



MOTION REGARDING THE ADOPTION OF A POLICY AGAINST UNPAID INTERNSHIPS

Whereas, through its constitution the SSMU commits “to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection;”

Whereas, in Canada, almost one in four youth is unemployed, underemployed, or has given up looking for work;¹

Whereas, unpaid internships exacerbate social inequalities by excluding from many prestigious and meaningful fields those students who cannot afford to work for free;²

Whereas, unpaid internships are already illegal in most situations in numerous jurisdictions across Canada, but continue to exist because of lax enforcement;³

Whereas, unpaid internships risk eliminating entry-level jobs and lowering starting wages for all, but particularly young workers;⁴

¹ “Youth Unemployment and Underemployment in Canada,” Canadian Teachers’ Federation (2014). <http://www.ctf-fce.ca/Research-Library/Brief-Youth-Unemployment.pdf>

² “Why Unpaid Internships Mean Inequality of Opportunity,” Macleans (2013). <http://www.macleans.ca/economy/business/why-unpaid-internships-means-inequality-of-opportunity/>

³ “What is the law?” Canadian Interns Association (2015). <http://www.internassociation.ca/what-is-the-law/>

⁴ Marco Chown Oved, “Unpaid internships: the most precarious work of all,” The Toronto Star (2013). http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/03/05/unpaid_internships_the_most_precarious_work_of_all.html



Whereas, research suggests there is no advantage in terms of hiring rates or starting salary for graduates with unpaid internship experience, but significant advantages in hiring and starting salary for those with paid internship experience;⁵

Whereas, at the Winter 2015 General Assembly the SSMU adopted a “Motion Regarding Unpaid Internships;”⁶

Whereas, this motion resolved that, “the SSMU develop a policy, in consultation with interested student groups and McGill University, clarifying when unpaid internships should be considered illegal for the purposes of this motion,” among other mandates;

Whereas, the SSMU hired a researcher in Summer 2016 in order to investigate the specific issues posed by unpaid internships for McGill students, accompanied by recommendations for improvement;

Whereas, an overview of this research was presented to the Legislative Council at its meeting of October 20, 2016;

Whereas, based on this research the Vice-President (University Affairs) and Vice-President (External Affairs) developed a policy in order to institutionalize existing and additional measures for advocacy and awareness-building on issues related to unpaid internships;

Be It Resolved, That the SSMU adopt the following Policy against Unpaid Internships (Appendix A), which shall expire on February 23, 2022.

Moved by:

Jasmine Segal, Social Work Representative
Caitlin Mehrotra, Science Representative
Kahli-Ann Douglas, Services Representative
David Aird, Vice-President (External)
Erin Sobat, Vice-President (University Affairs)

⁵ “Class of 2013: Paid Interns Outpace Unpaid Peers in Job Offers, Salaries,” National Association of Colleges and Employers” (2013). <http://www.nacweb.org/s05292013/paid-unpaid-interns-job-offer.aspx>

⁶ “Motion Regarding Unpaid Internships,” Students’ Society of McGill University (2015). <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Motion-Regarding-Unpaid-Internships1.pdf>