



# WINTER 2018 SSMU GENERAL ASSEMBLY

## 1. Call to Order

The speaker announces that the general assembly will begin in one minute. Students can pick their vote cards up from the main door, if they have not yet done so.

The speaker calls the general assembly to order at 18:27 (6:27 PM).

The speaker points out the exits in the room. If students need whisper translation throughout the proceedings, the translators can be found at the corners of the room. The speaker repeats this announcement in french.

As of 5 minutes ago, there were 65 voting individuals in the room. This does not reach quorum.

The speaker explains that when quorum has not been reached, a consultative forum is established. The speaker reads this from the internal regulations. Motions passed during consultative forums will be placed on the agenda at the following GA, or, at the discretion of the speaker, at the following legislative council. Minutes shall be circulated within 2 weeks of the consultative forum. At this time, this is a consultative forum. If we reach 350 individuals, then this can become a General Assembly again.

The proceedings today will adhere to a 2-minute speaking time. The speaker will knock twice when the time has elapsed.

For the proceedings today, members are asked to address all comments towards the speaker. A level of decorum and respect is expected, with regards to all comments made.

## 2. Land Acknowledgement

The speaker presents the land acknowledgement.

## 3. Approval of the Agenda



On a point of parliamentary inquiry, a member asks where the microphones are. The speaker explains that individuals can line up on the stairs, and a microphone will be handed to them

A member proposes that point 6 become point 4, right after the approval of the agenda. The motion is seconded.

Another member motions to add a motion regarding executive objectives, which was previously sent to the speaker. The speaker explains that this will take place during executive reports.

Move to vote to amend the agenda to move motion 6 to number 4. Vote by placard.

The speaker explains that the vote has to be redone, because it needs to be counted by the counters due to this being a procedural vote. The speaker judged that less members voted than had the ability to vote, hence why this must also be redone and counted.

With 45 in favour and 6 against, the amendment passes.

Vote by placard on adoption of full agenda. With 54 in favour and 0 opposed, the agenda is adopted.

#### 4. New Business

1. Motion to Organize the Fight for Free Education and Cancellation of Student Debt

A mover presents the motion. (<https://ssmu.ca/governance/general-assembly/general-assembly-2017-2018/>)

Move to question period. Andrew Figueiredo, U2 Arts, asks if any movers spoke to government officials about this or if we are just endorsing a strike out of the blue. The mover responds that they have been talking to officials for the last ten years, but that didn't work. That's what the red square movement was about. Nobody is going to give it to us. That is clear. The last ten years have shown us that. The member reminds everyone here that this year we have a provincial election, and a federal election the year after. Imagine how politics will have to listen if there is action from us now.



Calvin from The Daily asks what the cancellation of student debt means. A mover responds that this refers to the cancellation of all student debt. This total debt is more than the debt of some provinces. There is money sitting idle in banks, which is not being invested. If 5% of this is put into student debt, it can eliminate it and students won't have this burden anymore.

Charles, U0 arts asks who is getting cancellation of debt. Is it Canadians, Ontarians? Who is it for? The mover responds that "students" refers to Canadian students, including Quebec. But, we are socialists, so we are internationalists. The fight for students doesn't stay in Canada. It has already started elsewhere. Students in Germany fought and they won this. The fight extends beyond the border.

Brian Buraga, U0 arts asks how democratic forums are created when this GA has less than the 350 needed. What would be a big enough size to consider something democratic? A mover responds that because this will be placed under the VP University Affairs, it will be up to them. The suggestion is that there could be multiple assemblies. There is a lot of flexibility in this resolution. The mover also points out that this is already democratic in that there are a lot of endorsements from Independent Jewish Voices to QPIRG, so there is a lot of push behind this.

Patrick Beecham, U1 Arts states that the mover has made it seem that they are unwilling to talk to politicians about this. The mover asks who is going to create the fiscal policy to make this happen? Why aren't they talking to get people elected who can do this? A mover responds that they didn't say that they are opposed to talking to officials. Instead, they said that it's not enough. The mover thinks we can all see the limitation to speaking to elected officials. The best way to fight for what we want is mass action. It took 2012, the mass strike, for the government to cancel the tuition hike. That's what the government responds to. Not pressure, not votes. The government responds to pressure. The mover doesn't believe that by themselves they will do anything.

Charles, U0 arts says that only 30% of McGill students are Canadian, and asks why the movers think that the strike, which won't affect all students, should be placed on SSMU, which represents all students. The mover reiterates that, even though the motion talks about Canadian students, this would extend to all students. International students would likely stand by Canadians. It's time we stop looking at these barriers of "you're an international student and I'm a



Quebec student”, and we support each other. Now is not the time to be building up walls.

Andrew Figuieredo, U2 Arts, asks if any of the movers have consulted economic experts on the effects of taking 5% of money in banks. The mover responds that they aren't sure what is meant by the effect on the economy. The 5% is in banks, not being invested. To answer the question, they have not consulted anyone. The better question seems to be: what impact would adding 5% to the student population instead of the banks have.

Chip Smith, U0 arts asks whether the strike will be binding or will be voluntary. Will those who want to go to class be able to go? VP Spencer says this comes up all the time. There is a huge amount of misinformation on how strikes work. SSMU cannot call a strike. Each departmental association has to call a strike vote. It could be the faculty of arts, but usually it's a department. During the 2015 austerity strikes, some specific departments went on strike while others didn't. There weren't really strict blockades into classes either. So SSMU doesn't really have this power, as it's housed within departments.

Calvin, Arts, asks where the 5% comes from, and how much student fees would be set to. A mover responds that the 5% is a deduction of the amount of student debt versus the amount of money that is sitting. Student fees would be set to zero.

Andrew Figuieredo asks who will actually fund the schools, after the one time debt is paid off. The mover responds that there are a lot of inefficiencies in how the government is currently working. Inefficient contracts can be looked at. There are other kind of inefficiencies which increase the costs of services without increasing jobs. There are ways to increase funding without austerity, and without just going after banks. The point here is that we aren't planning a whole restructuring of the government. The point is that we put pressure on government officials. The mover requests that subject matter be kept to the specific motion.

Move to debate.

Connor Spencer, VP External, speaks in favour of this motion. It is ridiculous that we are a student union that doesn't have a position on free tuition, since this is literally what unions are for. In terms of this being an anti-government motion, this is actually mandating the SSMU to bring this up to the government, so it's



actually moving on this. In fact, there is lots of talk about this happening in government. In fact, the NDP just passed a motion on free tuition at their conference about a month ago, so this is very much on the agenda for the next federal election. The VP is fully in favour of this and willing to answer any questions.

Andrew Figuiereado says that this is a pipe dream. It's a nice idea but is more something in the long term. A strike can really get in the way of campus, and there is such low turnout that monthly democratic meetings with only 10 or 12 people, one of which would be Andrew, would be pathetic. No economists have been consulted on this, so maybe we should take a step back here.

Nadia from Socialist Fightback adds that this has already been fought at other campuses like York university, and today we are demanding that the SSMU also joins this struggle. The only way this can be done is in a democratic manner, which is why this urges the SSMU to organize monthly assemblies. It doesn't have to take a lot of work if students feel empowered. The only way students will feel empowered is if the SSMU really takes this stance. The mover responds that it is true that a one-day student strike isn't enough. That's true. This is just a beginning. Eventually, they want a national strike, for longer if needed. This is the only way that students in the past have won anything. It's through strikes.

Patrick Beecham, U1 Arts is here to talk about the merits of this and whether it is a meritable goal. In Britain, they decided to impose student fees because it helped support poor students. The number of poor students in universities and general outreach has increased. Why is that the case? Tuition makes it so that universities have more funds with which to extend opportunity to those who have the dream but not the funds. So what does this motion say? That the most well-off of us are not willing to forsake ourselves for the poorest? Especially when the movers have not looked into how this will actually work, the mover urges everyone to vote not to this motion. As it stands now, this will not be good for anyone, especially not the poorest.

Kiana St. Macary, Arts and Science U4 is very excited about this motion. Kiana disputes that this has never been costed. This has been costed by numerous organizations. Kiana also disputes that this is bad for low-income people. First of all, forcing people to jump through hoops to prove that they are poor enough is pretty cruel. Secondly, when you universalize programs, you tend to get people more interested in supporting them, which is less likely with means-tested



programs. A lot of people need to just google 'free tuition' and see how it has been costed and what it's actually about. People have to be a little bit compassionate about the people who support this motion, because it personally affects them and the people that they love.

Grant, Arts U3 speaks in favour of this motion on one specific experience. As a student who has organized on the issue of austerity, it is clear that as student mobilization has decreased, university campuses (including McGill) have been increasing their margins of profits. This has ultimately resulted in an increase in tuition. The only way for McGill to realize that this is not okay is for this to be organized on the ground. The union also needs to move away from the school and towards the government. If possible, recreating 2012 might be what is needed. With the reference to England, the mover thinks everyone should realize that increasing the cost of tuition by several thousand pounds does not make education more accessible.

Liam, Arts U1, wants to address some points made by Mr. Figueredo and friends. The idea that free education is impossible is imposterous. In many countries, this has worked. Many countries even give stipends for students to go to school. These countries know that an educated society is something that should be invested in. In terms of the point that this should happen later; if not now, then when? We can't always wait around. We have to start now, and this is what this motion does. The point about has this been costed is beyond the scope of SSMU. The point of this motion is to say 'we support free education' and it's up to the government to cost it out.

Chip Smith, U0 arts speaks to two points. The presenter asks everyone to look around and notice the empty chairs. How are we going to get quorum at monthly meetings? We can't take decisions with a handful of people. We have heard here today that there will be one strike. We have heard that there will be more than one strike. How can we force a strike on students who have worked four years to get their degree, and might have to take another semester. We need to really look at what this means for students.

A member has free tuition from Ontario, and it feels great. The mover doesn't want their taxes increased so that income goes to the families of the wealthiest, who will also get free tuition but could pay for it. The mover also knows a lot of students who go to York who aren't in favour of the strike. Especially students in



fourth year don't want this to happen. The mover doesn't want to pay an extra year of rent to make up for a strike.

A mover motions to divide the question clause by clause. The speaker says that this is in order. The motion is seconded. The speaker explains that this will require a majority, and that it will take place by placard vote.

Move to vote on motion to divide the question. The motion fails.

Patrick Beecham, U1 Arts is against this motion for reasons that have already been stated, but some clarifications need to be made. Someone has said that the system in Britain makes people prove that they are poor which is not true. There is a sane repayment plan that is accessible to poor people. The arguments that people have made are not particularly valid and should not be taken with just 'google it' as justification. In terms of nordic countries, these countries have valid economic plans, which we are not getting from the movers. The consequence of not having a fiscal plan means that we will have cost reduction, which means decreased enrollment rates, and the movers, like the current speaker, probably don't want to see poor people having less access to schools.

Bircken, U1 Arts, is an international student from the United States who is in favour of this. It is ridiculous that two of the richest countries aren't able to invest in education. In terms of the point of going into debt, it just isn't true that student need to pay or going into debt for education. If countries can built roads, skyscrapers, and trips to space, then they can build education. We know intrinsically that education is a social good. It's beneficial to everyone to have a more educated society, so even from a self-interested standpoint, it makes sense. It's not that governments can't do this, it's that they don't want to. That's why we need motions like this.

Andrew Chase, U1 Arts, wants to provide an economist's perspective as an economics student. Most of the investment that helps fuel the economy comes from banks. So the people who are going to be hurt by this are the people who have the most risks. Those are young families, and students. So we risk hurting others if we don't work with groups. Striking hurts us, because we miss days that we have been paying for the educate us. We should proceed through this without striking, and should take an approach that works with people.



A member from Socialist Fightback wants to refute some of what has been said. To reemphasize, they are not taking 5% from banks. They are taking 5% from the money that is not being invested, which is precisely the former speaker's point. In terms of means testing, it can be very degrading. Having to prove that you have seniors at home on life support is degrading. Furthermore, the reason there aren't people here is because people are disenfranchised. Motions have always been "motion to support", but never concrete. This motion is support and it actually gives concrete action, which is what we need. In terms of talking to the government, they would love to do that, but this is what has been happening for four years, and nothing has happened. In terms of a strike being disruptive, that's the point of a strike: to disrupt, to draw attention.

Chip Smith motions to amend the motion. Seconded. The amendment is being sent to the parliamentarian for projection.

A member motions to call the question. The speaker explains that this would require a  $\frac{2}{3}$  vote. The motion to call the question is seconded.

The mover withdraws the motion to move the question.

Another member motions to call the question. Seconded.

Voting on the motion to call the question on the main motion. Revote due to numerous members not voting. The speaker explains again that this vote is on whether to enter into voting procedure on the main motion, not the amendment. The motion to call the question passes.

The speaker explains that this ends debate, with a move to vote on the main motion. The speaker explains that this is not binding. With the approval of the movers and at the speaker's discretion, the motion would be presented to legislative council, if this passes.

Move to vote on main motion. The motion passes. At the discretion of the speaker and the approval of the movers, this will be presented to the earliest possible legislative council.

## 5. Question Period



Brian Burrigaga, Arts and Science, asks the incoming executives what their plans are to increase turnout at the GA. Tre Mansdoerfer responds that they are looking to make this online, and discussions with the CompSci President has already happened in terms of how this could be implemented. They would also like to have departments advertise, as that has worked really well in the past.

A member asks the current executive why they feel there was such low turnout at this GA. President Tojiboeva responds that this was advertised on Facebook and quite widely, so it probably has to do with the non-controversial nature of the motions.

## 6. Report of the Executive Committee

The speaker explains that at legislative council on the January 25th, a motion was passed to hold the GA after the SSMU elections, with part of the motion mandating the incoming executive to prepare a statement outline their priorities for the coming year. So, this will be presented, and then their priorities will be voted on.

Incoming President Tre Mansdoerfer presents the main points, which are presented on the screen.

Chip Smith, UO Arts, asks in terms of monthly town halls, how the executive can work to ensure that people are coming out to these events and engaging with SSMU executives. Matthew McLaughlin responds that it could be much less frequent, like maybe semesterly or even yearly. Budgets should be expanded in the capacity of social media advertising. Furthermore, incentives like having meetings in other locations can be helpful. For instance, FYC had a GA in Gerts and a lot of people came. Also, it will be more about one-on-one communication, so it's a really different vibe.

Calvin from the Tribune asks if Tre could explain how Marina could implement the motion on Free Tuition. Mansdoerfer thinks that a strike should be pretty implementable, although the democratic meetings might be harder. From Facebook messages, Marina seems really interested. Matthew responds that it won't be done in a cylo, so Matthew will work with Marina to make sure the word is getting out. The goal is to work together and make sure they have an effective executive team, so they can work together on this in their various portfolios. Calvin further asks if the incoming VP University Affairs would consider pushing for this with the University. The incoming VP UA notes that all incoming executives voted in favour of this motion, so they will all be on the same page to work together on this. At this point, the executive is not fully able to answer it but they will be working on it together.



Move to vote on accepting the executive committee report from the incoming executive. The contents of the report is approved.

At the speaker's discretion and the approval of the movers, this moves to legislative council.

## 7. Executive Reports

### 1. Vice-President (External Affairs)

VP Spencer presents the report.

Dominic says that the original GSVP was supposed to be presented in this GA, and asks if it will be passed on to Marina now. VP Spencer responds that the Community Disclosure Network asked for this to be presented at this GA. Ultimately the decision was made that this shouldn't be rushed, and that this timeline doesn't really work. If anyone wants to see the draft, they totally can, but right now they are in the process of showing this to stakeholders. In terms of whether this will be passed onto Marina, it will not. The whole point is to hold people in power accountable, so the executive should not have control over this. Instead, there will be permanent staff with the skills to do this job who will take over.

### 2. Vice-President (Internal Affairs)

President Tojiboeva presents the report on the VP Koparkar's behalf.

### 3. Vice-President (Finance)

VP Herpin presents the report.

A member asks why the Peel building was purchased, and if there are any preliminary thoughts on how to use it. VP Herpin responds that they are looking at which services to pool together into one building. They are exploring different options and really looking into each option. Ultimately, it will have to be passed onto the next exec. Most of the groups will move into the building when the original SSMU building reopens. In terms of why the building should be bought, buying a building was already on the table when VP Herpin came into the building, so the VP more-so just gave advice to the Board.



Another member asks why a building that is inaccessible to many students was bought without the consultation of students. The VP Finance responds that they will be looking into making the building accessible. It's also an investment, because it can be rented out and add to the society. The reason why students weren't consulted on this was because of the nature of the confidentiality. If they had gone public, McGill administration might have sought to undermine it or intervene. Additionally, because of the cost, they didn't want others to come in and bid higher and take the building away. The Board was selected to represent the best interests of the society, so they were chosen to make the decision. As much as it's unfortunate that not each student could be consulted, the decision was made with the best interests of students in mind.

A member asks if there is asbestos in the building. The VP responds that the building is in perfect condition other than not yet being accessible.

A member asks if any progress has been made on increasing accessibility for the clubs fund. The VP responds that he has been attending meetings of the funding committee to make sure that things are process quickly. From what he understands, the right system is already in place. It's also a lack of awareness about the funds and how accessible they actually are. The VP says that the process is actually quite accessible and quick, with responses usually coming within one or two weeks. They have also been meeting with groups to let them know that these funds exist and that they should apply. The member follow sup to ask if there has been an increase in applications. The VP would have to look into it to see, and they could look into it and get back to the member.

#### 4. Vice-President (University Affairs)

VP Oke presents the report.

A member asks how much of the 'advocating for a fall reading week' will fall onto the VP UA. VP Spencer responds that in terms of lobbying the province, the VP has doubts about the Minister of Education, but it is something that would first have to be brought to UEQ or AVEQ. This is something that the VP External will be training the future VP External to do. The VP UA adds that different institutions have different methods of counting their contact hours, so it's hard to organize, but it has been done. Enrollment services has sent surveys out to see



how different administrators conceptualize their semesters and how a fall break could fit in.

5. Vice-President (Student Life)

VP Earle presents the report.

6. President

President Tojiboeva presents the report.

A member asks if there any important points regarding the MoA negotiation with McGill. President Tojiboeva cannot discuss the points right now because they are in negotiation, but it should be done by the end of Tojiboeva's term.

The member asks if the 6th testimony from the BoG has been released regarding the terms of reference. Tojiboeva believes that it may be mentioned at the next meeting, but is unsure.

8. Adjournment

VP Earle motions to adjourn. Seconded. The consultative forum is adjourned at 21:05 (9:05 PM)

APPROVED