



MOTION REGARDING A POLICY ON HARMFUL MILITARY TECHNOLOGY 2021-01-28

Submitted for: 2021-01-28

Submitted to: SSMU Legislative Council **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-01-28-001
(to be assigned by Steering)

Moved by: Ayo Ogunremi **Current Status:** FOR APPROVAL
Vice-President (External Affairs) APPROVED
 POSTPONED
 COMMITTED
 NOT APPROVED

Seconded by: Darshan Daryanani
Senate Caucus Representative

Issue This motion seeks to adopt a policy on harmful military research, harmful military technology, and the military-industrial complex, in order to elaborate upon, and establish concrete directives with respect to, the SSMU's commitment to a campus free from harmful military technology.

Background and Rationale The Policy on a Campus Free from Harmful Military Technology expired in April 2020. While an important step for advocacy on transparent and ethical research at McGill, it was less than 2 pages long, and included neither a definition of harmful military technology nor specific mandates and reporting mechanisms. Nonetheless, it served as a basis for some of the SSMU's positions on research, which affirm that the ongoing on-campus development of military technology intended to inflict harm on people is immoral and that the University must adopt higher standards of transparency with regard to the sponsors and intended applications of research contracts.

As a result of the expiration of the Policy on a Campus Free from Harmful Military Technology, the importance of transparency and ethics in research, and the need to establish actionable mandates for SSMU representatives to undertake in this regard, the former Policy has been transformed into the new Policy on Harmful Military Technology, appended to this motion. This policy concretely commits SSMU representatives, in particular the SSMU Executives, to engage in meaningful advocacy on the problems of harmful



military research, harmful military technology, and the military-industrial complex.

Alignment with Mission

First and foremost, the Policy on Harmful Military Technology aligns with and expands upon the SSMU’s position on research, as outlined in the Positions Book. More generally, it aligns with the SSMU’s commitment to showing leadership on matters of human rights, social justice, and environmental protection by taking a stance on harmful military technology. Finally, the Policy treats the topic of harmful military research and technology in a manner consistent with the Equity Policy, the Sustainability Policy, and the Indigenous Solidarity Policy.

Consultations Completed

This motion and the Policy appended to it were drafted in consultation with several relevant stakeholders, including the Equity Commissioners, the Sustainability Commissioner, the Engineering Representatives to Council, the Science Representatives to Council, the Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs), the Office of the President, and Students for Peace and Disarmament.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Adopting the Policy appended to this motion would convey a strong message to universities, student associations, and their related organisations that the SSMU takes seriously the problem of harmful military research on its campus.

The risk of limiting research opportunities by advocating for the cessation of harmful military research is anticipated and addressed by the “Framework” section of the Policy, which articulates a framework of solidarity, anti-oppression, and a just transition towards alternative research opportunities for students.

Lastly, this position would enable the Campaigns department of the office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) to support student-led campaigns that advocate for a just transition away from the military-industrial complex. This has such resource implications as would be needed to carry out popular education and awareness-raising activities.



Sustainability Considerations

At the heart of this motion is a concern for sustainability, of a social, economic, and environmental kind. With respect to social sustainability, this policy recognises the profound interactions between social marginalisation, oppression, and the military-industrial complex, and positions the SSMU firmly against structures that perpetuate these harms.

Further, this position contributes to economic sustainability by recognising the need for a just transition away from the military-industrial complex, which would call upon the SSMU to attend to the impact that disarmament would have on students involved in fields implicated in the research and development of harmful military technology, as well as the communities who are economically reliant on the military-industrial complex.

Finally, with respect to environmental sustainability, this motion recognises the extraordinary damage to the environment of harmful military technology, especially nuclear weapons, and would concretely position the SSMU against them.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If passed, the new Policy on Harmful Military Technology will immediately become a policy of the Society and will expire in May 2026. The offices of the Vice-Presidents (External Affairs) and (University Affairs) would receive extensive mandates to advocate for a just transition away from the presence of harmful military research at McGill and the military-industrial complex more generally.

If this motion fails, the Legislative Council will have defaulted on the SSMU's established position on research, adopted by the Legislative Council in Winter 2020, setting a dangerous precedent for SSMU governance.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council adopt the SSMU Policy on Harmful Military Technology, as provided in Appendix A;

Be it further resolved, that the Legislative Council reaffirm its support for a campus free from harmful military technology;

Be it lastly resolved, that this Policy expires on May 1, 2026.



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**Results of the
Vote**

In favour ()
Opposed ()
Abstain ()

FOR APPROVAL



Appendix A : Policy on Harmful Military Technology

Policy on Harmful Military Technology

1. Scope

This Policy will apply to all individuals and bodies involved in Society decision-making processes for the duration of their formal involvement with the Society, including but not limited to Officers, Directors, Senators, Councillors, Committees, Committee Members, Clubs, Services, and Staff. It will direct advocacy on issues relating to harmful military technology, including but not limited to that within McGill University, the City of Montréal, the Province of Québec, and Canada.

2. Definitions

2.1. Harmful military technology: harmful military technology is any technology produced for the purpose of conducting military activity that contributes to harm against individuals, groups, or natural environments. Harmful military technology is not limited to technologies directly related to weaponry, but includes all military technologies whose purpose is to carry out or enhance the effectiveness of causing physical harm, psychological harm, marginalisation, or insecurity, whether in the immediate or long term. Non-harmful military technology, in contrast, involves technologies used by the military for rehabilitation or peacebuilding purposes, such as medical technologies that alleviate medical conditions of military personnel, or technologies that enhance peaceful negotiations simulations.

2.2. Harmful military research: harmful military research is the systematic investigation of scientific knowledge with the purpose of developing or improving harmful military technologies.

2.3. Military-industrial complex: The military-industrial complex is the network of individuals and institutions involved in the development, production, sale, purchase, and use of harmful military technology. It involves the companies, organisations, and government departments that fund harmful military research; the research institutions, research groups, and individual researchers that conduct harmful military research; the companies, organisations, and government departments that manufacture and sell harmful military technology; and the organisations that purchase and employ harmful military technology.



2.4. Militarism: The term militarism includes all efforts, ideas, and resources that contribute to the creation, organisation, and preparation of military forces, as well as the warfare that takes place as a result of such systems.¹ Militarism is not limited to warfare itself; it is imbued within economic activities, social hierarchies, and national identity.

2.5. Disarmament: Disarmament refers to a range of actions taken by an organisation to reduce its quantity of or capacity to obtain harmful military technology, or to reduce its involvement in the military-industrial complex.

2.5.1. Nuclear disarmament: Nuclear disarmament refers specifically to the actions taken by an organisation to reduce its quantity of or capacity to obtain harmful nuclear military technology. Such actions include the cessation of constructing new nuclear weapons, the dismantling of nuclear weapons currently in operation, and the refusal to contribute to the development of nuclear arsenals, whether through the sale, enrichment, or extraction of uranium.

2.5.2. Divestment: Divestment refers to the withdrawal of an organisation's investments from another organisation or group of organisations. Divestment includes the selling of stocks in a company or industry and the refusal to conclude new loan agreements with a company or in an industry. Divestment campaigns seek to challenge the social license to operate of a given organisation or group of organisations, such as the weapons manufacturing industry, galvanising social pressure to force the industry to adapt to more socially sustainable practices, which may include dissolving entirely.

3. Context

3.1. McGill and the Military-Industrial Complex

The SSMU recognises that McGill University has a long history of involvement in the military-industrial complex. The Shock Wave Physics Group (SWPG) is McGill's longest standing military-funded laboratory, whose basic principle is to study the sharp changes of pressure in air resulting in and from explosions. The SWPG is funded by Defense Research and Development Canada and the US Department of Defense among others.² Another lab, the Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) lab, specialises in the development of complex 3D modelling software for use by the aerospace industry and arms manufacturers.³ Historically, the CFD lab has collaborated with Aeronautical University for drone development and online drone simulations, and has been funded by CAE (formerly Canadian Aviation Electronics), Bombardier, Lockheed Martin, and Bell Helicopter.

¹ <https://www-jstor-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/stable/pdf/20666055.pdf>

² <https://peaceanddisarmamentmcgill.wordpress.com/physics-shock-wave/>

³ <https://peaceanddisarmamentmcgill.wordpress.com/cfd/>



Funding from military industries is not benign; rather, such funding severely affects the uses of scientific research. For example, thermobaric explosives (also known as Fuel-Air Explosives) developed in the SWPG have been used in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as in the Syrian Wars. Further, cooperation between universities and the military-industrial complex compromises transparency in research applications and processes. In 2001, for example, an agreement between Bombardier and McGill University granted Bombardier the right to veto any application of the CFD lab's research which might work against their corporate interests.⁴

The Society recognises and affirms the importance of student activism against harmful military technology. In 1988, decades of student-led advocacy⁵ opposing harmful military research on campus culminated in the implementation of regulations on military-funded research being passed through the McGill Senate.⁶ McGill was the first U15 university to implement regulations of this nature; other universities around the world have been successful in passing similar policies since. In 2009 the 1998 policy was rescinded in order to “align with [other] Canadian universities” who did not have similar policies in place, and an anonymity clause was passed allowing funding sources to remain hidden, thereby increasing opacity in McGills connections to the military-industrial complex. This was in spite of strong opposition from SSMU and Post-Graduate Student Society (PGSS) executives, student senators and groups on Campus. In recent years, student activism led to SSMU adopting a Policy on a Campus Free from Harmful Military Technology, which lasted from 2015 to 2020. Student activism challenged McGill legally, resulting in the eventual release of about 6500 pages of information regarding McGill's relationship to military industries.⁷

3.2. Inequities in the Military-Industrial Complex

The SSMU recognises that settler governments in Canada have relied on harmful military technology to deprive Indigenous peoples from their lands, and to subjugate enslaved Black and Indigenous peoples. Further, the SSMU recognises that governments in Canada are involved in the funding, production, purchase, or sale of harmful military technology today. This has had prolonged effects on many marginalised communities which continue to this day.

War has a disproportionate impact on Black people, Indigenous peoples, and People of Colour (BIPOC), in the Global South and Global North.⁸ Wars today are primarily fought in the Global South and, as a result, the military-industrial complex contributes to socio-political and economic

⁴https://docs.google.com/document/d/1taa-q--xYbXWh4AnBgPCemF7f_hsXN89xusqpMe7nD-U/edit?usp=sharing

⁵<https://ia801300.us.archive.org/11/items/McGillLibrary-mcgill-daily-v76-n057-february-26-1987-12956/mcgill-daily-v76-n057-february-26-1987.pdf>

⁶ <https://peaceanddisarmamentmcgill.wordpress.com/the-history/>

⁷ <https://www.mcgilldaily.com/2016/07/mcgill-releases-600-pages-of-documents-to-demilitarize-mcgill/>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1122271/>



destabilisation of these regions. In the Global North, BIPOC communities face higher rates of targeted recruitment into the military in what is informally known as the “school to military pipeline.”⁹

The effects of the military-industrial complex disproportionately affect women and non-binary people, especially in the Global South. These effects are rarely considered by international actors when making military decisions. The military-industrial complex is fuelled by a neoliberal economic model that impedes social welfare and humanitarian support for poor nations. This promotes dangerous labour practices, especially as the Global South struggles to compete where the international order values the Global North. Women perform the most labour in this sense (i.e. sweatshops, child care), bearing the burden of poverty caused by the male-dominated military-industrial complex. In addition, military bases in the Global South engage in economies of colonial control and exploitative female employment, particularly in sex work.

The military-industrial is also a major contributor to the climate crisis. The Canadian military is one of the largest national consumers¹⁰ and emitters of fossil fuels,¹¹ and the US military is the largest consumer of petroleum in the world.¹² Further exacerbating this situation, emissions reports required of member countries of the United Nations exclude any fuels purchased and used overseas by a country’s military, severely limiting the world’s capacity to commit to serious, concerted action on the crisis of anthropogenic climate change.

3.3. Nuclear Weapons as a Case Study

Nuclear weapons are the clearest example of harmful military technology. They are the most destructive, inhumane, and indiscriminate weapons ever created, both on the scale of environmental devastation as well as their uniquely persistent radioactive fallout, which results in genetic damage.¹³ Nuclear testing in Indigenous communities in Kazakhstan and the Marshall islands throughout the 1970s resulted in 40-50% higher rates of cancers and genetic mutations¹⁴ among the population, producing suffering that endures to this day. Further, a 2016 Columbia University study revealed that radiation levels in some of these Indigenous lands are almost double of what is deemed safe for human habitation.¹⁵

Less than one percent of the nuclear weapons in the world could disrupt the global climate and threaten as many as two billion people with starvation in a nuclear famine. This could precipitate a nuclear winter, destroying the essential ecosystems on which all life depends. Additionally, nuclear

⁹https://www.academia.edu/5062189/The_military_pipeline_from_our_public_schools_to_returning_veterans_What_should_be_the_role_of_public_schools

¹⁰ Dr. Neta Crawford, Brown University (2018) “Pentagon Fuel Use, Climate Change and the Costs of War”

¹¹ Dr. Tamara Lorincz, University of Waterloo (2019) “NATO is a threat to the climate”

¹² <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/us-military-and-oil>

¹³ https://www.icanw.org/catastrophic_harm

¹⁴ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01034-8>

¹⁵ <https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2016/06/01/1605535113>



weapons manufacturing contributes to widespread depletion of important resources via deforestation, mining for fossil fuels and minerals, contamination of resources, air and water pollution, reduced arability of land and clean water supply, and soil erosion. A large carbon footprint is produced by the overconsumption of resources for the production of war, including the production of greenhouse gases by transport and manufacturing facilities.

Whether or not they are detonated, nuclear weapons cause widespread harm to health and the environment. In Northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, highly enriched uranium (HEU) is mined on Ashton, Janivier, and Dene Nation lands near the Clearwater River and Patterson Lake to be used almost exclusively for nuclear weapons production. Uranium mining often leaks radiation into the surrounding Indigenous lands, as in the case of Patterson Lake. Radiation is transferred into Indigenous communities via the consumption of animals exposed to contaminated land and waters. These case studies of environmental racism¹⁶ are not anomalies, but rather represent a repeated pattern of nuclear weapons storage, testing, development and harm having a disproportionate impact on the health and local ecosystems of Indigenous communities.

These catastrophic humanitarian and environmental consequences span decades and cross generations; they breed fear and mistrust among nations; they divert public funds from healthcare, education, disaster relief, and other vital services due to their cost of production, maintenance, and modernisation. Banning these cruel, immoral, and inhumane weapons was a critical step on the path to ridding the world of them. With the entry into force of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)¹⁷ on January 22, 2021, making the development, testing, production, manufacturing, otherwise acquiring, possessing or stockpiling nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosives illegal for signatory nations under international law, the world took a critical step towards making a future without nuclear weapons a reality.

4. Framework

4.1. Principles for Advocacy: The Society will adopt a framework of justice-focused peace activism, in accordance with its values and based fundamentally on anti-oppression, as outlined in the Constitution, Equity Policy, and Sustainability Policy. The Society will refer to the following framework when organising around harmful military research:

4.1.1. Anti-oppression: The Society will organise initiatives around the recognition that harmful military research and the military-industrial complex disproportionately impact the most vulnerable groups in society. The Society will strive to ensure these voices are centred in its initiatives, and provide educational resources on the connections between oppression and the military-industrial complex.

¹⁶<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3132626>

¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>



4.1.2. **Solidarity:** The Society will act in meaningful solidarity by maintaining relationships with communities directly affected by the military-industrial complex, with a particular emphasis on Indigenous groups in accordance with the Indigenous Solidarity Policy.

4.2. **Just Transition:** The strong grip of the military-industrial complex over the private and public sector should not be an excuse to avoid addressing it. As such, the Society will advocate for a timely and equitable transition away from harmful military technology and towards transparent and ethical research on campus. This transition will be rooted in the knowledge that McGill students rely on University-based research opportunities to further their education and work experience. Thus, research that violates the principles of this policy should be replaced with alternative, equitable research opportunities to ensure students' continued access to this form of learning. Additionally, this transition will be rooted in the knowledge that the military-industrial complex has employed and sustained many Canadians for decades. As such, the transition towards disarmament must consider the complexity and entrenched nature of the military-industrial complex and account for the needs of communities economically reliant on militarism and the military-industrial complex.

5. University advocacy

The Society will advocate for the cessation of harmful military research, the interests of harmful military technology organisations at McGill University, or any other connection to the military-industrial complex.

5.1. The Vice-President (University Affairs), in collaboration with the Senate Caucus and University Committee Representatives, will make use of Senate questions, resolutions, and other mechanisms to advocate for more ethical and transparent military research at McGill.

5.1.1. These standards will include the requirement that researchers disclose any interaction of their research with the military-industrial complex, including but not limited to the receipt of funding from organisations involved in the military-industrial complex or the applicability of their research to the development of harmful military technology. Further, these standards will require that research funded by organisations involved in the military-industrial complex explicitly name these organisations in its publication, so as to increase the transparency of military-funded research. Finally, as more information regarding harmful military research at McGill is obtained, an ethics review board or other mechanism of ethical, transparent evaluation must be developed in order to regulate military-funded research at McGill.

5.1.2. For greater certainty, the Vice-President (University Affairs), Senate Caucus, and Committee Representatives will lobby the Office of the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) and the Academic Policy Committee and its subcommittees for the adoption of policies and mandates to the effect of s. 5.1.1.



5.1.3. In the interim, the Vice-President (University Affairs), President, Senate Caucus, and Committee Representatives will advocate for the revision of the Regulation on Conduct of Research with special focus given to the implementation of transparency and accountability measures for military research.

5.2. The Society, through the President and Vice-President (University Affairs), will lobby the Board of Governors to divest all holdings in McGill's endowment fund from the military-industrial complex, including but not limited to organisations involved in the production, sale, or purchase of harmful military technology.

5.2.1. This advocacy will utilise social, political, and financial pressure, as necessary, in a manner consistent with the Society's mobilisations in support of fossil fuel divestment.

5.3. The Vice-President (University Affairs) and Vice-President (External Affairs) will support campus and community-based campaigns opposing the development of harmful military technology. This support will make use of the Society's institutional capacity and will include both resource allocations and logistical assistance.

5.3.1. The Vice-President (University Affairs) will advocate for the revision of the Operating Procedures Demonstrations Protests Occupations to exclude the use of police forces and prioritise principles of harm reduction and de-escalation.

5.3.2. In the interim, the Vice-President (University Affairs) will lobby the Principal and Vice-Principal (Administration and Finance) for the active exclusion of military and police forces from campus, including recruitment efforts.

5.3.3. Further, these Offices will support in the development and dissemination of popular educational resources on McGill University's connections to and involvement in the military-industrial complex. This will include support for a dedicated researcher within their portfolios, who will work closely with relevant student groups to examine McGill University's involvement in the military-industrial complex and military research.

5.4. The Vice-President (University Affairs) and Senate Caucus will lobby the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) for increased research funding and paid internship opportunities in fields outlined above, with specific interest given to studies that contribute to a just transition towards disarmament. This advocacy is undertaken with the intention to outway research and internship opportunities lost as we transition away from military research.



6. External advocacy

6.1. The Society, through the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs), will collaborate with external organisations to protest the research, development, purchase, sale, or use of harmful military technology by municipal, provincial, and federal governments, and advocate for treaties, laws, and regulations that mandate a just transition towards disarmament.

6.1.1. In particular, the Vice-President (External Affairs) will collaborate with organisations to advocate the City of Montréal to support the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons by the Parliament of Canada, by committing to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Cities Appeal, which calls upon the city's country to adopt the treaty.

6.2. The Vice-President (External Affairs) will advocate for the adoption of similar policies on harmful military research and technology at other student unions in Quebec and in Canada.

6.3. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) will collaborate with external organisations to advocate for the adoption of more ethical and transparent standards for military research at research-related organisations, such as the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the U15 Group of Canadian Research Universities.

6.4. The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) will collaborate with university and external actors to develop more concrete directions for advocacy regarding harmful military technology at all levels of government.

7. Reporting and review

7.1. At the end of each year, the Vice-President (University Affairs) and the Vice-President (External Affairs) will present a joint report on the status of the mandates outlined in this Policy to the public session of the SSMU Legislative Council.