



# MOTION REGARDING THE ADOPTION OF THE HARM REDUCTION POLICY 2021-03-11

Submitted for: 2021-03-11

**Submitted to:** SSMU Legislative Council      **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2021-03-11-001

**Moved by:** Brooklyn Frizzle  
*Vice-President (University Affairs)*      **Current Status:**  FOR APPROVAL  
 APPROVED  
 POSTPONED  
 COMMITTED  
 NOT APPROVED

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

**Issue**      In response to the recent discontinuation of harm reductive practices within Student Housing and Hospitality Services and Student Services, this motion seeks to formalize and strengthen the SSMU's commitment to harm reduction through the adoption of a Harm Reduction Policy.

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**Background and Rationale**      On March 12, 2020, the SSMU Legislative Council passed the "[Motion Regarding Condemnation of Changes to Harm Reduction Approach Within SHHS and Student Services](#)." The motion, among other resolutions, mandated the Vice-President (University Affairs) to advocate for the reinstatement of meaningful harm-reductive approaches in Residences.

In fulfilling this mandate, a [Question Regarding Harm Reduction and Substance Use](#) was submitted to the McGill Senate, of which the preamble best captures the rationale behind this Motion and proposed Policy:

“Over the past academic year, recent changes to University resources and policies around drug and alcohol use, particularly drug and alcohol use in residences, have come into effect.

In residence, previous editions of the Student Housing and Hospitality Services (SHHS) "[Guide to Community Living](#)", sent to all students in residence and made public on the SHHS website, included a page dedicated to harm reduction, which promoted the



principles of “acceptance, compassion, respect, collaboration, and empowerment.” This page also included a link to a McGill University website on harm reduction. However, the [Winter 2020 Guide to Community Living](#) does not include this page and the McGill website on harm reduction has [since been deleted](#). Moreover, where Floor Fellows typically receive dedicated training on harm reduction, many have reported that little to no such training was provided this academic year. Students have also reported difficulty accessing fentanyl test strips from the University, which is particularly concerning given the recent discovery of street drugs acquired near campus that [tested positive](#) for fentanyl.

Additionally, the Winter 2020 Guide to Community Living page on Alcohol and Drugs includes a new section, “Controlled or Illegal Substances”, with provisions such as: “Evidence which could lead to investigation by a Residence Life Manager, Protection Services or McGill Security, includes but is not limited to: drug traces, illicit drug paraphernalia, or the smell of controlled substances,” and “As a member of the Residence community, it is your responsibility to report any instances of inappropriate behaviour related to illegal or controlled substances.” These provisions, which also reference the [McGill University Policy Concerning Alcohol, Cannabis, and Other Drugs](#), go above and beyond [provincial law](#) (which does not prohibit the possession of cannabis in University-level student residences) and serve to cultivate an environment of secrecy, and therefore, danger.”

While this Question did not receive a meaningful reply from the University, it underlines the need for SSMU to strengthen its commitment to harm reduction and continue advocating for the implementation of harm reductive practices in Residences.

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### Alignment with Mission

This Motion and the proposed Policy are inline with the SSMU’s mandate to strengthen the “educational, cultural, environmental, political, and social conditions” of its members.

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### Consultations Completed

The proposed Policy was drafted by the Vice-President (University Affairs), Vice-President (Student Life), and AMUSE Vice-President (Floor Fellow), in consultation with the Senate Caucus, Equity Commissioners, Anti-Violence Coordinators, General Manager, Greek-letter organizations, and

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Vice-President (Finance) who has assumed the event-planning responsibilities of the Internal Affairs portfolio.

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### Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Should this motion fail, there remains a substantive risk associated with the University's recent transition away from harm reduction. The newly adopted abstinence-only approach disincentivizes students from seeking help and fundamentally alters the role of floor fellows, turning them into agents of the administration with the power to punish students for substance use, rather than supportive figures intended to help students stay as safe as possible even when using substances.

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### Sustainability Considerations

The proposed amendments 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, the implicated Executives, Commissioners, and Coordinators will be informed of their mandates under the Policy. The Vice-President (External Affairs), Vice-President (Student Life), and Vice-President (University Affairs) will immediately begin planning and executing their advocacy efforts. The Vice-President (Student Life) will, furthermore, begin organizing training and educational resources on harm reduction, in collaboration with the Equity Commissioners and Anti-Violence Coordinators.

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### Motion or Resolution for Approval

*Be it resolved, that the SSMU adopt the Harm Reduction Policy of 2021-03-11 as a Policy of the Legislative Council;*

*Be it further resolved, that the Vice-President (University Affairs) be mandated to draft and send a letter to the Director of Student Housing and Hospitality Services, reiterating the SSMU's wholehearted condemnation of the University's recent shift away from harm reduction in Residences and its support for students living in Residences as first-years and as floor fellows.*



**Results of the  
Vote**

In favour	(UNANIMOUS)
Opposed	()
Abstain	()

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## Appendix A : Harm Reduction Policy

Link: [Harm Reduction Policy 2021/03/11](#)

APPROVED