



January 19, 2012.

Dear SSMU Councillors and constituents,

At yesterday's Executive Committee meeting, I disclosed to my fellow Executives that I feel that I have too many different roles in relation to the ongoing Judicial Board case between students Zach Newburgh and Brendan Steven and Elections SSMU Chief Electoral Officer Rebecca Tacoma to spearhead any decisions of the SSMU or SSMU Executive regarding this issue. Consequently, I agreed with the Executive Committee that any actions necessary on the part of the SSMU will be led by VP University Affairs Emily Yee Clare. I will, however, continue to perform my related administrative duties, in consultation with VP Clare, the SSMU General Manager and the rest of the Executive Committee, unless they (or SSMU Council) deem it inappropriate that I do so.

The natures of my various roles are as follows:

- 1) As Chair of SSMU's Nominating Committee, I am mandated to ensure that the Judicial Board is appointed (SSMU Constitution, Articles 12.2 and 31.1). Along with SSMU's Human Resources Advisor, I completed the interviews with the current members of the Judicial Board before recommending their nomination to the SSMU Nominating Committee.
- 2) It has been the practice of the SSMU over the past several years that Elections SSMU (formerly Elections McGill) operates at arm's length within the President's portfolio. While former SSMU President Zach Newburgh and former Chief Electoral Officer Tais McNeill selected current CEO Rebecca Tacoma for her position, I function as her immediate supervisor and am responsible for both evaluating her performance and providing her with feedback and support.
- 3) I am the Chair of the SSMU Board of Directors, which is ultimately and legally responsible for all of the SSMU's activities.
- 4) I am mandated to act as the spokesperson for the SSMU (SSMU Constitution, Article 7.2).
- 5) In my capacities outlined in points 1 and 2, I was involved in the orientation and administration of the Judicial Board immediately following the Fall 2011 Referendum Period. As such, I was part of some of the events currently being considered by the Judicial Board.
- 6) I have a history of professional and personal interactions with the petitioner Zach Newburgh. In my capacity as a 2010-2011 Clubs & Services Representative, I signed a motion to consider the removal of then-President Newburgh when matters I found concerning were brought to my attention and subsequently voted in favour of SSMU Council censuring him. In my capacity as President-elect, I worked closely with, and was



trained by, then-President Newburgh throughout May 2011. In Fall 2011, I was responsible for managing Zach Newburgh's request for SSMU's membership list.

- 7) From 2007-2009, I was an active member of Greening McGill, a working group of Quebec Public Interest Research Group (QPIRG). I have personal relationships with some members of QPIRG McGill's Board of Directors (as former high school and McGill classmates, colleagues on SSMU Council, etc.).
- 8) In the past I have written letters and opinion pieces in the campus press arguing against the arguments and actions of the QPIRG Opt-Out Campaign. These included pieces arguing directly against articles written by petitioner Brendan Steven.

The SSMU's Conflict of Interest Policy defines conflict of interest as "any situation in which an individual has an interest that may compromise their actions...[and] can be financial or interpersonal." It is possible that situations outlined under section 4 of the Policy, regarding Committees and Decision-Making Bodies, may arise. While the Policy does not require me to publicly announce the nature of a real or potential conflict or to do so outside of formal decision-making processes, hiring, or financial/business transactions, I believe it is in keeping with the spirit of the Conflict of Interest Policy to proactively disclose the above to all of you, given the various less formal areas of the SSMU President's influence that relate to this current Judicial Board case. The Executive Committee agreed that leadership on this issue should be transferred to the VP University Affairs in the spirit of Article 7.8 of the SSMU Constitution, which lists the VP University Affairs as the replacement for the President under certain circumstances.

I hope that, by disclosing these roles to SSMU's Council and membership and by deferring to another member of SSMU's Executive to take the lead on any issues which emerge from this ongoing Judicial Board case, I am helping to ensure that the SSMU's democratic processes will proceed in a responsible and transparent manner. Should any SSMU member have any comments or concerns about this course of action, I welcome your thoughts in person or by email to [president@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:president@ssmu.mcgill.ca) and [ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca).

Yours,

Maggie Knight

*President, Students' Society of McGill University*

Note: The SSMU's Constitution, Bylaws, and Policies referenced above can be consulted at <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/about-us/who-we-are/constitution-and-bylaws/>.