



SSMU LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PUBLIC MINUTES

November 28, 2019

A portion of the minutes was transcribed as per the [YouTube livestream recording](#). This is an unofficial transcription and is yet to be approved by Legislative Council.

Timeline of the SSMU President speaking during the meeting:

- **5:55:19 to 5:55:48:** The President moves to add the amendments in red, which were submitted to the Speaker and the Parliamentarian, seconded by Councillor Chan. The President explains that there are no longer two (2) Councillor-Directors who will be attending the trip, there is only one at this time, and there is an additional whereas clause pertaining to the AUS and SUS stances regarding this.
- **6:58:48 to 6:59:03:** The President motions to suspend the standing rules to set default speaking time to three minutes for members of the gallery, seconded by VP External - FAILS.
- **7:03:08 to 7:07:27:** The President notes that it's important for Legislative Council to realize the true power that it has in recommending to the Board of Directors certain means regarding incorrect decisions made by the Board. Legislative Council is the highest political body of the Society. Generally, the Board is obliged not to intervene with any motions passed by Legislative Council unless they are in conflict with any HR, financial or legal matters. The President would like for Council to fix the situation. In his opinion, the President thinks there has been a great debate on the content of the trip and the location of the trip as well. The President reminds Council that VP Finance and VP Internal were offered this trip as student leaders. In his opinion, the President argues that the individuals who were offered this trip, are taking advantage of their position. The President wishes for Council to understand that the circumstances under which the Executives were invited to this trip, it's possible that this discussion wouldn't necessarily be happening. Even if the location of the trip was different, it still stands. The President believes that this trip is improper, it shows a lack of integrity in student leaders and strongly urges them to take the time to deeply consider.
- **7:22:53 to 7:23:13:** The President confirms with the Speaker that as per the Be It Resolved clause, the Speaker would be mandated to ask with Councillor Wright if she did attend the trip or not. The Speaker replies that he will do as he is mandated, as a SSMU staff.



Transcription begins:

Motion to suspend the rules by Councillor Fakih to add a late motion 'Motion to request the Board of Directors to reevaluate the recent Conflicts of Interest Recommendations', seconded by Senator Garneau.

Voting on suspending the rules to add a late motion:

In favour: 4

Opposed: 18

The $\frac{3}{4}$ majority was not reached. This fails.

Moving onto the next agenda item, Motion Regarding Free Trip Offers to Student Leaders 2019-11-18 moved by Senator Garneau, seconded by Councillor Merali.

Councillor Chase has a point of parliamentary inquiry regarding recusal of councillors as recommended in the Conflict of Interest Recommendation. However, the Speaker explains that this is very much in order, but, because we are not yet in the debate period, this is not yet required.

Councillor Wright asks the Speaker if she is allowed to stay for question period, as she is explicitly mentioned in the motion.

VP External inquires with the Speaker on how the recusal of Councillors was recommended in the recommendation. The Speaker explains that it was adopted as a remedy by the Board of Directors.

The Speaker invites Senator Garneau to motivate the motion, with two minutes. Senator Garneau asks to have an extension.

Councillor Das motions to extend by four minutes, seconded by Councillor Sabayte - PASSES.

Senator Garneau motivates the motion. He explains that he did not foresee his first motion at Legislative Council to be this, but believes that it's important to discuss this at Legislative Council in light of recent question period at the previous Legislative Council. Senator Garneau further explains that this motion is not about the purpose of the trip or its content, but rather about gifts and accepting gifts as a student leader.

Question Period:



Councillor Mackie acknowledges that this motion is coming from Senate Caucus and asks Senator Garneau if he could explain the vote breakdown at Senate Caucus in moving this forward.

Senator Garneau replies that he is not obligated to share this information.

Councillor Wright asks the movers of the motion to define what is their definition of “student leader” as this has been the headlines the past few days, and do the movers believe that the only student leaders are SSMU members or from faculty associations.

VP External explains that he is unsure of how the mover’s interpretation of this motion’s definition of student leaders is pertinent to the operative clauses of the motion. The Speaker replies that throughout several sections of the motion, it does make reference to ‘student leader’. However, Council is always welcome to appeal the Chair’s rulings.

VP External motions to appeal the decision of the Chair on the grounds that everyone knows what a student leader is, seconded by VP University Affairs.

Debate:

Councillor Chan agrees with Councillor Wright regarding defining specifically what a student leader is. Councillor Chan also mentions the Hillel Montreal letter and their selection process of student leaders for the trip.

Member from the Gallery, Andres Koch, explains that he disagrees with Councillor Wright, in the fact that this motion does fall within the student leaders and student politicians and a much broader category.

Senator Lametti sustains the decision of the Chair and agrees that members should ask questions related to the motion to appeal the decision of the Chair at this time.

VP External doesn’t want to get caught in the semantics and thinks it would be pertinent to move forward, as we have already received the Board of Directors report.

Councillor Chan respectfully disagrees and thinks this motion is all about semantics and the definition of student leader and thinks we ought to sustain the decision of the Chair.

Voting on upholding the decision of the Chair, which is to accept Councillor Wright’s question - this passes with a clear simple majority (18 in favour).

The Speaker asks the Recording Secretary to restate the question asked by Councillor Wright.



Senator Garneau replies that he does not believe that the definition of student leader only applies within the framework of SSMU or McGill.

Councillor Francenschini inquires about the fact that the Board of Directors has already determined that it is not a Conflict of Interest, then why are we discussing the Board's choice. Senator Garneau replies that he believes this reaches further than just a conflict of interest, and touches upon the judgment of student leaders accepting gifts of large amounts.

Councillor Rhamey inquires about the specific wording of monetary benefit in the motion. In other words, if the individual was never intending on going on the trip, they are not profiting from a monetary benefit? Councillor Merali explains that simply because you never 'intended' on attending the trip, it is not fully justified here and gives the example of giving someone a car, just because they never wanted one or asked for one, doesn't mean it's not the same concept, if they accepted the car.

VP University Affairs motions to extend question period by two minutes, seconded by Councillor Fakhri -PASSES.

Member from the Gallery, Andres Koch, has an issue with a whereas clause and would like to amend it. The Speaker informs that only Councillors may amend clauses, members of the gallery cannot.

Debate:

Councillor Mackie strongly encourages Councillors to not abstain on this motion.

The President moves to add the amendments in red, which were submitted to the Speaker and the Parliamentarian, seconded by Councillor Chan. The President explains that there are no longer two (2) Councillor-Directors who will be attending the trip, there is only one at this time, and there is an additional whereas clause pertaining to the AUS and SUS stances regarding this.

Debate on the amendment:

Senator Garneau strongly supports the amendment.

Councillor Wu claims that as the only individual from SUS currently in the room, she encourages this amendment.

Member from the Gallery, Asa Kohn, SUS, asks if the Science Undergraduate Society declare its opposition or was that simply from the Executive Committee, as Kohn was at the last General Council meeting and he does not remember this being said. Councillor Wu replies that the SUS Executives had a very long conversation about this and although they haven't declared it publically, it is available as



meeting notes should he wish to request it. Councillor Wu also mentions that SUS will be releasing a statement soon.

Voting on the amendment:

In favour: 22

Opposed: 1

Abstain: 0

The amendment is adopted.

Debate on the main motion as amended:

Proxy for Councillor Platt inquires if the voting on Senate Caucus is confidential. This question is deferred to the VP University Affairs. VP University Affairs replies that usually, Senate Caucus does take minutes, but because the voting on this happened online in a Facebook group, as a result, this is unclear.

Councillor Chan shares the concern about gifts. For example, applying to scholarships with AUS student leadership role on a resume. However, Councillor Chan would like to clarify with the movers of the motion whether or not they want to go into specific details of the Be It Resolved clause, as it is currently very broad.

Senator Lametti moves an amendment to the motion, seconded by Councillor Mackie. The amendment would add two (2) *Whereas* clauses.

Debate on the amendment:

Senator Lametti explains that this motion takes a position on what consists of accepting gifts as a conflict of interest, and Council would be doing this despite the fact that the Board of Directors has already decided otherwise.

Councillor Eisner asks in terms of the Board of Directors taking a decision on this already, does it not have any weight, as we are discussing this in Legislative Council. The Speaker clarifies that there is nothing in this motion that will remove Directors from the Board, as Legislative Council does not have that power.

Member of the Gallery, Hanin, would like to clarify that herself and other members of the gallery have been waiting for hours to voice their opinion on the matter at hand, even if the Board of Directors has already taken a decision on this.

Councillor Fakih asks Senator Lametti to clarify his motivation for the amendment.



Senator Lametti replies that these are facts and this is something that has happened and this may make the decision of Council stronger.

VP External claims that while this motion won't necessarily change how the Board of Directors operates or the decision taken, as they must comply with the Conflict of Interest Policy. VP External points out that as two (2) faculties have already taken their stance on this, this might urge the amendments to the Conflict of Interest Policy to be changed.

Voting on the amendment:

In favour: 23

Opposed: 0

Abstain: 1

This amendment is adopted.

Debate on the main motion as amended:

Councillor Mackie asks the Speaker if we should invite Councillor Wright back to the room as this motion pertains to judgment, so it would make sense to inquire what Councillor Wright's judgment was when accepting this trip.

VP External wishes to move to call the question, that is ruled out of order by the Speaker.

Departure of Councillor Sabaytee at 23:51.

MCSS Representative, Andres Parisdakos, explains that he understands the struggle and the fear of someone going into your house, or living with fear that you might get killed by police or authorities. Andres explains that the issue is where the trip is going, Israel and Palestine, and if this trip was going to Sweden, this wouldn't be such a problem, in his opinion.

VP External motions to extend by three minutes, seconded by Councillor Franceschini - PASSES.

Senator Garneau claims that this statement is not directly related to the motion and does not wish to further discuss this. The Speaker replies that this is out of order and will allow the member from the gallery to continue speaking.

VP External motion to appeal the decision of the chair, seconded by Councilor Merali. VP External points out that Legislative Council is not the place to have Israel-Palestine discussions or debate and



says that the Executive Committee will be ensuring that they have a budget to further discuss this with professionals on the matter, and wishes to move forward with Senator Garneau's motion.

Voting on upholding the decision of the Chair:

In favour: 24

MCSS Representative, Andres, continues with his statement. The Israel-Palestine debate is long existing and he further explains that this organization is willing to travel to Israel and Palestine, and try to start solving the Israel-Palestine conflict from one side. Both regions should try to work to resolve this conflict.

Recess at 00:00.

Council is back in session at 00:10.

Member from the Gallery, Justine, asks Councillor Chan why did he accept the trip in the first place and why did he later change his mind about the trip. Councillor Chan replies that after listening to his various constituents, he had a change of heart regarding attending the trip, as such, he decided not to attend the trip anymore. This has also been a distraction to his academics and friendships.

Member from the Gallery, Rida, does not understand how anyone thinks this is an educational trip when it is founded by an outside organization. Rida claims that this organization is funded by Sheldon Andelson, who supports Donald Trump.

Member from the Gallery, Jordana Schiff, AUS, she is deeply concerned with how SSMU is treating this. Senator Garneau makes a point of order that this does not relate to the motion specifically. The Speaker will allow the member from the gallery to continue speaking and participate in debate.

Senator Garneau intervenes and makes a point of order once again. The Speaker claims this is once again out of order.

Senator Garneau appeals the decision of the Chair, seconded by Councillor Fakh.

Member from the Gallery, Alex Karasick, McGill Daily, opposes the point of order and wishes that Council would allow Jordana to finish her statement without interruptions.

Councillor Chan claims to Council that letting members from the gallery speak as most of them have been waiting to speak on this motion and on this issue for approximately 6 hours.

Councillor Fakh wishes for Council to focus on the motion in question and if they wish to have a generative discussion before or after, this can be done.



VP External says that Council shouldn't be having this type of debate during Council, as he prompted the call the question previously.

Departure of Senator Lametti at 00:20.

VP University Affairs motions for five minute recess, seconded by VP External.

Proxy for Councillor Platt is now the Proxy for Senator Lametti.

Councillor Bhutkar calls in at 00:27.

Councillor Fakih moves to suspend the rules to add a generative discussion to the agenda. Councillor Fakih moves to lay the motion on the table, seconded by Senator Garneau - FAILS.

In favour: 9

Opposed: 12

VP External motions to call the question of the ruling of the Speaker, seconded by Councillor Wu -

In favour: 17

Opposed: 2

Motion regarding sustaining the ruling of the Speaker to allow the member of the gallery to continue her statement:

In favour: 19

Opposed: 1

Jordana Schiff resumes. Schiff states that the underlying motion goes against academic freedom at McGill. Voting in favour of the motion would set a dangerous precedent.

Member of the Gallery Benjamin Stis, would contest the academic value of a trip whose primary purpose is propaganda, according to him.

Member from the Gallery, Haneen, considers herself a very intellectually inspired individual. If she wanted to go on this trip, she would not be able to. She encourages Council to listen to Palestinian voices.

Member from the Gallery, Gilli Cohen, AUS, address the fact that the organization leading the trip that it is Hillel Montreal. Hillel Montreal is not a club of the SSMU. As a member of Hillel McGill, he



suggested to some of his friends to apply to the trip, but had no say in the decision making. Gilli explains that simply because this trip is run by a Jewish organization, does not mean it is necessarily a propaganda trip.

Councillor Eisner motions to extend by one minute, seconded by Chan.

Member from the Gallery, Murad Khrias, Faculty of Science, claims that this trip is not just referred to as just a Jewish organization, but Hillel previously stated that its main purpose is to fight BDS.

Member from the Gallery, Andres Koch, there has been a lot of headlines and a lot has been said and written about the trip. He is wondering what Council thinks about the fact that pro-Israeli billionaire Sheldon Andelson funding this trip would possibly want to give free trips to student leaders. The format of the trip is similar to over 40 trips offered by Hillel chapters across universities in North America.

VP External motions to extend by three minutes, seconded by VP University Affairs.

President motion to suspend the standing rules to set default speaking time to three minutes for members of the gallery, seconded by VP External - FAILS.

The President moves to amend the motion, seconded by Councillor Fakih.

Debate on the amendment:

Proxy for Councillor Kersch to extend discussion by four minutes, seconded by VP University Affairs - PASSES.

The President notes that it's important for Legislative Council to realize the true power that it has in recommending to the Board of Directors certain means regarding incorrect decisions made by the Board. Legislative Council is the highest political body of the Society. Generally, the Board is obliged not to intervene with any motions passed by Legislative Council unless they are in conflict with any HR, financial or legal matters. The President would like for Council to fix the situation. In his opinion, the President thinks there has been a great debate on the content of the trip and the location of the trip as well. The President reminds Council that VP Finance and VP Internal were offered this trip as student leaders. In his opinion, the President argues that the individuals who were offered this trip, are taking advantage of their position. The President wishes for Council to understand that the circumstances under which the Executives were invited to this trip, it's possible that this discussion wouldn't necessarily be happening. Even if the location of the trip was different, it still stands. The President believes that this trip is improper, it shows a lack of integrity in student leaders and strongly urges them to take the time to deeply consider.



Member from the Gallery, Ashley Schulman, Arts Faculty, in terms of altercations of the motion, this discussion is going beyond the jurisdiction of this Council and seems to be motivated by personal opinions. She would also like to remind everyone that SSMU is an a-political organization and this Council should not be solving conflicts around this topic.

VP External moves to extend by one (1) minute, seconde by Wu - PASSES

Schulman continues by explaining that it is obvious that Zionist students continue to be targeted by the changes in this motion.

Councillor Chan explains that this decision was not a simple decision made by the Board. The Board did find that there would be a potential conflict of interest regarding discussions about Israel or BDS or Palestine, so these individuals would need to recuse themselves from the room.

Councillor Eisner Motion to extend by two minutes, seconded by Councillor Wu - PASSES.

Councillor Chan believes that the Board of Directors has made the decision as the corporate institution and Legislative Council does not have such power.

Councillor Bhutkar echoes the sentiments of the President. He believes that this decision should be made by Legislative Council and upheld by Board of Directors. This isn't about the country of the trip, but how these individuals were approached to go on the trip. He reminds Legislative Council that this should not be a political decision, but it should be up to Legislative Council to uphold this.

Councillor Fakih points out that given the recent Board ruling, the Board has also violated section 7.2.a and voted against one of the motions from Council in September. Councillor Fakih reminds that Council can make its own decisions, as Board does not have the same motivations.

VP University Affairs claims that a dangerous precedent would be allowing people to attend a trip that has a specific motive, given to them in their position as student leaders.

Councillor Marcoux moves to call the question, seconded by VP External - PASSES.

In favour: 20

Opposed: 1

Voting on the amendment:

In favour: 11

Against: 10

Abstain: 1



Councillor Eisner inquires about the vote count during Council, as he wants to ensure that 11-10 vote is accurately counted by the Dais. The Speaker confirms that both himself and the Parliamentarian count accurately and verify with one another about the totals.

The Speaker appears to have misunderstood the previous question and would like to apologize to Councillor Eisner.

Debate on the main motion:

VP University Affairs would like to discuss academic freedom. In her opinion, this seems to be a way people use academic freedom to justify hateful or hurtful things. Academic freedom is something to value.

Member from the Gallery, Jordana Schiff, AUS, in terms of academic freedom, the notion is flawed and she would like to argue that she wouldn't disagree on something that anyone else would say. She also addresses the fact that a lot of terms used in regards to Zionism and Israel are considered hateful terms and debatable and she hopes that Council will not simply rely on these. Everyone has the right to academic freedom. Everyone can believe other things, and it is fully in their right to pursue academic freedom.

Councillor Chan disagrees the point made by VP External. His second point in regards to this motion, is that we will be sending an email to all undergraduate students, naming Councillor Wright, and this idea is disturbing to him. Transparency is important but sending over 20,000 emails to single out one individual's actions is troubling.

The President confirms with the Speaker that as per the Be It Resolved clause, the Speaker would be mandated to ask with Councillor Wright if she did attend the trip or not. The Speaker replies that he will do as he is mandated, as a SSMU staff.

Councillor Mackie makes a point that while Councillor Wright was approached as a student leader on campus, it is important to note that she is also a Jewish leader and a Greek life leader on campus. Councillor Mackie would like to motion to suspend the rules to allow her to come back into the room.

Proxy for Senator Lametti claims that the Senate vote that took place, the vote count was 4-1. Two of those votes were not from Senators. The other point the Proxy makes is that Fabrice Labeau came to talk about how students do not feel safe on campus, and he believes that this motion will not be helping the situation.

Councillor Kaye has a concern with the motion, that Council will be preemptively overruling a decision of the Board.



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VP External moves to strike the Be It Resolved clause pertaining to the Speaker asking Councillor Wright if she did attend the trip, as they find it particularly invasive, seconded by Councillor Chan.

Voting on the amendment:

In favour: 22

Opposed: 1

Abstaining: 0

The amendment is adopted.

Motion to call the question by Proxy for Senator Lametti, seconded by Councillor Francenschini.

In favour: 22

Opposed: 0

Voting procedure on Motion Regarding Free Trip Offers to Student Leaders 2019-11-28:

In favour: 10

Opposed: 9

For Approval