



Bureau du président du conseil de l'AÉUM

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

SSMU Office of the Speaker

Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

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MOTION REGARDING A POLICY TO SUPPORT TRANS STUDENTS ON CAMPUS

Submitted for: 2023-01-19

Submitted to: SSMU Legislative Council **Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2023-01-19-003

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

Seconded by: Emily Thom
Law Representative

Issue

The McGill Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism's (CHRLP) platforming of transphobic voices makes the university an unsafe and hostile place for trans* students. This helps legitimise transphobia at the university and at an institutional level, calling into question the rights of already marginalised community members. SSMU calls for the recognition of this, and for the creation of a mandate to help correct McGill's course of action, to ensure the university does not act in such a manner in the future.

Background and Rationale

McGill's Centre for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism, which operates within the Faculty of Law, gave a platform to Professor Robert Wintemute, a member of the LGB Alliance, for a speaking event on January 11, 2023. The topic of the event, as well as Professor Wintemute's professional affiliations and academic interests, signal to students and the broader McGill community that he is an active supporter of transphobia, jeopardising the safety and well-being of trans students. The CHRLP's dismissal of protestors' concerns with the Sex vs. Gender (Identity) Debate event highlighted the danger of platforming such harmful ideas has on trans students.

McGill's endorsement of transphobic speech under the guise of "academic freedom" also sets a dangerous precedent for future support of transphobia both within the university and in Montreal as a whole, through monetary



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and institutional support. Such a precedent threatens the safety of trans students at the university, and negatively affects the quality of life of the McGill community overall. The SSMU is responsible for advocating for the well-being of its constituents and ensuring they are better protected and supported in the future.

Alignment with Mission

This motion aligns with the advocacy priorities of the SSMU, namely its constitutional leadership mandate, its commitment to Gender Equity, its Equity Policy, Sustainability Policy, and its Policy on Accessible Education and Academics. As well, this aligns with SSMU Divest for Human Rights Policy, which stresses the need for McGill University to terminate relationships with organisations implicated in human rights abuses such as the LGB Alliance.

Consultations Completed

This motion draws from consultations with the collective put in place to protest the event, which includes RadLaw McGill, Queer McGill, the Trans Patient Union, the Union for Gender Empowerment, the Social Work Student Association, as well local trans* activists and advocates. In conversation with these actors, the SSMU was able to establish that the scope of the harm caused by the platforming a transphobic speaker, the severity of the message presented by said speaker, and the steps that the trans* community within McGill, and in Montreal at large, has deemed necessary for McGill to follow in order to repair the harm done and prevent further harm from reoccurring.

At SSMU, the VP (External Affairs), the VP (University Affairs), the Gender and Sexuality Commissioner and the Governance Manager were consulted.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Not adopting this resolution would mean that SSMU lacks mandates to take tangible actions to support the trans community on campus.

If adopted, this resolution will require a significant time commitment from student representatives to engage in research, consultations, drafting, and other aspects of the policy writing process.

To mitigate risk factors, in drafting the plan, there will be a need for clear and consistent communication with the rest of the McGill community, to highlight that standing against hate speech does not affect academic



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freedom, nor does it compromise the values held by McGill as an institution dedicated to learning and excellence.

Sustainability Considerations

The goal of this resolution is to create a more socially sustainable learning environment in McGill, through its impact on what is deemed acceptable within the boundaries of academic freedom. Following the steps laid out below will ensure that the trans* members of the McGill community will face less inequity in the future. Strengthening and empowering any marginalised group within the student body by minimising systemic power imbalances is beneficial for the SSMU sustainability objectives.

The repercussions of this resolution could also positively affect other marginalised members of the community, who could also be targeted by similarly harmful ideologies.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

Adoption of the following resolution would result in added labour to the University Affairs, and External Affairs department in order to create a plan of action and amplify current demands of the trans community.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

WHEREAS, the actions of the McGill Center for Human Rights and Legal Pluralism (CHRLP) in hosting the Sex vs. Gender (Identity) Debate event on January 11, 2023 have harmed trans students at McGill and in the McGill community, and the SSMU is responsible for advocating for its constituents;

WHEREAS, the platforming of Professor Robert Wintermute, considering his associations with the LGB Alliance, furthers transphobia at the university and sets a precedent for the continued support of transphobic organisations,

WHEREAS, protestors and students have expressed concerns;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the SSMU condemns the actions of the McGill CHRLP in platforming Professor Robert Wintermute's transphobic academic debate in opposition to the wellbeing of the trans community at McGill.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the VP (University Affairs) and the President amplify the demands outlined in the [open letter](#) drafted by Celeste Trianon,



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RadLaw McGill, and Queer McGill in their meetings with the McGill Administration;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the VP(University Affairs) and Gender and Sexuality Commissioner, in collaboration with the VP (External Affairs) and the Gender and Sexuality Committee, create an action plan to be submitted to the Legislative Council before the end of the 2023 winter semester;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this plan be developed in consultation with queer groups on campus, including but not limited to the Union for Gender Empowerment, Queer McGill, and the Trans Patient Union;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this plan mandate the VP (University Affairs) to advocate to the McGill Administration for the inclusion of student voices when faculties decide to bring speakers for academic activities, including but not limited to conferences;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this plan reiterate SSMU's stance against hate speech, and skillfully navigate its interaction—or lack thereof—with McGill's academic freedom policy and the limits on freedom of speech prescribed by law;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, this plan include and address the aforementioned demands and work with McGill to ensure support for trans students at the university;

BE IT ULTIMATELY RESOLVED THAT, this plan focus on concrete steps that the SSMU can take to advocate for trans students' needs and further support the McGill trans community in facilitating access to services and work to end transphobia on campus.

Results of the Vote

In favour	(18)
Opposed	(0)
Abstain	(1)