



# MOTION TO ENDORSE THE STUDENT MOBILIZATION AGAINST BILL 21 2020-01-16

Submitted for: 2020-01-16

<b>Submitted to:</b>	SSMU Legislative Council	<b>Document no.:</b>	LEG-PUB-MOT-2020-01-16-006
<b>Moved by:</b>	Adam Gwiazda-Amsel <i>Vice-President (External Affairs)</i>	<b>Current Status:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
<b>Seconded by:</b>	Adin Chan <i>Arts Representative</i>		

## Issue

Student associations including, but not limited to, EdUS, MSS, AUS, SUS, LSA, ADEESE-UQAM, AFESH-UQAM, AFEA-UQAM, AFESPED-UQAM, AÉES-UL, and AGÉÉÉ-UdeM have seen mobilization relating to Bill 21, and notably the upcoming two-day strike on January 17th and 20th, 2020. Given the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) position in opposition to Bill 21, it behooves us to support the mobilization. This can be done with an endorsement of the protest, including a press release (draft in Appendix A).

## Background and Rationale

Actors across Quebec have been pressuring successive governments to abandon the ban on religious symbols with mixed success. The present government, however, has refused to budge on the issue or offer mitigation. Therefore, students from around Quebec have deemed it reasonable to take to the streets, showing that the future of this province does not support the approach taken by the provincial government.

## Alignment with Mission

This action is aligned with our obligation to take a leadership role in matter of human rights, social justice, and environmental protection.<sup>1</sup> The SSMU should give a strong show of support for communities that feel quite isolated at present.

<sup>1</sup> [SSMU: Constitution, Preamble, Leadership, p. 5](#)



## Consultations Completed

There is a collective understanding that this motion is an appropriate role for the university-wide association based on consultations with the above listed student associations.

Consultations have also occurred with the *Non a la Loi 21* group, who desire a show of support from as many community organisations as possible.

## Risk Factors and Resource Implications

This requires a mass communication to a student body that is not unanimously in opposition to Bill 21; notwithstanding, this is generally the case for political issues. The SSMU has the appropriate mandate to support the communication and, in the opinion of the mover, the moral obligation.

## Sustainability Considerations

Social sustainability is positively impacted by fostering an environment of anti-oppression, as is achieved by communications such as these.

## Impact of Decision and Next Steps

The press release will be edited with any suggestions from members of the Legislative Council, then diffused the morning of 17 January 2020 through an email sent to the student body. This will be undertaken by the Communications department in partnership with the Vice-President (Internal Affairs).

## Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the SSMU Legislative Council approve the press release in Appendix A be sent to the student body on the morning of 17 January 2020.

## Results of the Vote

In favour	unanimous consent
Opposed	x
Abstain	x



## Appendix A

### Press Release to the Student Body

As many of you know, this year has seen the Quebec government pass a number of laws restricting immigration and freedom of religion. Notably, the CAQ passed Bill 21, an Act Respecting the Laicity of the State, on June 16th. This law, the third iteration of its kind, forbids public sector workers working in fields that are deemed to grant them a “position of authority” from wearing religious symbols while at work. Those who were already in these positions at the time the bill was passed are allowed to remain in their current positions, but are no longer protected if they decide to accept a promotion or transfer to a different position.

These restrictions have a number of implications: Bill 21 shows that the government cares more about radical secularism than the freedom of workers from harassment by restricting their ability to transfer positions, that it cares more about imposing its view of what a Quebecker should look like than the current labour shortage of teachers, and that it does not realise, or perhaps does not care, that banning (visible) religious symbols does not affect everyone equally, but rather disproportionately affects racialized individuals such as Muslim women and people of the Jewish and Sikh faith. Certainly, the presence of many far-right groups that come out to oppose anti-Bill 21 demonstrations this year seems to indicate that the CAQ knows very well that this law does not, as they claim, give everyone equal treatment.

In solidarity with the members of our own community that have been affected by the government’s policies and the community organizations that are slowing the implementation of the law by fighting it in the streets and in the courts, many student associations from around Quebec have decided to adopt mandates against Bill 21.<sup>2 3 4 5 6</sup> They seek to indicate to the Quebec government that the youth, the future of this province, do not believe this vision of Quebec is the way forward. In particular, CEGEP and University students have for several months planned the early steps of a mass mobilization against the anti-migrant reforms of the CAQ, and most recently a series of mass actions to take place this Friday, Saturday, and Monday.

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<sup>2</sup> [SSMU: Motion Regarding Condemnation of Bill 21 2019-10-10](#)

<sup>3</sup> [l’ADEESE-UQAM: “Projet de loi 21: l’ADEESE dénonce un outil de contrôle social et de stigmatisation des femmes musulmanes”](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Concordia Student Union: “Statement on Bills 9 and 21”](#)

<sup>5</sup> [l’AELIÉS: “Projet de loi 21 - Position et réaction de l’AELIÉS”](#)

<sup>6</sup> [FEUS: “Bill 21”](#)



In this instance, a strike is meant to demonstrate that we will not accept business as usual, going on to work in industries that keep the province running, so long as our friends and neighbours are left behind. It means that we will not allow a government that thrives on fear-mongering and hatred to have its way while being completely unchecked. While Bill 21 is indeed currently before the courts, those affected by this Bill are feeling its consequences *now*. It is time to lift one another up, to show that we are not afraid, and to show that we will support those that need it.

While certain faculties have decided to hold full strikes, physically discouraging students from entering their morning classes on the 17th, we respect the ability of each faculty to determine how they want to show support for those affected. If your faculty is not on strike, please consider walking out of your morning classes and joining your peers on McTavish Street today, January 17th at 12:00p.m., to hear moving speeches about the fight against Bill 21 and to march through the streets of Montreal until we reach the Ministry of Immigration, Francisation, and Integration. Join us in demanding:

- 1) That the CAQ repeal Bill 21 in its entirety
- 2) That university administrations across Quebec take a more hardline stance against Bill 21 and support of their affected members. For McGill, this means
  - a) a mass e-mail to staff that recognizes the affect Bill 21 has on its members, unlike the e-mail released to the student body on June 18th
  - b) a commitment to panels and other programming to educate students about the effects of Bill 21, and
  - c) a commitment to offering and communicating additional culturally-sensitive Wellness resources to those at McGill affected by the bill.

Other events include a Public Assembly on Immigration tomorrow, January 18th at 1p.m. in Leacock 232, and another day of class disruptions (no march planned) on Monday, January 20th.