtable

Reminder: TaCEQ is SSMU's provincial student lobby group. We met on September 18th in Quebec City to hash out some common actions against tuition hikes for the upcoming semester. We agreed to organize a delegation to a protest happening outside the Quebec Liberal Party's convention on October 22nd. We also agreed to participate in the November 10th demonstration against tuition hikes, and to organize concerted actions during the week leading up to November 10th to get as many people as possible across the province to know about the demonstration and participate in it.

Also, a quick update on an issue that has been around since the year Sebastian Ronderos-Morgan was VP External (ie 2009-10): we were informed that TaCEQ has not been recognized as eligible for a special Quebec government program which provides bursaries for some Quebec-wide student association executives. The lobby group would need one more student association. This being said the Ministry of Education has made every indication that they consider us a legitimate student lobby group and will be willing to sit at the table with us in the future (except to talk about tuition hikes, which they've already made their minds up about).

Moulin à paroles pour l'éducation event in Quebec City

The two student associations at Laval University (undergrads and grads) organized a sort of open-mic type event in the main public square in Old Quebec City on September 24th, under the aegis of TaCEQ. I attended as SSMU VP External and read part of the David Harvey piece which is quoted above. It is titled *University, Inc.* and was published in the Atlantic in 1998 - still highly relevant and a terrific read. Google it!

ASSE regional mobilization committee and congress

I attended the Montreal mobilization committee meeting of the ASSÉ on September 20th. ASSÉ stands for “Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante”, or Association for student-worker solidarity and are one of the more grassroots of student organizations in Quebec, with a strong base of activists in Montreal. They decided to host multiple actions against tuition hikes in Montreal over the next few weeks, some of which follow a very interesting format (ie public teach-in at Place des Arts).

As well, I attended ASSÉ's semesterly congress on September 24th and 25th in Sherbrooke, alongside Councillors Stettin and Burnett. It's great to be able to field a SSMU delegation to the congress, since some years at SSMU this has been very hard to do. I'll report orally on where things stand on ASSÉ's side of things.



Mobilization and campus affairs

McGill Inter-union meeting

This informal body has been coordinating many support actions for MUNACA, for example last September 16th there was a large rally on McGill College to show support for the striking union. I spoke at the rally, taking the opportunity to convey that SSMU Council passed a motion of support just the previous day. The next large action will consist of a **rally on Wednesday, September 28th**. It will leave from McTavish street at 11:30 and will circle campus. PGSS may be serving ice cream towards the end. All are welcome!

Members of MFLAG (the McGill Faculty Labour Action Group) were present at the most recent inter-union meeting for the first time, which Councillor Burnett also attended.

There is also discussion at the inter-union meeting of organizing a “McGill Assembly” along the lines of a similar project at the University of Toronto. The idea would be to find a very large room off campus and convene an open meeting of any interested staff, students, MUNACA members (who would not hold picket lines during the meeting in order to attend), even managers who might be concerned by their increased workload during the strike. The idea would be to talk about how the way the administration has responded to the strike is affecting everyone in the McGill community and develop a concerted response. Exciting stuff!

General Assembly motion

I submitted a slightly re-tooled version of the Policy on Accessible Education which is set to expire this year, for discussion at the General Assembly. By now we should all know whether it passed!

Panel on free education

This was supposed to take place on September 27th, but is being postponed indefinitely (womp womp) since the organizers (ie me, Niko Block and Andrea Figueroa from QPIRG) have been unable to find a room off-campus; we were hoping to invite someone from MUNACA to the panel but they can't be on campus, much less cross picket lines. More to come.

Community Affairs

Neighbourhood BBQ and corn roast

I helped organize a neighbourhood BBQ and corn roast alongside the Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee. The weather was beautiful, it was a success, and The rationale behind organizing this type of event is to build better community relations (in particular between student and long-term residents of the Milton-Parc neighbourhood, a.k.a the McGill Ghetto). This type of event is an important step in achieving this goal!

Meeting with representative from the MPCC

My counterpart at the Milton-Parc Citizens' Committee is H el ene Brisson. I met with her on September 23rd.



Students' Society of McGill University
Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs)
Bureau du Vice-président (affaires externes)

Meeting with Heather Munroe-Blum

The executive had our semesterly meeting with Heather-Munroe-Blum on the 21st of September. I raised the fact that the Principal had used the phrase “McGill Ghetto” during her Discover McGill speech, which she apologized for. I explained to her we are trying to make the use of the expression “Milton-Parc” more common, and gave her a “Milton-Parc” pin, which she promptly attached to her blazer. My job is full of surprises.

SSMU Affairs

New Political attaché and researcher

Simon started working at SSMU on September 19th. He works Mondays to Thursdays if you want to come say hi to him! So far, he's worked on creating press reviews of local, regional, national and international news on a bi-weekly basis, and on piecing apart the McGill budget. He's made some interesting discoveries about McGill's financial position which I'll be glad to share orally.

Community Engagement Committee

Met on Friday, September 23rd. We discussed new funding criteria for the Charity Fund (to be brought to the next council meeting) and a funding application.

Policy on Negative Corporate Influences Ad-hoc Committee

I met with Councillors Winer and Patel to discuss reviewing this policy before bringing it for re-adoption in the near future. We had a very interesting discussion about the potential for democratic reform of McGill and are interested in making the revised policy reflect a coherent vision of a more democratic university.

Adverbly verbed,

Joël Pedneault VP (External)