



SSMU BOARD OF DIRECTORS PUBLIC MINUTES

January 6, 2022

The Board of Directors meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held by teleconference on Thursday, January 6, 2022 at 18:00.

Present: Alexandre Ashkir (Chair, non-voting), Eric Sader (Officer), Claire Downie (Officer), Karla Heisele Cubilla (Officer), Sarah Paulin (Officer), Ghania Javed (Council Member), Benson Wan (Council Member), Charlotte Gurung (Council Member), Sacha Delouvrier (Officer, non-voting), Yara Coussa (Council Member)

Absent: Darshan Daryanani (Officer, non-voting), Daniel Dufour (General Manager, non-voting)

1. Call to Order: **18:05**

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 18:05 on January 6, 2022.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair presents the Land Acknowledgement.

The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee nations. The SSMU recognizes and respects these nations as the true and constant custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Further, the SSMU commits to and respects the traditional laws and customs of these territories.

3. Attendance

The Chair notes the absences of Officer Daryanani and the General Manager.

4. Adoption of the Agenda – **ADOPTED**

The Chair presents the Public Agenda.

Director Downie motions to adopt the Agenda, seconded by Director Coussa. There is no opposition.

The Agenda is adopted.



5. For Discussion:

a. Purchasing quality masks for students

Director Downie presents this discussion and explains that she has been looking into what the SSMU can do to provide a safer new year for students on campus. She has been in discussions with the Post-Graduate Students' Society (PGSS) in regards to this concern. However, after meeting with the Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) Labeau, he explained to Director Downie that McGill Security will not “bother” students who are wearing better quality masks such as K95 and N95. Director Downie notes that these two specific types of masks are difficult to find but are inexpensive if bought in bulk and provide more protection to students in classrooms, around \$1. Since SSMU will be cancelling many events and activities, this may be a good initiative to provide to students, and she inquires if the Board would be interested in such an initiative, and what amount should be set for this. Lastly, she notes that this will ensure a safer environment for students because not all students can access these masks.

Question:

Director Wan asks how much regular surgical masks cost in large quantities.

Answer:

Director Downie responds that she is not certain, but she notes that McGill University distributes masks for free on campus, but they are not as effective as respirator-style masks.

Question:

Officer Delouvrier thanks Director Downie for presenting this initiative. He inquires if Director Downie has an estimate of how many students are going to be required to be on campus and how we would provide them with masks as a preliminary measure in the next few weeks.

Answer:

Director Downie responds that according to Labeau, there were 6,000 wifi connections on campus today, but some of the students are living in residences, which are counted in this number. Primarily, there are students in labs and students in health sciences, where there will be more activities in the next few weeks. She explains that ordering approximately 10,000 masks should be sufficient for the students at this time.

Question:



Director Wan asks if McGill University will be paying for the masks, or if this will be a SSMU initiative.

Answer:

Director Downie responds that McGill University noted to her that surgical masks are adequate for higher education institutions, per the provincial government, but other experts are saying that this is not the case. She explains that most students will be able to pay \$10-\$15 for the masks, but they are not able to order these in bulk.

Question:

Director Paulin asks if this will be a recurring expense or will this be an expense for the month of January while cases are high in Montreal.

Answer:

Director Downie responds that she does not expect this wave to last the entire semester, so it looks like it may be 2 or 3 months.

Director Wan notes that surgical masks are sold for under 20 cents (\$0.20) per mask, so this initiative would be a significant expense for SSMU, whereas the surgical masks are supplied and financed by the University.

Director Coussa is in favour of this initiative and it would be helpful for students who are immunocompromised and who may not feel safe going back to campus. She notes that SSMU should start with this initiative on a trial basis, and review if students are interested in purchasing these masks.

Director Downie responds to Director Wan and Director Coussa noting that these specific masks are expensive, but they are not comparable to the McGill University supplied masks. They would be distributed in packages to students, rather than keeping them in dispensers. She has been thinking about an initiative on how to help students, rather than be reactive at SSMU. Subsidizing the masks would protect and help many students, in her opinion.

Question:

Director Sader thanks Director Downie for this initiative. He inquires what approximate amount is budgeted for, noting that he and Director Downie previously discussed possibly subsidizing rapid tests for students, but masks are much cheaper and require much more in



quantity. If the SSMU wishes to do a trial period of a month, where there is reduced capacity at the University, he asks what amount of masks would be needed in this situation.

Answer:

Director Downie notes that with N-95 masks, there is much evidence that these can be re-worn by placing them in a 'quarantine bag' for about a week and re-wear them. She explains that various agencies suggest that one can re-wear these specific masks. She notes that she does not have a budget for this initiative at this time, but wanted to gauge interest at the Board level for this project and it would be an important financial commitment.

Question:

Officer Delouvrier inquires about the amount of 10,000 masks, which was mentioned earlier by Director Downie, and asks how many students and for how long this would last on campus.

Answer:

Director Downie explains that she envisions for the SSMU to distribute these in packages of masks with social distancing at the University Centre, as such, it would depend on students who show up to pick them up. She states that 10,000 masks appears as a reasonable amount for a trial run, and if demand is slower than expected, there will still be students during the semester who would be interested in picking up the masks, since they [masks] cannot expire.

Director Gurung explains that providing the masks and subsidizing them would be a useful way to make this initiative more sustainable during the semester. She notes that students may be willing to pay for the masks, but there is no place to order them, even online. Subsidizing them on a need-basis for those who cannot afford them will be useful as well.

Director Heisele Cubilla mentions that if the SSMU provides masks on campus, to be mindful of all students and to provide to all 27,000 students.

Question:

Director Wan mentions that from his perspective, he works in a hospital, they limit the hospital workers to one N-95 mask per day. If the SSMU does manage to procure this many specific masks, he is concerned with how these N-95 fit the students, as they do not fit properly in size. He further inquires if there is evidence that surgical masks are not sufficient and that N-95 masks are better in quality, as hospitals, as hospitals prefer to use surgical masks.

Answer:

Director Downie points out that she is not a medical professional, but she has done some research regarding masks and medical N-95 masks need to be fitted for specific people. She has also researched CN-95 masks which are respirator style masks. She is not certain about surgical masks and if they are



sufficient, as McGill University has not held a 200-people class as of yet, but COVID-19 can be caught anywhere. If students will be returning to crowded environments, it would be a good use of student money to help students by being proactive.

Question:

Director Downie asks if she were to propose a motion with a certain amount at this time, would it need to be included in this Public or Confidential Session.

Answer:

The Chair clarifies that it could be presented in Confidential, or to suspend the Rules with $\frac{3}{4}$ majority and add a motion in this Public session.

Director Downie motions to suspend the Rules, seconded by Director Coussa; this requires a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority of the voting Board members present. This passes and the rules are suspended.

Director Downie adds a motion for approval, which becomes item 6.a. In the Minutes.

- b. Remote learning bursary for students (Director Downie)

[This discussion proceeds the question period and debate on item 6.a.]

Director Downie presents this item and inquires if the SSMU can establish a bursary to reimburse students who are learning remotely and have limited access to certain resources, such as internet, upgraded technology devices and other. She asks if any Board members have ideas on this matter.

Director Heisele Cubilla is in favour of this initiative, and notes that other student unions have provided a certain amount to students who applied for it and would be interested in seeing how we can apply something similar at SSMU.

Director Downie notes she will bring this for further discussion to the Executive Committee and if necessary, she will present it again to the Board.

6. Motions for Approval:

- a. Motion to approve up to \$8,000 to be spent on an initial purchase of respirator-style masks, with the understanding that specific purchase details will be approved by the Board prior to the completion of the transaction – **APPROVED**



The motion's discussion and debate can be found in item 5.a. of these Minutes and is continued below.

Question:

Director Coussa inquires if the SSMU could spend the money after we receive the orders from students.

Answer:

Director Downie is not opposed to this, but notes that it would be easier to let students know that mask distribution will be held in the University Centre.

Question:

Director Wan asks if the amount indicated in the motion is approximate or arbitrarily chosen.

Answer:

Director Downie notes that based on the pricing that she has researched thus far, this would allow for an initial order of 8,000 to 10,000 respirator-style masks.

Director Sader is not in favour of how the Board is approaching this expense, he prefers to review the numbers and budget beforehand, rather than setting a limit on an initiative from the beginning. He notes that it would be useful to indicate a smaller amount of masks, pending the interest and demand from students. He suggests purchasing 1,000 masks, setting up a specific day to distribute them, and to review how high the demand is for the masks from students. He notes that this approach is not preferred and he is not comfortable with this motion; he would like to see a proper budget to be presented by email approval, for example, rather than arbitrarily choosing an amount of money. He further suggests conducting a student survey or conducting a trial period for this initiative and to establish how many masks are actually needed.

Director Downie understands Director Sader's concerns regarding the budget, but it is getting more difficult to prepare orders for these masks, and if the Board can commit to spending a certain amount of money, SSMU does not have to spend it all. She notes that students are worried about going back on campus and believes the demand will be high. She explains that if a budget is approved at a later date, suppliers can run out of inventory, but she would like to get started on this as these orders take time.

Director Coussa suggests modifying the motion and amend to include a deadline of Monday for the budget to be sent to the Board, as well as a survey to be sent to the Membership to gauge interest.



Director Downie explains that while it may be useful, the survey may not be representative of the entire student body.

Director Gurung notes that many students do not interact with SSMU emails or social media, so they will not obtain accurate numbers or interest from the student body. If the SSMU orders 8,000 masks and they distribute them in packages of 5, they will only cater to 1,600 students, and there will definitely be demand for these. She does not believe there is a risk in approving this motion today and the demand will be there.

Director Downie wishes to do a straw poll to know if people are comfortable to approve an amount in this meeting or to present an email motion for approval at a later date. Based on the straw poll, the Board would like to proceed with the motion in this Public session.

The Chair adds the wording of the motion to this Agenda.

Question:

Director Sader asks if the Board will be approving up to \$8,000 for the purchase of the masks immediately or pending the further approval from the Board.

Answer:

Director Downie would prefer that this is approved by the Board so that there is further approval on the types of masks that will be distributed to students with greater detail, and would like to ensure that there is more discussion and review from the Board.

[Return to this motion for approval after 5.b.]

Question:

Director Wan inquires as to whether the previously mentioned survey could be launched to the Legislative Council, a more representative body of the student population.

Answer:

Director Downie responds that the demand will be there with an initial amount, and she does not think the SSMU can wait until January 20th for the Council meeting, or try to email Councillors in regards to this, but notes that it is better to get started on this as soon as possible and figure out all the details.



Director Downie motions to call the question.

Director Downie motions to vote by 'Raise Hand' feature on Zoom, seconded by Director Coussa.

In favour: Director Coussa, Director Downie, Director Gurung, Director Heisele Cubilla, Director Javed, Director Paulin

Opposed: Director Wan, Director Sader

Abstain: None

The motion is approved.

[The Board enters into a 10-minute recess from 18:50 until 19:00.]

7. Confidential Session: **19:02**

The Board of Directors enters into a Confidential Session at 19:02.

8. Adjournment: **20:44**

The Board of Directors meeting is adjourned at 20:44, as moved by Director Coussa and seconded by Director Wan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Éric S', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Éric Sader, Vice-President (Finance)