



**Association étudiante de l'Université McGill**

*Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.*

**Students' Society of McGill University**

*Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.*

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# SSMU GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES [CONSULTATIVE FORUM]

October 02, 2023

1. Call to Order: **18:14**

The Speaker calls the General Assembly to order at 18:14.

Legislative Councillors Sakajiri, Nitu, Qian, Yang, and Grall-Johnson are present in-person and Councillors Rajan, Baybayon, Foster, and Porter are present over Zoom.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker presents the Land Acknowledgement.

3. [Adoption of Standing Rules](#) – **ADOPTED**

The Speaker, the Parliamentarian, and the Deputy Speaker introduce themselves.

The Speaker presents some housekeeping rules and notes that some people have joined on Zoom. Those who wish to speak during question and debate periods may line up at the microphone. Translation services from the Translation Manager are available.

The Standing Rules are distributed. The Speaker explains how to vote using the voting placards. Because they have not met the quorum of 350 members, the Assembly is a consultative forum.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Standing Rules are approved.

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

Seeing no additions or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

5. Minutes for Approval:



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a. SSMU General Assembly Winter 2023 Minutes 2023-01-16 – **APPROVED AT A CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

The minutes are distributed.

Seeing no changes or corrections, the Minutes are approved.

6. Question Period:

The Speaker states that the standard response time is 1 minute, and he will notify members when there is 10 seconds left in their time using a gavel. He will also notify them when their time is up.

Seeing no questions, the Question Period is exhausted.

The Speaker entertains a quick recess.

The Speaker adjourns the recess.

7. Report of Executives:

a. Vice-President (Internal Affairs)

VP Barlas presents his report. His portfolio includes First-Year Affairs, communications, interfaculty relations, event planning, and alumni affairs. The VP Internal consults with the Society's members, faculties of McGill and facilitates communication and events among these groups, and plans events for first-years. This year, he has been working on diversifying SSPN events by hosting events at Gerts. He revamped the listservs and social media. The First-Year Council elections are happening now, and the Council plans events for first-years, and they are hoping to collaborate with other first-year student groups. VP Barlas sent out the SSMU Handbook, which was a huge success, and sent out digital SSMU flyers. He has been focusing on social media and online reach, specifically on Instagram. He is in charge of SSPN, and they hosted a Back to School event, and have Halloween events planned for October. They also held Frosh crash pads. He has started collecting feedback from students after events, and 10% of attendees have replied. They are looking for a wide range of students to sit on SSPN. Interfaculty relations are being improved, as VP Barlas has been meeting with many faculties so far. He has also started travelling office hours each day, to ensure SSMU's accessibility. VP Barlas reached out to the McGill Alumni Association, and sits on MASAEC, the CKUT Board of Directors, and on the Senate. VP Barlas stands for questions.

b. Vice-President (External Affairs)



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VP Gaither presents his report. He introduces himself and his responsibilities, which include meeting with other student unions like Laval's, Concordia's, and PGSS. He sits on the UCRU Board, a group of Canada's 15 most research-intensive universities who advocates for better conditions for students. Their three advocacy priorities this year are affordable student housing, mental health, and financial need. They are having a lobby week in January, in Ottawa. He works with community groups in Milton Parc to improve relations between the student body and the city. Their student-funded residence building will be finished by Fall 2026. SSMU invested \$1,500,000 through the SSMU UTILE Fee, and other groups invested too, and the City of Montreal has fast-tracked the project and invested \$6,000,000. The residence will be on the corner of Ontario and St-Laurent, and rent will be lower than market rates. VP Gaither provides small amounts of funding to local political campaigns and solidarity groups, such as Defund the Police, Divest McGill, or Let's Eat McGill. He also works with labour unions on campus, such as the teaching assistants' union. Other projects include working with the Mohawk Mothers with the Royal Victoria Hospital, and they are planning critical campus tours, for an alternative story about the land of McGill. He is also hosting Community Engagement Day, and will be publicizing more events soon. His goals include to support more organizations, post more educational events and improve resource accessibility for those starting campaigns.

#### c. Vice-President (Sustainability and Operations)

VP Koulibaly presents her report. Her portfolio consists of buildings, operations, and sustainability. She manages the usage of the University Centre, including space allocations. She oversees the food and beverage operations, as well as Mini-Courses and rentals. She operationalizes the Society's commitment to sustainability. VP Koulibaly worked on many space agreements with student groups, including the groups on the fourth floor and downstairs. She recently conducted an accessibility audit, to increase accessibility within the Centre. She works on the Management Agreement with McGill, and is currently working on the implementation of gender-neutral bathrooms throughout the University Centre. VP Koulibaly works with Gerts, and developed new branding guidelines for the cafe and bar. Every student gets a 20% discount, and 40% off during happy hour. She is working on a Gerts Ambassador program, to have students promote Gerts. A new mocktail menu is coming soon, and food will soon be available at the bar. She coordinates spaces, including room bookings and equipment allocation. She revised the costs of room rentals, and developed an agreement with Les fermes du marché. VP Koulibaly organized the poster sale and coordinated Minicourses, and there are many interesting ones available. She hired a new Sustainability Commissioner, who will be working on a sustainability plan, as well as a coordinator for Campus Crops. She works with the McGill Office of Sustainability, and they are working on consultations for a university-wide sustainability plan. She also takes care of some financial and legal affairs, and sits on many committees. VP Koulibaly stands for questions.



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### d. Vice-President (University Affairs)

VP Katchelewa presents her report. Her portfolio advocates for students through policy work and representation at the University Senate, who does policy work, SSMU Senate, who discusses initiatives by other student unions. She sits on a few Senate Committees, and meets with the administration to advocate for students. Topics include food insecurity and a sense of community on campus. She works on the Know Your Rights campaign, which is being revamped with the Legal Protection Clinic. She wants to provide information on academic complaints, student housing, and other personal issues. She does general policy work, and produced a report on the Student Accessibility and Achievement Office's impact on students. VP Katchelewa meets with the Indigenous Affairs Committee monthly to discuss Indigenous students on campus, in collaboration with the First People's House at McGill to resolve issues. They want to continue to provide parking to Indigenous students. She wants to collaborate with External Affairs on the critical campus tours. VP Katchelewa works on the Library Improvement Fund, which recently provided new furniture to the Schulich Library. She works on the Menstrual Health Project, and works on Open Educational Resources to provide class materials for free. The Menstrual Health Project is being enlarged, with more pickups to come. Information is available on Instagram and online. She is also trying to research alternative companies, and is producing videos on locations of free menstrual products and how to use them. VP Katchelewa stands for questions.

### e. Vice-President (Student Life)

VP Dakdouki presents her report. She introduces herself, and states that her portfolio includes three main parts: student groups, mental health, and family care. She has been reviewing clubs and their funding, and club applications will open as soon as the Clubs Committee starts meeting. The Club portal will be launched next year, which will make it easier for clubs to manage SSMU. She created a Clubs Guidebook this year, and planned Activities Night and clubs workshops. She overviewed Services' employee hirings, their finances, and created a Services Guidebook. The Fall referendum is coming up, and some services will levy fees. Activities Night is the biggest event of the year, with 360 tables, and it went well other than an entrance change on the second day. VP Dakdouki also held clubs workshops two weeks ago, which was also a success. Future events include a Games Night in November, and a Winter Farmers' Market in November/December. She works with the SSMU Daycare, which is doing great. VP Dakdouki would love to expand it if they can find the space. She is in talks with PGSS about a family care event. A volunteer program at the Daycare is being set up, and a Family Care policy is being developed. The Mental Health Committee works on many events, such as Mental Illness Awareness Week which is this week. They also do continued check-ins with the Dean, the Wellness Hub, and the Mental Health Roundtable, and work with KeepMeSafe, the online safety service. Other initiatives include a get involved workshop with Campus Life & Engagement, and tabling at Discover McGill, where first-year students learned about SSMU. VP Dakdouki stands for questions.



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### f. President

President Ashkir presents his report. He introduces himself, and states that these reports are useful to transfer information about what Executives do to students. He wants to put in work to attract more students to the Winter General Assembly, to make them more interactive. As President, he does a lot of internal governance. He works on representation of students, and assists with SSMU's staff. He is the Chief Officer and Spokesperson of SSMU, ensures the integrity of the Society, and Chairs many committees. He also has the ability to call meetings of the Legislative Council and the Board of Directors in case of urgent need. President Ashkir also sits on the Board of Governors, which is quite interesting. He sits on a few McGill committees, as well as the Senate, the Board of Governors and consults with the administration. He also Chairs a few SSMU Committees, some of which are recruiting for members at large. President Ashkir oversees the governance department of SSMU and works with the Secretary General, and spends a lot of time assisting other portfolios. Within the governance department, he works with the Governance Manager, to organize the GA and maintain operations. They are looking to hire a Grocery Coordinator; the Grocery Program provides groceries to students. His projects include reforming governing documents, and making SSMU more accessible. He wants to tackle the lack of quorum at General Assemblies, which really needs to be worked on. President Ashkir also works on the Interfaculty Framework, to ensure better coordination and activities on campus, between all the student unions. President Ashkir stands for questions.

### 8. For Discussion:

#### a. Use and accessibility to campus space by students (VP Student Life)

VP Dakdouki states that she wants to hear from students during discussion items. SSMU only has control over the University Centre, which is still owned by McGill. She knows that it is hard to book spaces in the Centre and outside of it, because of McGill's booking system and its regulations.

VP Katchelewa states that the McGill booking system is not very user-friendly, and she asks if students can ask SSMU for help when they want to book spaces outside the University Centre.

VP Dakdouki answers that SSMU does not control anything outside the University Centre, so SSMU cannot really help groups navigate it. She wants to speak with the administration about the booking system, to clarify the external events bookings.

The Speaker encourages everyone to speak.

#### b. Climate crisis actions and updates (VP External)



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VP Gaither states that Divest McGill's campaign has been fighting hard to get the University to divest from fossil fuel investments. Recently, the campaign gave a presentation to the Board of Governors about divestment and how it works, and which other schools have divested. The timeline for the Board's vote on divestment has been moved up to December, which is hopeful. The face of climate organizing may change on campus, as Divest McGill has been supported by SSMU for a long time. They also used to have CJAM, Climate Justice Action McGill, which kind of lost its steam. VP Gaither invites a broader discussion of new methods of climate activism, and is hosting an information session open to all at ECOLE next week.

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### Question:

Member Nitu asks whether there is a system in place to bring together presidents of faculties to collaborate on sustainability events, because there are so many going on. Communication between faculties could create a bigger movement.

### Answer:

VP Gaither thinks this is a great idea, and they could work on this together.

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VP Dakdouki states that many student groups do similar things in different areas, and if there are any ideas to bring all these together, that would be great.

- c. Food insecurity on campus and potential action on it (VP External Affairs)

VP Gaither states that Let's Eat McGill's advocacy has led to a new pricing system in McGill's dining halls. This "all you care to eat" model allows students to enter the dining hall and pay a fixed price, and they can choose what and how much they want to eat. However, it still costs about \$6,000 per year, which is quite expensive. Lunch on campus often costs over \$15.00. Let's Eat McGill wants to put pressure on the administration to subsidize food costs, or change its policies around food. Some examples include the University of British Columbia and Concordia University.

VP Dakdouki states that there has been progress through the creation of SNAC, which provides free produce boxes to students in need. They do not yet have a fee, but it will be voted on at referendum. This fee is extremely valuable to many students, and the service will not be able to continue without financial support. Midnight Kitchen also raised their fee last year, and their operations are doing well. They provide free vegan lunches every Thursday.



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The Deputy Speaker asks Legislative Councillors to come up to the stage after the adjournment to record their attendance.

9. Adjournment: **19:17**

The Speaker declares the General Assembly adjourned at 19:17. The Speaker thanks everyone for attending and hopes to see everyone at the next General Assembly.

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Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024

FOR APPROVAL