



# MOTION REGARDING MSA SERVICE FEE REFERENDUM QUESTION 2021-02-11

Submitted for: 2021-02-11

**Submitted to:** SSMU Legislative Council      **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-02-11-018

**Moved by:** Maheen Akter  
*Vice-President (Student Life)*      **Current Status:**  FOR APPROVAL  
 APPROVED  
 POSTPONED  
 COMMITTED  
 NOT APPROVED

**Seconded by:** Noah Merali  
*Services Representative*

**Issue**      The Muslim Students' Association (MSA) was approved as a Service of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) on February 10th, 2021 by the SSMU Legislative Council. The MSA seeks to have its opt-outable Service fee of \$0.99 per student semester approved in order to maintain their annual operations as a SSMU Service, benefiting and supporting a significant population of SSMU Members.

**Background and Rationale**      The MSA is a SSMU Service that aims to bring together Muslim students at the University, providing essential services, Islamic prayer, resources, educational tools and student life opportunities needed to enhance these students' university experience through social, spiritual, and professional growth. The MSA has been in operation at McGill for decades, and has served as a source of support and community for Muslims and non-Muslims alike, on campus.

Muslim students constitute a noteworthy proportion of overall students at the University, with 6.4% of students identifying as Muslim in the 2009 Student Demographic Survey<sup>1</sup>. Recent information shows that that

<sup>1</sup> McGill University Student Demographic Survey, Final Report (2009)  
[https://www.mcgill.ca/studentlifeandlearning/files/studentlifeandlearning/final\\_report\\_1.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/studentlifeandlearning/files/studentlifeandlearning/final_report_1.pdf)



percentage has nearly doubled in the past 13 years. For example, the MSA newsletter has 1000s of registered students; the MSA Facebook page has almost 4,000 followers<sup>2</sup>, in addition to many more community members who are not on the platform. This would not be surprising for the MSA, as the lack of resources available to serve its community's needs has been gradually impeding the MSA's functioning and its ability to provide adequate services to the community it serves.

The MSA had always functioned as a service towards SSMU members; however, it has done so with limited reach, resources and capabilities. Service expenses tied to space, supplies, counseling, community engagement initiatives, prayer, chaplaincy, student aid, and educational resources have either increased significantly or become difficult to implement given the current state of affairs, as the population of Muslim students at the University, and in Montréal, has risen and as the needs of students are becoming more clear. Therefore, by proposing a modest fee, the MSA will achieve the financial stability it needs to maintain these services and continue functioning in an effective manner, serving many Members of the SSMU and the Post Graduate Students' Society (PGSS), as per the SSMU and the PGSS's Memorandum of Agreement.

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### Alignment with Mission

Ensuring the MSA, a SSMU Service, has the resources it needs to fulfill its mandates in serving the Muslim student population and allowing them to effectively practice their religion is in alignment with the SSMU's constitutional role of acting in the best interests of its Members as a whole, given that Muslim students are SSMU Members as well.

The SSMU Constitution also states that

*"The Society shall strive to provide excellence and quality of service at all times, and shall continue to enhance the quality and scope of these services."*<sup>3</sup>

This motion is also in line with multiple SSMU's Policies, including:

- *Clubs and Services are SSMU's Highest Priority Policy*, which states that

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<sup>2</sup> MSA McGill, Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/MSAMcGill>

<sup>3</sup> The Constitution of the Students' Society of McGill University

<https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Constitution-of-the-Students%E2%80%99-Society-of-McGill-University-2017-11-10.pdf?x21981>



*“Clubs and services are the Society’s highest priority. The Society will actively work towards improving the structure to support clubs and services.”<sup>4</sup>*

- the *Mental Health Policy*, which emphasizes its *“long-term vision for SSMU’s continued dedication to the improvement of mental health resource access, promotion, and institutional accountability.”<sup>5</sup>*
- the *Equity Policy*, which states that *“The SSMU has a responsibility as a leader, representative, and service provider to a diverse membership to conduct itself by the highest standards of respect, fairness, integrity, safety, and equitable treatment for all persons.”<sup>6</sup>*

By approving this Fee, the SSMU will have fulfilled its mission in representing its students, fulfilled its constitutional obligation of improving the quality of the services it provides, fulfilled its task in dedicating its highest priority in improving the structure of services, fulfilled its vision in improving mental health resource access through allowing a chaplain/counsellor serve the student body, and fulfilled its responsibility in maintaining an equitable environment in allowing one of its religious communities fulfill their required needs.

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## Consultations Completed

Consultations were conducted with a variety of groups and individuals:

- the Services Review Committee (SRC) (which comprise the VP Student Life, the VP Finance, the Services Representative, the Services Administrator);
- the previous (2019-2020) VP Student Life, VP Finance, and VP External,
- Muslim and non-Muslim students;
- the SSMU Clubs Representative;
- current and previous SSMU Councillors and Senators;
- previous SSMU Directors;
- previous SSMU Equity Commissioner;
- previous MSA Executives and alumni;
- the Thaqaalayn Muslim Association at McGill;

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<sup>4</sup> SSMU Legislative Council Policies: Clubs and Services are SSMU’s Highest Priority Policy  
<https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Clubs-and-Services-As-SSMU%E2%80%99s-Highest-Priority-Policy.pdf?x21981>

<sup>5</sup> SSMU Legislative Council Policies: Mental Health Policy  
<https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/SSMU-Mental-Health-Policy-3.pdf?x21981>

<sup>6</sup> SSMU Board of Directors Policies: Equity Policy  
<https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Equity-Policy-2018-04-05-to-2023-01-01-2020-11-05.pdf?x21981>



- chaplaincy organizations and chaplains/counsellors of other universities;
- and multiple other SSMU Services.

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### Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Should the fee creation not pass, the operational capacity of the Service will be severely impacted, significantly reducing and/or possibly completely eliminating the execution of the MSA's services. The MSA will not be able to complete most of its constitutional mandates as it would not have any financial capital to work off of, putting them in a limbo situation. This will negatively impact the wellbeing of many Members of the SSMU, as well as the public reputation of the Society.

Furthermore, if the fee creation does not pass and there becomes a halt of operation of the services provided by the MSA, the SSMU risks violating its constitutional role in providing essential services to its different constituencies, and risks violating the SSMU's own implemented policies, as highlighted in the *Alignment with Mission* section of this motion.

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### Sustainability Considerations

The approval of this fee ensures the long term stability of the MSA and the important services it provides to SSMU Members. This will increase its efficiency and will also allow for more sustainable initiatives to be implemented within the Service.

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### Impact of Decision and Next Steps

Should this motion pass, an MSA Service Fee question will be sent to the Winter 2021 referendum, asking SSMU Members if they are willing to have an opt-outable fee of \$0.99 per undergraduate student, per semester. The opt-outable fee was deduced given the financial breakdown present in Appendix A.

Should the fee question then pass at referendum, the MSA will be able to continue and expand their operations, offering further services, counselling, support, student life opportunities, advocacy, and many more resources to Members and the community at large, fulfilling their mandates. Furthermore, should the fee question pass, the MSA will not have to use certain SSMU Funds, such as the club fund, to finance their operations anymore, giving other clubs and groups access to more financial resources.



## Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved, that the SSMU Legislative Council approves the following questions for the Winter 2021 Referendum period:

*Do you agree to the creation of the opt-outable SSMU MSA Service Fee of \$0.99, per semester, for all full and part-time SSMU members, to start in Fall 2021 and to be charged until Fall 2026 (inclusive), with the understanding that a majority 'no' vote would result in the absence of the fee, severely impacting the services' capacity for operation?*

*Do you also agree to the allocation of discretionary funding (5.16% of the fee) towards individuals, for the purpose of providing students with important financial aid, with the understanding that a majority 'no' vote would result in the absence of this financial aid to students?*

Be it further resolved, that the SSMU Legislative Council adopts the actionable aspects of this question and that any grammatical or legal changes necessary do not need the re-approval of the Legislative Council.

Be it further resolved, that SSMU Elections, in collaboration with the Governance Manager, include links of the following to the MSA Service Fee voting ballot:

- the SRC recommendation regarding the MSA's Service status;
- this approved motion (Motion Regarding MSA Service Fee Referendum Question 2021-02-11);
- the SSMU Legislative Council meeting Live-Stream recording, with timestamps for the SRC recommendation and this motion's agenda points;
- and the Voting Records of this Legislative Council meeting.

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## Results of the Vote

(UNANIMOUS) In favour  
( ) Opposed  
( ) Abstain

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## Appendix A - Financial Breakdown of MSA Service Fee

The following highlights the financial breakdown of the MSA Service Fee in the hopes of providing SSMU Members and Members of its Governance structures a concrete and legitimate source and rationale for the fee.

Categories	Amount	Percentage of Total	Details of Budget Category
Chaplaincy, Counselling & Mental Health	\$13,860.00	35.74%	Used to hire a chaplain/counsellor to fulfill the mental health needs of Muslim students at McGill at a rate of 22\$/hr throughout the entire year.
Training	\$1,700.00	4.38%	Used to train the 13+ MSA Executives at the beginning of the year and provide training opportunities with qualified mentors. Note: MSA Executives do not receive any wages or financial remuneration. Value obtained from previous years.
Education	\$2,500.00	6.45%	Used to pay instructor or scholar fees or honorariums for educational classes and seminars. Classes accessible to entire McGill community. Rates obtained from previous years.
Prayer	\$1,964.29	5.06%	Used to maintain and provide the weekly Friday Prayers which attract around 500 SSMU and PGSS Members. Also used to maintain the MSA Prayer Office to allow for the enactment of 5 daily prayers. Dozens of students attend each prayer, every day.
Marketing, Media & Communication	\$3,070.00	7.92%	Required to maintain the relevant technical considerations for the MSA as a Service. The bulk is to obtain G-Suite for members of the MSA team, which is at \$7.80/user/month. Other costs include website maintenance, photographer, and graphic designer fees, etc.
Charitable Engagement	\$400.00	1.03%	Every year, the MSA raises many \$1,000's in charity for those in need, locally in Montréal, and the world. This category allows for the appropriate investment in these charitable causes in order to obtain a much higher return on investment, benefiting thousands of those in need.
Community Engagement	\$11,350.00	29.27%	Used to subsidize the student life initiatives and events carried out by the MSA throughout the year, including but not limited to MSA Frosh, free community Iftars (dinners, open to all students), advocacy costs, social events, & the two Eids.
Discretionary (Scholarships/student aid)	\$2,000.00	5.16%	Used to provide financial aid and scholarships for those in need, as Muslim students disproportionately receive less scholarships than others. Multiple awarded, with the maximum awarded per student being \$1,000.
Discretionary (Contingency)	\$1,939.17	5.00%	Standard 5% of the total budget is reserved as contingency to accommodate for unexpected costs or events throughout the year.
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>\$38,783.46</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	



The MSA truly respects the will of the students in the case they wish to opt out of the MSA Service Fee, as this motion is to be passed with the assumption that whoever wishes to opt out, can do so. It is for this reason that the MSA will publicly advertise and emphasize the opt out periods, as the Service does not wish to profit off of students' ignorance of the Fee's existence and the students' abilities to opt out of paying it; therefore, the MSA expects an opt out rate near the high end.

<b>Total Amount</b>	\$38,783.46	100.00%
<b>Students</b>	24,000	(undergraduate students)
<i>Assuming 0% of students optout</i>	\$1.62	/ student / year
	\$0.81	/ student / semester
<i>Assuming 15% of students optout</i>	\$1.90	/ student / year
	\$0.95	/ student / semester
<i>Assuming 18% of students optout</i>	\$1.97	/ student / year
	\$0.99	/ student / semester
<i>Assuming 21% of students optout</i>	\$2.05	/ student / year
	\$1.02	/ student / semester
<b>MSA Proposed Fee</b>	\$0.99	/ student / semester

If you may need any clarifications, questions, details, or concerns, please contact the MSA President at [msamcgill@ssmu.ca](mailto:msamcgill@ssmu.ca).