



# MOTION REGARDING REFERENDUM QUESTION ON THE INCREASE OF THE SSMU MEMBERSHIP FEE 2021-02-11

Submitted for: 2021-02-11

**Submitted to:** SSMU Legislative Council      **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-02-11-003

**Moved by:** Brooklyn Frizzle  
*Vice-President (University Affairs)*      **Current Status:**  FOR APPROVAL  
 APPROVED  
 POSTPONED

**Seconded by:** Addy Parsons  
*Senate Caucus Representative*       COMMITTED  
 NOT APPROVED

## Issue

This motion seeks to put forward a Question for Referendum regarding an increase to the SSMU Membership Fee, dedicated to funding fair wages for Legislative Councillors and Student Senators, compensating them for their work.

## Background and Rationale

In 2017, the Legislative Council adopted the [Against Unpaid Internships Policy](#) which positioned the SSMU against unpaid and exploitative labour practices. In **Section 6. Screening Criteria** of the Policy, several criteria from the Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers (CACEE) were cited as conditional for justified unpaid labour.

While these criteria were not originally intended to apply to non-profit organizations, they are useful in contextualizing the double standard in which SSMU finds itself. Notably, the SSMU currently fails to satisfy the following criteria for its Legislative Councillors and Student Senators:

- 6.1 The training is similar to field-specific or applied training that can be found at a post-secondary institution.
- 6.2 The training is for the benefit of the intern.
- 6.3 The organization providing the training derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the intern while [they are] being trained.



6.8 There are clearly defined and articulated learning outcomes for the intern to realize by the conclusion of the internship.

6.9 Regular supervision is given by a professional pertinent to the internship.

All this to say, Legislative Councillors and Student Senators contribute enormously to the functioning of the SSMU. Without the unpaid labour of Councillors and Senators, the SSMU's political decision-making, policy development, and University representation would be brought to a stand-still. With that in mind, this motion proposes an increase to the SSMU Membership Fee as a means of funding fair wages for student representatives.

Job descriptions for [Legislative Councillors](#) and [Student Senators](#) were drafted using the responsibilities outlined in the Internal Regulations of Governance and Representation and Advocacy. These job descriptions were then assigned hourly wages using SSMU HR's Pay Equity Scale, which were used to determine a conservative [budget estimate](#) justifying the proposed Fee increase, with the understanding that SSMU may, in future, be able to receive work-study subsidization from the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid.

Furthermore, concerns were raised over the selection of a supervisor for the positions, as such supervisory responsibility would require exhaustive impartiality. Thus, the Governance Manager, an already impartial and apolitical position, was selected as the supervisor.

Lastly, while **Article 8.9. Remuneration and Expenses** of the Constitution currently precludes the compensation of Legislative Councillors for their work, this Fee Question is proposed with the understanding that Article 8.9. will be amended in the next iteration of the Constitution.

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### Alignment with Mission

This motion and the proposed Fee increase align with the spirit of SSMU's Against Unpaid Internships Policy, specifically:

**Section 2. Context**, which asserts that reference letters and CV-building are not substitutes for remuneration for any form of labour, particularly as this consistently exacerbates existing inequalities; and

**Section 7.2. Programming and Student Groups**, which mandates that the SSMU shall ensure that all constituent and affiliated

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student groups of the Society shall not offer unpaid internship opportunities.

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## Consultations Completed

Throughout the development of this motion and the corresponding Fee Question, many stakeholders were consulted.

The Governance Manager and Human Resources Department were consulted extensively in the drafting of job descriptions for Legislative Councillors and Student Senators.

The Presidents' Roundtable, Executive Committee, Senate Caucus, Legislative Council, and Board of Directors were also consulted throughout the Summer 2020 and Fall 2020 terms to determine the best way to compensate student representatives for their work.

The Scholarships and Student Aid Office of McGill University was consulted regarding eligibility for and implementation of work-study subsidization for SSMU Representatives.

The Vice-President (Finance) and General Manager were consulted regarding the proposed SSMU Membership Fee Question, the management of such funds, and budget estimate thereof.

The Arts Undergraduate Society leadership and former Vice-President (External Affairs), Adam Gwiazda-Amsel, were consulted on their experience advocating for and implementing compensation plans for non-executive student representatives.

The proposed question was revised and approved by the Office of the Deputy Provost of Student Life and Learning.

Finally, this motion and the proposed fee increase were endorsed unanimously by the Senate Caucus.

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## Risk Factors and Resource Implications

In order to equitably fund fair wages for student representatives, the SSMU Membership Fee must be increased.

Furthermore, the introduction of 40 new paid positions would add to the workload of the Human Resource Department.



Lastly, the supervision of Councillors and Senators would add to the workload of the Governance Manager.

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### Sustainability Considerations

The compensation of student representatives would serve to increase the social sustainability of SSMU's practices and promote a strong, safe and empowering community by endeavouring to minimize systemic power imbalances within society and foster a culture of anti-oppression, as outlined in section 3.2 of the Sustainability Policy.

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### Impact of Decision and Next Steps

Should this motion succeed, an account within SSMU would be created to house the funds collected by the Membership Fee increase. The job descriptions assigned to Councillors and Senators, with the newly created account attached, would be approved by the Executive Committee.

An additional coordinator-level position would be created under the Governance Manager to increase the capacity of the portfolio and compensate for the added responsibilities of the Governance Manager. The Governance Manager would then receive additional training on University Governance from the Vice-President (University Affairs) to allow the Manager to better support the Senators.

The first new responsibility of the Governance Manager would be to oversee the application for and implementation of any work-study subsidies granted by the Scholarships and Student Aid Office.

Throughout the Summer of 2021, SSMU's HR and Payroll departments would prepare for the influx in SSMU employees while the Governance Manager could begin onboarding any Senators who assume office before the Fall 2021 Semester.

Legislative Councillors and any remaining Student Senators would then be onboarded as they are elected by their respective constituencies while the Governance Manager would continue to oversee the implementation of any work-study subsidies.

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### Motion or Resolution for Approval

*Be it resolved, that* the following Question be approved for the Winter 2021 Referendum Period:



“Whereas, the SSMU Basic Society Fee is currently:

A faculties:

Full-time (9 credits or more): \$59.98

Part-time (1-8.5 credits): \$29.12

B faculties:

Full-time (9 credits or more): \$44.06

Part-time (1-8.5 credits): \$21.14

Whereas, A faculties are defined as Arts, Education, Engineering, Management, Music, Nursing, Physical and Occupational Therapy, and Science,

Whereas, B faculties are defined as Medicine, Law and Dentistry.

Whereas, the SSMU Basic Society Fee is indexed to inflation annually according to the Quebec CPI rate.

Whereas, the proposed increase would take place after the 2021 indexation is applied in March.

Do you agree to increase the non-opt-outable SSMU Society Fee by \$1.20, payable each semester (excluding summer) by all members of the Students Society of McGill University, starting Fall 2021?”

*Be it further resolved, that this motion be included with the above Question for the Winter 2021 Referendum Period.*

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.

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Results of the  
Vote

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|-----------|------|
| In favour | (18) |
| Opposed   | (1)  |
| Abstain   | (13) |

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