



Legislative Council – February 8th, 2018

Motion to De-gender the Language of the SSMU

Whereas, for the purpose of this Motion, “gendered language” shall be defined as “any language which refers to a person or people and infers on them a gender, usually binary” (eg. he/she pronouns, man/woman, guys/girls, girl/boyfriend, ladies and gentlemen, etc.);

Whereas, a person’s gender and the pronouns they use are not immediately obvious;

Whereas, the experience of being addressed with incorrectly gendered language, can be dehumanizing, disrespectful, and emotionally distressing, and can render a space unwelcoming and inaccessible;

Whereas, purposely addressing someone with incorrectly gendered language is an act of discrimination and violence;

Whereas, this form of gender discrimination is experienced most commonly by transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people, who also bear the bulk of the labour of informing and correcting the use of pronouns and other gendered language;

Whereas, the common practice of using binary gendered language when referring to the general public or anyone whose pronouns and/or gender have not been communicated is discriminatory in that it assumes these people can all be described by male and/or female gender, effectively erasing the existence of non-binary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people;

Whereas, to create a space where non-binary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people are included and acknowledged, gender-inclusive language can be used when referring to the general public or anyone whose pronouns and/or gender have not been communicated;

Whereas, the SSMU Equity Policy states “The SSMU will promote a functional anti-oppressive environment through [...] using gender-neutral language in all documents, electronic and written correspondence from SSMU addresses, and in the workplace. This shift shall be implemented systematically under the supervision of the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs).”

Be it Resolved, that the Standing Rules of Legislative Council be amended to include the following articles:

3.5. Unless a member requests otherwise, their placard should include their pronouns, in both English and French.



Members may request their pronouns be added, removed, or changed at any time.

3.6. Guest Speakers and members of the gallery should be encouraged to include their pronouns when they introduce themselves.

3.7 The official Minutes should use the correct pronouns as provided from 3.5 & 3.6 above, or gender-neutral pronouns if unspecified.

Be it further Resolved, that Legislative Council recommend the following include the relevant person's pronouns, unless requested otherwise:

- a. Email signatures of SSMU staff, Officers, Directors, Councillors, and any other SSMU personnel;
- b. Any bios posted on the SSMU website or other SSMU publications, including those of Councillors, Directors, and Officers;
- c. Any time someone is introduced.

The Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs) shall ensure the relevant parties are informed of this recommendation and shall coordinate efforts to implement it.

Be it further Resolved, that the SSMU, through the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs) create a *SSMU Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language*, including but not limited to:

- a. A standardization for both French and English language
- b. The actions outlined in this Motion
- c. A section advising campus media on reporting & interviewing
- d. General guidelines for formal and informal communication.

Ideally this guide would be produced as part of a larger *SSMU Guide to Inclusive Language*, addressing topics such as race and disability, along with gender. In creating the *SSMU Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language*, the SSMU should seek input from campus groups representing transgender, non-binary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming people.

Be it further Resolved, that, in accordance with the SSMU Equity Policy, the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs) supervise the removal of, and replacement with gender-neutral terminology, any gendered language referring to the general public or a person/people whose pronouns and/or gender have not been communicated from all SSMU documents, including but not limited to:

- a. Internal Regulations of the SSMU
- b. SSMU Motions, plans, and policies
- c. Employee Contracts
- d. Confidentiality Agreements
- e. Waivers, Insurance Forms, and any other HR Documents

Be it further Resolved, that the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs) prepare a report for Legislative Council, to be delivered at the next meeting of Legislative Council, including the following:



- a. An summary of the current state of SSMU documents as mentioned above.
- b. A timeline and plan for the implementation of the mandates in this Motion.

Be it further Resolved, that the Equity Policy be amended to include reference to the *SSMU Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language* as follows:

1.1.4. Using gender-neutral language in all documents, electronic and written correspondence from SSMU addresses, and in the workplace, in accordance with the *SSMU Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language*. This *Guide* shall be maintained by the Equity Commissioners.

This amendment shall come into effect upon completion of the *SSMU Guide to Gender-Inclusive Language*.

Moved by:

Vivian Campbell, Engineering Representative (ssmu.rep1@mcgilleus.ca)
Jennifer Chan, Arts Representative
Marjan Ghazi, Science Representative
Corinne Bulger, Arts Representative
Isabella Anderson, Senate Caucus Representative
Maya Koparkar, SSMU Vice-President (Internal Affairs)
Matthew Savage, Social Work Representative
Namrata Khopkar, Engineering Representative
Muna Tojiboeva, SSMU President
Melisa Demir, Law Representative
Yué Jiao, Athletics Representative