



MOTION REGARDING THE ADOPTION OF A POSITION ON FREEDOM OF RELIGION 2021-04-08

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Moved by:	Ayo Ogunremi <i>Vice-President (External Affairs)</i>	Current Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Hussain Awan <i>Clubs Representative</i>		

Issue This motion seeks to expand the SSMU's commitment to leadership in matters of human rights and social justice by establishing a position on freedom of religion.

Background and Rationale Over the years, SSMU has approved motions condemning the [Charter of Values](#), [Bill 62](#), and [Bill 21](#). While these motions set a precedent for taking action against discriminatory legislation, their mandates have technically expired, since resolutions last only one year. Now that the SSMU has a Positions Book, it is fitting that we adopt a permanent position on freedom of religion, given the frequency with which the SSMU Legislative Council has had to condemn the derogation of this fundamental right over the past decade. This motion addresses this inadequacy by adopting a position on freedom of religion.

Alignment with Mission This motion aligns with the SSMU's commitment to showing leadership on matters of human rights and social justice, as well as to represent the interests of all of its members, including those subject to social marginalisation. It builds on the commitments outlined in the Equity Policy,



the Accessibility Policy, and the Policy on Accessible Education and Academics.

Consultations Completed

This motion was drafted by the Vice-President (External Affairs), the External Affairs Coordinator, and the Political Researcher, in consultation and collaboration with the McGill Thaqalyn Muslim Students' Association (TMA), the Education Undergraduate Society (EdUS), the President of the McGill Law Students' Association (LSA/AÉD), the Black Students' Network of McGill (BSN), the McGill Sikh Students' Association (MSSA), the Dean of the McGill Faculty of Law, the Muslim Law Students' Association (MLSA), the Muslim Students' Association (MSA), a representative of the Coalition Non à la loi 21, Hillel McGill and representatives from the organisation Droit d'enseigner au Québec pour toutes et tous. Also consulted were the SSMU Governance Manager and Executive Committee.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Adopting this position would provide a clear basis on which to issue statements and articulate the SSMU's position regarding challenges to freedom of religion in its external representation and advocacy, facilitating the work of the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs).

It would also serve as a basis on which to support political campaigns that align with this position, adding to the responsibilities of the External Affairs casual staff, notably the Political Campaigns Coordinators and the External Affairs Coordinator.

Sustainability Considerations

The sustainability implications of this motion are primarily of a social and economic nature, as it seeks to recognise systemic discrimination in our public institutions against religious minorities.

As such, this motion serves to promote social sustainability within the SSMU, promoting an inclusive and equitable community that addresses systemic power imbalances within society and fosters a culture of anti-oppression, as per section 3.2. of the Sustainability Policy.



Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If approved, this motion would provide a clear and democratically legitimated basis on which to continue its opposition to Bill 21 and practices of discrimination framed under the thin guise of secularism. This position would become SSMU's principal basis for issuing any statement regarding such practices, and would give the SSMU External Affairs portfolio a clearer stance to communicate in matters of external representation and advocacy.

Should this motion pass, the new Position on Freedom of Religion will be added to the SSMU Positions Book by the Governance Manager.

If this motion fails, the Legislative Council will have failed to act in alignment with the SSMU's mission to show leadership on matters of human rights and social justice, as well as its commitments to social sustainability, equity, and accessibility.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved, that the Legislative Council approve the Position on Freedom of Religion in Appendix A;

Be it further resolved, that the Legislative Council reaffirm its unequivocal, unconditional, and wholehearted condemnation of Bill 21.

Results of the Vote

In favour	(UNANIMOUS)
Opposed	()
Abstain	()



Appendix A : Proposed Position

La version en français suit.

Position on Freedom of Religion

In its commitment to leadership on matters of human rights and social justice, and in advocacy on freedom of religion, the SSMU believes:

1. In the fundamental right to freedom of religion and conscience, as guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms.
 - 1.1. That this right includes the right to perform or to receive public services while dressing in a manner that adheres to one's religious belief(s).
2. That conceptions of state religious neutrality have been invoked to enact discriminatory restrictions on religious and cultural expression in Quebec, disproportionately harming religious minorities and marginalised people, including but not limited to Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities.
 - 2.1. That such restrictions cause irreparable harm to these people, including but not limited to loss or limitation of employment opportunities, denial of public services, stigmatisation, dehumanisation, and political exclusion.

That such restrictions are often inscribed in a broader xenophobic political agenda, and are a blatant example of systemic racism.
 - 2.2. That the enactment of such restrictions is correlated with the rise of racist attitudes, xenophobic movements, hate crimes, and violence against religious minorities, which especially affects women and gender minorities, both in Quebec and elsewhere in the world.
3. That the enactment of laws that discriminate against people on the basis of their religious affiliation, notwithstanding their fundamental rights and freedoms, sets a dangerous precedent for arbitrary and authoritarian government in Quebec and Canada.
4. That any attempt by any level of government to discriminate against people on the basis of their religious affiliation, conviction, or belief, whether directly or indirectly, must be strongly, vigorously, and unequivocally opposed, in solidarity with those affected.



Position sur la liberté de religion

Dans son engagement à jouer un rôle de leader en matière de droits humains et de justice sociale, ainsi que dans sa défense de la liberté de religion, l'ÀÉUM croit:

1. Au droit fondamental à la liberté de religion et de conscience, tel que garanti par la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés et la Charte des droits et libertés de la personne du Québec.
 - 1.1. Que ce droit comprend le droit de fournir ou de recevoir des services publics tout en s'habillant d'une manière qui correspond à ses croyances religieuses.
2. Que la conception de la neutralité religieuse de l'État a été invoquée pour promulguer des restrictions discriminatoires sur l'expression religieuse et culturelle au Québec, nuisant de façon disproportionnée aux minorités religieuses et aux personnes marginalisées, y compris, sans toutefois s'y limiter, les personnes de confession musulmane, juive et sikh.
 - 2.1. Que de telles restrictions causent des dommages irréparables à ces personnes, y compris, sans toutefois s'y limiter, la perte ou la limitation des possibilités d'emploi, le refus de services publics, la stigmatisation, la déshumanisation et l'exclusion politique.
 - 2.2. Que de telles restrictions sont souvent inscrites dans un agenda politique xénophobe plus large, qui affecte de manière disproportionnée les femmes et les minorités de genre, et constitue un exemple flagrant de racisme systémique.
 - 2.3. Que l'adoption de telles restrictions est corrélée à la montée des attitudes racistes, des mouvements xénophobes, des crimes haineux et de la violence contre les minorités religieuses, ce qui affecte particulièrement les femmes et les minorités de genre, tant au Québec qu'ailleurs dans le monde.
3. Que l'adoption de lois discriminatoires à l'égard des personnes sur la base de leur appartenance religieuse, en dépit de leurs droits et libertés fondamentaux, crée un dangereux précédent de gouvernement arbitraire et autoritaire au Québec et au Canada.
4. Que toute tentative de discrimination, directe ou indirecte, contre des personnes en raison de leur appartenance religieuse, de leurs convictions ou de leurs croyances, par quelque ordre de gouvernement que ce soit, doit être combattue avec force, vigueur et sans équivoque, en solidarité avec les personnes concernées.