SSMU's Guide to Writing Legislation

Prior to each meeting, the Speaker of Council will announce an official call for agenda items along with a due date. This deadline is final and unforgiving – all final versions of an agenda item must be submitted before this deadline or risk not being included on what is always a very full agenda. Resolutions can be fine-tuned, reworded, etc., at the meeting, but no new resolutions will be accepted after a cut off-date decided by the Speaker of Council. Those resolutions that comply with these guidelines will be the only ones on the agenda for the meeting.

Resolutions are comprised of five main components:

1. Title

The heading serves as identification for the resolution and informs the reader of the topic to be discussed as well as where, or at which meeting, the resolution is to be submitted.

2. Background

The background is not mandatory but is helpful in cases where there is a relevant history in SSMU about the topic that the delegates would benefit from knowing.

3. Preamble

The preamble builds the argument for why the action in the operative clauses should be taken. Clauses in this section are called preambulatory clauses or *whereas* clauses. For each preambulatory clause, the first phrase following 'whereas' should set the 'tone' for the statement that will follow. Tone has to do with the strength of your conviction about the topic. Therefore, the stronger the phrasing, the stronger the conviction about an issue. *See Appendix B for a list of suggested preambulatory words.

4. Action

The action section is the most important part of the resolution. In this section, the operative clauses, or *resolved* clauses, of a resolution tell the reader what action should be taken to solve the challenge set up in the preamble. The operative clauses should be the strongest part of your resolution; debate and any amendments will only be entertained on operative clauses. Language and tone will play a very important part in determining the strength of your operative clauses. Furthermore, the operative clauses are the only part of the resolution that will be recorded.
*See Appendix C for a list of suggested operative words.

5. Salutation

This section informs the reader who wrote the piece of legislation and who supports it. There is a difference between the author and those who co-sign the document, for both practical and philosophical reasons. Thus, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Author: The entity that actually wrote the document or came up with the idea should sign under "Respectfully submitted." This entity can be one or several people or an official taskforce. Please asterix (*) the author that will be given first right to speak during the meeting.

- Co-signed: A short list of people after the author. The purpose of the co-signers is to act as a support group for the author during debate. A strong voice in debate is far more important than a name on a piece of paper. Co-signers can be individuals, boards, or taskforces.

As a general rule, pieces of legislation should be long enough to cover the subject but short enough to maintain interest. If in doubt, aim for the shorter side, especially in the background and preambulatory clauses. One can make more arguments in debate.

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Accuracy

A piece of legislation with poor grammar and spelling will slow down the meeting and is likely to be poorly received by the assembly. Please use a dictionary and other resources to proofread and hone your writing. Some suggested sources beyond dictionaries: "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell and *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

A resolution is, in fact, a very long sentence, and thus requires special standardized punctuation. Please follow the example from Appendix A – "Resolution Regarding the Colour of the Shatner Building."

Accuracy is paramount in the meeting. Be sure to check all of your arguments and assertions to make sure they are indeed fact. It is to your benefit to cite all facts and information within your resolution, especially statistics or elements of the SSMU Constitution and Bylaws. Use footnotes or in-text citations as appropriate.

Appendix A: Sample Resolution

Resolution Regarding the Colour of the Shatner Building

Background: In 1943, SSMU acquired the lease of a building. For the last seven years, the official SSMU Building has been called the Shatner Building, and has been beige in colour[1].

WHEREAS the Shatner Building has been beige in colour for far too long, and;

WHEREAS some members of SSMU are deeply concerned, as beige is commonly associated with dullness, and;

WHEREAS blue would better suit the environment that SSMU is trying to foster.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED that the Shatner Building be painted blue, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Shatner Building be painted blue by the next meeting of the SSMU Legislative Council.

Respectfully submitted,

*Ivan Neilson
SSMU President 2009-2010

Jose Diaz
VP Finance and Operations 2009-2010

Co-signed:
Sarah Olle
VP Clubs and Services 2009-2010

[1] Neilson, Ivan. History of the Shatner Building: A Beginner's Guide. Montreal: SSMU Press, 2009.

Appendix B: Suggested Preambulatory Words

Acknowledging	Contemplating	Fulfilling	regard for	Realizing
Affirming	Convinced	Fully	reviewed	Recalling
Alarmed	Declaring	aware	viewed with apprehension	Recognizing
Anxious	Deeply disturbed	believing	Keeping in mind	Referring
Appreciating	Desiring	bearing in mind	Mindful	Regretting
Approving	Deploring	Grieved	Noting	Reiterating
Aware	Determined	Guided by	further	Seeking
Bearing in mind	Emphasizing	Having	with approval	Stressing
Being convinced	Encouraged	adopted	with deep concern	Taking
Cognizant	Endorsing	approved	with regret	into account
Concerned	Expressing	considered	with satisfaction	into consideration
Confident	Appreciation deep	decided	with grave concern	note
Conscious	appreciation	further	Observing	Welcoming
Considering	Expecting	received	Reaffirming	

Appendix C: Suggested Operative Words

Accepts	Confirms	its regret	resolves	Supports
Adopts	Congratulates	sympathy	Instructs	Takes note of
Affirms	Considers	thanks	Reaffirms	Transmits
Appeals	Decides	the belief	Recognizes	Urges
Appreciates	Declares	the hope	Recommends	Welcomes
Approves	Deplores	Further	Regrets	
Authorizes	Designates	invites	Reiterates	
Calls upon	Directs	proclaims	Renews its appeal	
Commends	Expresses its	reminds	Repeats	
Concurs	appreciation	s	Resolves	
Condemns	conviction	requests	Suggests	