



Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

Students' Society of McGill University

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SSMU BOARD OF DIRECTORS PUBLIC MINUTES

May 4, 2023

The Board of Directors meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held by teleconference and in the SSMU Boardroom on Thursday, April 13, 2023 at 18:00.

Present: Alexandre Ashkir (Chair, non-voting), Jaz Kaur (Parliamentarian, non-voting), Risann Wright (Officer), Val Masny (Officer), Marco Pizarro (Officer, non-voting), Cat Williams (Officer, non-voting), Hassanatou Koulibaly (Officer, non-voting), Julia Nam (Council Member), Benson Wan (Council Member), Kerry Yang (Officer), Incoming Executives (non-voting)

Absent: Peter Tai (Council Member), Coco Jie Wang (Council Member)

1. Call to Order: **18:15**

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 18:15. He notes that the meeting is recorded.

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 takes attendance.

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

The agenda is distributed.

Seeing no changes or corrections, Director Wan motions to adopt the agenda.



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Director Masny motions to postpone Motion 7a until the next meeting, because Officer Pizarro will not have it ready until the next meeting.

The Chair states that he can take this motion after the agenda is adopted.

Director Nam seconds the motion to adopt the agenda.

Seeing no opposition, the agenda is adopted.

Director Wan seconds Director Masny's motion to postpone point 7a until May 18.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 7a is postponed.

5. Executive Committee Public Report – **APPROVED**

Director Wright presents the Executive Committee Public Report. A few motions were approved relating to job descriptions and contract renewals, and the summer Fridays were set up. Director Wright stands for questions.

Seeing no opposition, the Executive Committee Public Report is ratified.

6. Minutes for Approval:

a. SSMU Board of Directors Public Minutes 2023-03-09 – **APPROVED**

Seeing no changes or corrections, the minutes are ratified as distributed.

Incoming Executive Dakdouki asks what ratification means.

The Chair answers that they ratified the Executive Committee Public Report, which means that the Board agrees to the decisions made in the report and approves it. When they ratify the minutes, it confirms that they are right. Directors go through the minutes before the meeting, and if there is anything that needs to be changed, it is done before ratification.

Incoming Executive Dakdouki asks if ratifying the report ratifies all Motions included in it.

The Chair answers yes. Ratification gives the report a seal of approval from the Board.

7. Legislative Council Motions for Ratification:



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- a. [Motion Regarding the Adoption of the Ethical Partnerships Policy](#) – **POSTPONED UNTIL NEXT BOARD MEETING (MAY 18)**

8. Motions for Approval:

- a. Motion to add the gender-affirming care plan to the Dental Plan under StudentCare – **COMMITTED TO LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

Director Yang states that this has been in the works since last year. StudentCare has a gender-affirming care plan that SSMU can add to their Health or Dental Plan. Other universities have started rolling it out (UBC and UofT), but there were some hiccups on SSMU's side. Officer Pizarro has been working on this, along with the Health & Dental Plan, but it is hard to arrange meetings and make decisions. Since the Board can make funding decisions for SSMU, they should decide on this before the Fall 2023 plan must be completed. Director Yang notes that gender-affirming care would be added to the Dental Plan rather than the Health Plan, because it would not cover international students if it was added to the Health Plan. So, adding this care to the Dental Plan would ensure that more students are covered. The StudentCare fee has enough to cover this addition for now, but this might need to be revisited in the future. Director Yang stands for questions.

The Chair entertains a question period.

Question:

Director Masny states that they do not know the limits of the gender-affirming care plan, which limits their ability to vote on this motion. They would rather receive a presentation of the plan, in order to better understand it and make an informed vote. They ask Director Yang if he plans on presenting the new coverage.

Answer:

Director Yang answers that he can present the Plan tonight. He sends the fact sheet to the Chair, so that everyone can go through it.

The Chair asks Director Yang to send the sheet to the Parliamentarian, so that she can present it. He suggests a motion to entertain this.

Seeing no opposition, Director Yang's speaking time is extended to 5 minutes.



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Director Yang presents the gender-affirming care fact sheet. StudentCare has been working on this package that falls within the care plan. They have done consultations with transgender and gender-diverse students across Canada, and they figured out what is covered by provincial plans and what can supplement these plans and support students with gender dysphoria. Some provinces cover different procedures and medications, there are many gaps, which the StudentCare plan seeks to fill. Eligible procedures include \$5,000 per procedure, up to \$10,000, where expenses are not covered by provincial health insurance. To receive coverage, individuals must be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, which StudentCare recognizes as a challenge, but they must follow insurance regulations. Gender dysphoria is a broad term for what StudentCare plans to accept for coverage. Currently, insurance coverage is done through reimbursements and individuals must submit claims. However, they are trying to implement a pay direct service as soon as possible. There are some issues with requirements for procedures such as laser hair removal, and in Quebec transgender students are not covered and the StudentCare plan does not currently cover them. However, they plan to do more research to determine whether they could provide this coverage. The plan is still relatively new, and there is still some data collection to be done and gaps to fill, but it is a step forward. Director Yang presents the fact sheet.

Question:

Director Wan asks, because this plan falls under the Dental Plan, if students must pay for it to access gender-affirming care.

Answer:

Director Yang answers yes.

Question:

Officer Koulibaly asks if students can choose to opt-out of the Health and Dental Plans separately.

Question:

Director Wan asks which services are currently offered to international students in the Health Plan, and asks how including gender-affirming care in the Health Plan would differ from including it in the Dental Plan.

Answer:

Director Yang answers that international students are not covered by the Health Plan, so any gender-affirming care would have to be private. Their coverage depends on their plan from home.



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Question:

Director Masny asks if coverage is determined based on the location of the procedure, or where the student is coming from. They ask if international students must have the procedures in Canada to obtain coverage.

Answer:

Director Yang answers that coverage depends on the students' insurance plan. For example, Director Yang is a resident of Alberta, so if he had a procedure done in Quebec, he would pay out of pocket and return to Alberta to be reimbursed. So, the province of Alberta still covers him. He does not have the answer to Director Masny's second question.

Question:

Director Masny asks what groups have been consulted within McGill with relation to the new plan.

Answer:

Director Yang answers that StudentCare consulted LGBTQ+ groups and groups who serve transgender students. They have a representative from StudentCare on campus who has consulted these groups. The Gender and Sexuality Commissioner and Director Yang had a meeting with StudentCare, along with Officer Pizarro, to discuss the plan, and the insurance provider said that they can do more consultations. They have also been talking with PGSS, who recently had an advocacy group pass this plan.

Question:

Director Masny asks what the decision deadline for this plan is, so that it can be implemented next year.

Answer:

Director Yang is not certain, but it is similar to past deadlines. The earlier they approve it, the better. This would allow StudentCare to organize everything before the beginning of the school year.

Question:

Director Masny asks if this should be committed to the Legislative Council, because they have a meeting on May 11 and another Board meeting on May 18, which would give the Council time to review the plan and allow the Board to ratify their decision.



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Answer:

Director Yang states that he can send StudentCare an email to ask them if this timeline is okay, or if they would prefer a quicker deadline.

Seeing no further questions, the Chair entertains a debate period.

Director Wan states that he is hesitant to include this in the Dental Plan, because the Health and Dental Review Committee looked at data on health and dental opt-outs. He is not sure that including gender-affirming care in the Dental Plan is the most beneficial, but he understands that international students should be covered. He thinks that they can discuss including this care in the Health Plan with StudentCare if this motion is postponed. Perhaps the Dental Plan option is only the easier option; Director Wan would be more comfortable with including gender-affirming care in the Health Plan and adding international students' coverage.

Question:

Officer Pizarro asks Director Wan to clarify the logistics of his idea.

Answer:

Director Wan clarifies that he does not know, so he wants someone to ask StudentCare if this is possible. Including gender-affirming care in the Dental Plan may or may not be the only option. Including the care in the Dental Plan might help StudentCare get more money from the Dental Plan, but it might be possible to include international students and gender-affirming care in the Health Plan.

Director Yang states that international students have their own health insurance through the International Student Services and Blue Cross. He understands Director Wan's concern, but if they want international students to be covered by SSMU, they have to include gender-affirming care in the Dental Plan.

Question:

Director Masny asks if conversations have been had with ISS, who were previously keen on learning more about SSMU's insurance. From what they understand, Blue Cross is not as good



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as StudentCare. Director Masny realizes that they have a short timeline, but they wonder if this has happened or if gender-affirming care coverage is available through Blue Cross.

Answer:

Officer Pizarro states that no consultations were done with ISS, which would have been important to have.

Director Masny states that Blue Cross offers the possibility of gender-affirming benefits, which could be added to the ISS's insurance. StudentCare is a for-profit company, so the Board needs to consider that the option they are proposing may not be the best option. Considering the short timeline, it might be wise to postpone this and have a presentation at the Legislative Council with a representative from ISS's insurance present, to understand gaps in the Blue Cross coverage.

Director Yang states that he can reach out to ISS to compare their coverage with SSMU's, but he would like to point out that SSMU has been working with StudentCare on this since last year. They want to make sure that this is implemented. It seems most natural to have this agreement with StudentCare, given that other schools are doing it, and because the provider has consulted many students.

Question:

Officer Pizarro asks Director Wan how much work was put into this in 2021-2022.

Answer:

Director Wan answers that in March or May 2022, gender-affirming care was brought up, and they brought up some questions for StudentCare about logistics and coverage. At the time, no information sheet was presented. This was discussed briefly for a few meetings, but it fell off the radar until recently.

Officer Pizarro states that StudentCare has a recurring habit to bring up new expenses in the spring, when Executives leave and committees do not meet anymore. This was done with the Legal Plan, and after SSMU implemented it they heard that other schools regretted it. So, the Board should ask other universities how they like the plan. Officer Pizarro suggests waiting another year for more consultations to be done, because it feels like StudentCare is trying to get SSMU to pay more.

Director Yang states that he is disappointed in this comment, because it was brought up in the summer during meetings with StudentCare. Although the focus was on the Legal Protection Plan, there was mention of gender-affirming care. This should have been worked on throughout the year, but it fell off



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the radar. Due diligence has been done. He adds that the Gender and Sexuality Commissioner believes that this plan is very important for students to get coverage as soon as possible. Director Yang wants to get coverage before the end of his term.

Director Masny states that they have worked on trans advocacy a lot this year, and delaying the plan by a whole year has a tremendous impact on transgender students. StudentCare does have a habit of bringing these things up in the spring, but they could amend the Terms of Reference of the Health and Dental Review Committee to require them to bring proposals forward by a certain date. They remember this idea being proposed in the summer, and they think that pushing this back by a week is not detrimental to the plan's implementation. It would allow faculty representatives to understand the plan and ask questions about it. Because the Health and Dental Review Committee is both a Council and Board committee, it is good for the Council to have a say in this. They motion to commit this to the Legislative Council.

Director Wan seconds Director Masny's motion.

Seeing no opposition, the motion is committed to the Legislative Council.

9. Confidential Session

The Board of Directors enter into a Confidential session.

10. Next meeting date:

- a. Thursday, May 18, 2023 at 6:00 PM EST

11. Adjournment: **22:22**

Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024