



**Association étudiante de l'Université McGill**

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**Students' Society of McGill University**

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# SSMU LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PUBLIC MINUTES

October 12, 2023

The regular monthly Legislative Council Meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held in the Lev Bukhman Room of the University Centre and by teleconference, on Thursday, October 12, 2023 at 18:00.

1. Call to Order: 18:17

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 18:17.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker presents the Land Acknowledgement.

3. Attendance

The Speaker takes attendance.

Present are: Councillors Porter, Rajan, Baybayon, Yang, Foster, Rylo, McMechan, Shannon (Proxy Stephanie Kay), Qian, Nitu, Grall-Johnson, Zukerman, Foxman (Proxy Grace Parish), Fournier, Gertsvolf, Pastrana, President Ashkir, VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly, VP Internal Affairs Barlas, VP Student Life Dakdouki, VP External Affairs Gaither, VP University Affairs Katchelewa.

Absent are: Councillors Sakajiri, Tai, Rancourt, Garofolo.

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

The Agenda is distributed.

President Ashkir asks if the Report of the Board was added.

Parliamentarian Pennel answers yes.

Seeing no further additions or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.



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### 5. Minutes for Approval

- a. SSMU Legislative Council Public Minutes 2023-09-28 – **APPROVED**

Seeing no changes or corrections, the minutes stand approved as distributed.

### 6. Reports by Councillors:

- a. Medicine (MSS)

Councillor Grall-Johnson presents the Medicine Report on her and Councillor Tai's behalf. Events include MedFrosh for the incoming class, two General Council Meetings, where they discuss club recruitment for Bridge and EdCom, and the adoption of global health initiatives at the Ouataouais campus, and how to change club finances to accommodate for the success of Zoom events. Other events include an AGM with other medical schools across the country, White Coat Ceremony, MSS Retreat, delegation at CFMS AGM. Upcoming events include the MSS's General Assembly. The President has been working on ensuring that Executives and Councillors are on the same page and coordinating frosh. The Executives have been working on sponsorships, funding, frosh and more. VP Finance is working on the budget for their gala and general finances. VP Socials organized frosh, and the VP Internal has been processing club applications. VP Wellness has been organizing job fairs, which have been successful. VP Education is monitoring their FaceBook page, key for student communications, and planning EdCom meetings. VP External helped organize the AGM and their VP Global Health helped with recruitment and workshops.

- b. Dentistry (DSS)

Councillor Yang presents the Dentistry Report. The President attended many committee and Council meetings, is planning a referendum to increase student membership fees, and electing a member for a new position. The Executive VPs are distributing a yearbook, receiving sponsorships, and making a handbook with useful information for students. VP Finance is organizing an audit and planning the annual declaration. VP External is organizing a meet and greet with the Newfoundland and Labrador Dental Association, and a Loupes fair for equipment. VP Communications created the internal mentorship program, and there was a dinner to go along with it planned by VP Social. They are also planning their annual Tremblant retreat. Councillor Yang sits on the Health and Dental Review Committee, and she is working on redesigning the DSS student lounge.

- c. Engineering (EUS)

Councillor Rylo presents the Engineering Report. The EUS Fall Referendum will happen in the beginning of November, equity training is happening soon. The President met with the Dean, faculty



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members and student leaders and is looking into improving the EUS' relationship with University Advancement, and Executive interviews will take place after Reading Break. VP Academic's position is vacant, but beforehand they planned the Tech Fair, and the peer tutoring service is doing well. The EUS Support Fund is open for applications and is up for renewal at the referendum. VP Communications is updating the EUS Wiki, and providing an alternative to Slack for EUS groups. VP External is planning the McGill Engineering Competition, and they attended two conferences. VP Finance is stepping down this month, and applications are open. New managers for OAP were hired, and they are looking to replace the POS system at Blues Pub. VP Internal is planning E-week and Blues Pub is up and going well. Departmental banquets are taking place in November. VP Events completed the Iron Ring fitting and is planning a Wine and Cheese event to go along with it. They planned a Ski Trip in February, and the Engineering Socials Committee is starting events. MERTW is happening and is almost sold out. The VP Student Life is doing club audits, planning Sustainability at McGill, working on the Mental Wellness Committee, and upgrading Frostbite and G-Store.

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#### Question:

Councillor Pastrana asks if the companies present at the Tech Fair supported mining and fossil fuels, and if this had any impact on the EUS.

#### Answer:

Councillor Rylo states that he is not aware of the situation, but will look into it.

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d. Management (MUS) - **POSTPONED**

#### 7. Report of the Steering Committee

Parliamentarian Pennel presents the Report of the Steering Committee. They met on Wednesday and have been communicating via Google Chats to review motions for today's meeting, as well as a question from a constituent. She reminds everyone, that in light of the discussion on today's agenda, to consider their faculty's interests when discussing, and that questions can be postponed to later meetings or to be answered by email. She notes that there is no confidential session this evening.

#### 8. Reports by Committees:

a. Community Engagement Committee – **POSTPONED**

b. Environment Committee – **POSTPONED**



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### c. Mental Health Committee – **APPROVED**

Loren, the Mental Health Commissioner, presents the Mental Health Committee Report. They state that they hosted a Mental Awareness Week, which went well overall. They are looking to hire Advocacy and Outreach Coordinators, as well as forming the committees. They have been working on student accommodation, meeting with the Wellness Hub, and are meeting weekly with the Outreach Commissioner and the VP Student Life. The Committee is working on a list of mental health resources for students, to be displayed online and on campus. They hope to create a list that makes it easier for students to know where to go when they need help. They are starting workshops with the Wellness Hub, for open discussions about mental illness. They are working on a sleep and relaxation room in the University Centre, but they plan to have a room available for students to sleep and relax in during exams. The Mental Health Roundtable is ongoing, with the next meeting on October 18. They are also doing contract renewal for KeepMeSafe, which is doing increasingly well. Loren stands for questions.

The Speaker entertains a vote on the ratification of the Mental Health Committee Report.

The Report of the Mental Health Committee is ratified.

### 9. Report of the Board of Directors (President Ashkir)

President Ashkir presents the Report of the Board, which was supposed to be presented at the General Assembly. The Board is made up of 4 Executives, 4 Councillors, 4 Members at Large, and the General Manager. The Board is the highest governing body of the Society, and looks over the finances and legal aspects of SSMU, and Operations and HR report to the Board. Every decision passed by the Council goes to the Board for ratification. The Board meets bi-weekly. President Ashkir stands for questions.

### 10. Executive Reports:

#### a. President Ashkir

President Ashkir presents his report. He states that he works in many areas, and any questions about specific points can be discussed. He checks in with the Governance team, who is going over research on accountability and policy. President Ashkir chairs the Executive Committee, which ensures the daily running of the Society. Big decisions go to the Board. He works on the Nominating Committee; the first round of applications has started and the second round should start soon. The Governance Reform Committee has gained members, and will get going soon. The EDI Working Group is finalizing memberships, and it is a very important committee. It is almost complete with the EDI Framework. President Ashkir has been meeting with many stakeholders. He presents projects he has been working



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on, and states that he is working on the Interfaculty Relations Program. It will be discussed at the Presidents' Roundtable, and will facilitate collaboration between faculties. President Ashkir stands for questions.

b. VP External

VP External Affairs Gaither presents his report. He states that not much has happened since the last Council meeting. He sits on the UCRU Board, an advocacy group to the federal government. He worked on a Union Solidarity Policy, and the committees he sits on are slowly coming together. Community Engagement Day is happening two weeks from now in the Ballroom, and campaigns are campaigning. VP External Affairs Gaither stands for questions.

c. VP Student Life

VP Student Life Dakdouki presents her report. She states that September held many events for clubs, and now she is working on making sure that they run smoothly. The Family Sub-Committee met, and a Family Care Policy will hopefully be written this year. VP Student Life Dakdouki also sits on the Nominating Committee, and she stands for questions.

d. VP University Affairs

VP University Affairs Katchelewa presents her report. She states that her projects are ongoing. The SSMU Senate Caucus is drafting a question for the McGill Senate about the New Victoria Hospital. The Black Affairs Committee met for the first time, and she sits on the Nominating Committee. VP University Affairs Katchelewa is almost done with interviews for the VP Research and Innovation are almost complete at the McGill administration level, who will work on a lot of research and sustainability. She is meeting with the Deputy Provost and the SSMU President, and is meeting soon with the Principal to discuss food on campus. VP University Affairs Katchelewa stands for questions.

e. VP Sustainability & Operations

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly presents her report. She states that she is working on the Gerts Ambassador program guide, reviewing some budgets for SSPN. She monitors the accessibility audit of the University Centre, and is developing a mocktail menu at Gerts. She is looking into the clubs' alcohol permit regulations, as well as security management at Gerts. The Senate on Physical Development met. VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly is working on Internal Regulations with the Policy and Advocacy Commissioner, because her role did not exist when the IRs were developed. She finished the budget revision, and it will be presented at the next meeting. She met with the VP Finance Candidate, and is doing departmental IT training and sustainability training within SSMU. VP



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Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly onboarded the Campus Crops Coordinator, and is working on climate strategy within the university.

### 11. Announcements:

- a. Policy and Advocacy Coordinator
  - i. [Appointment hours booking](#)
  - ii. Email for any questions/concerns: [pac@ssmu.ca](mailto:pac@ssmu.ca)

Parliamentarian Pennel states that the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator wanted to tell everyone about their availability for office hours with them. Their email is on the screen for any questions or concerns.

### 12. Question Period:

- a. Question from Constituent

The Speaker reads out the question:

*To anyone: how does the council plan to encourage education and promote peace surrounding increasing action over the Israel-Palestine conflict? That is, how will this council push students towards learning more about the full story about what is occurring, as well as addressing all student groups who may get involved or speak up about the situation in the coming weeks, as there is a fear within those invested that hate and ignorance may spread from these groups? (happy to explain if the question isn't clear, also very open to a conversation about this)*

The Speaker reminds everyone to wait to be called on by him before answering the question.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa asks for clarification on the question, as it contains several parts.

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### Question:

SSMU Member Ryan Stainsby clarifies their question. They are asking SSMU about their reactivity and proactivity. They ask if the Council has a plan to respond in case of acts of violence, to ensure that students feel safe on campus. Educated people are less likely to initiate violence, so they recommend providing students with resources so that they can educate themselves, to reduce the chances of violent events on and around campus. They also ask how SSMU is planning on trying to mitigate potential acts of violence.

### Answer:



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President Ashkir answers that Executives do not have an answer yet, but they will be able to get back to them soon. He encourages Council members to speak their opinions.

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Councillor Zukerman states that there were many concerns in their faculty, PTOT, about the crisis. It led to a student-led initiative to send a letter to their faculty, which is affecting other faculties in Health Sciences. Students showed faculty members' opinions regarding the conflict, which is important.

Councillor Porter notes that members of the Faculty of Arts have been concerned about threats of violent behaviour towards them, so he recommends that the University and SSMU condemn any violence around the conflict.

Councillor Baybayon indicates that there are many misleading conceptions online, and resources that can educate students about the conflict would be crucial, to provide unbiased information. There should be some mental health resources available to students. It is important to consider different experiences when considering the conflict, because the situation is quite delicate. They should be careful about what they say, as they represent the whole McGill community.

The Speaker states that the question period has elapsed. He recommends suspending the rules to add a discussion point about this if people wish to discuss more.

Councillor Pastrana motions to suspend the rules to extend the question period.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa seconds this motion.

Seeing no opposition, the rules are suspended and the question period is extended.

Councillor Pastrana states that every Council should talk about the conflict, as the Nursing Faculty will speak about it in their Council. As representatives they should come up with a plan to address the issue.

### 13. Recess, Consent Items

The Speaker asks everyone to fill out the Consent Items form to decide whether motions need to be debated or not. He entertains a 5-minute recess. Consent Items are a way for the Council to expedite items that are not contentious. On the form, Councillors can choose to consent to a Motion. If everyone votes to consent, the Motion will pass. If someone votes to debate an item, it will be discussed.



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#### 14. Old Business

There is no old business to report.

#### 15. New Business:

- a. Motion to Add a Question to the Fall Semester Referenda Regarding MUSTBUS Fee Increase — **POSTPONED**

Councillor Porter presents Motion 15.a, moved by him and seconded by VP Student Life Dakdouki. He states that MUSTBUS is McGill affordable transit group, allowing students to get home from school for reasonable costs. This allows students to get home for breaks and take trips for low prices. In a survey conducted by the services, members indicated that they would pay a \$5.00 opt-outable fee that would allow MUSTBUS to run more buses to cities closeby (Ottawa, Toronto, Boston, New York). The fee would increase from \$2.00 to \$5.00. The appendix includes a budget and a link to the survey.

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#### Question:

Councillor Nitu believes that a \$5.00 fee is a large amount, and she is concerned that students might refrain from voting for it in the referendum, even if it is opt-outable. She suggests a \$4.00 fee instead of \$5.00, because it started at \$2.00.

#### Answer:

Councillor Porter answers that this would need to go through SSMU's referendum. As per the poll, people were more willing to pay \$5.00. Students would have the final say in the fee increase. Should the Council feel that \$4.00 is more amenable, they can amend the motion. However, consultations with MUSTBUS determined that a \$5.00 fee is the best option to make the service more viable, as it is hard to get tickets right now.

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#### Question:

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly asks if there is a comparison between other services offered, or if the only consultation done was the survey.

#### Answer:

Councillor Porter answers that the survey was conducted on a basis of price, but it is cheaper for MUSTBUS to charge a higher fee and provide more services. The budget shows that a fee





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increase would allow the services to double. The poll simply asked how much students were willing to pay for an opt-outable MUSTBUS fee.

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#### **Question:**

Parliamentarian Pennel asks Councillor Porter how the survey was done. She is concerned that the people who responded to the survey are those most likely to approve the fee increase, compared with the rest of the student body.

#### **Answer:**

Councillor Porter answers that it was done on MUSTBUS's social media, so it is more of an anecdotal survey from 200 people who are frustrated with the lack of bus tickets available. Many more of MUSTBUS's followers would benefit from the fee increase.

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#### **Question:**

Councillor Nitu asks if MUSTBUS is sponsored. If this is not the case, it could be a good option to receive funding. There are probably many sponsors that would align themselves well with the vision of MUSTBUS. Sponsorship might be a more sustainable and equitable way to raise money for MUSTBUS.

#### **Answer:**

Councillor Porter answers that he does not know if they are sponsored, but he knows that most of their funding comes from SSMU. Without adequate funding, the service remains a supplemental service rather than a reliable option for students. He can recommend sponsorship to MUSTBUS.

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#### **Question:**

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly asks if options could be given to students on the referendum, for example to have a \$3.00, \$4.00 or \$5.00 increase.

#### **Answer:**

The Speaker answers that this would need to be posed to Elections SSMU.

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#### **Question:**



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VP External Affairs Gaither asks if \$5.00 would be enough to cover MUSTBUS's operations for a year, or if they need to borrow any money.

**Answer:**

Councillor Porter answers that MUSTBUS is struggling with the seasonal fee, and they sometimes have to ask for advances from SSMU, which is hard to do given the vacant VP Finance role. A surplus, possible with the \$5 fee, would allow them to cover the off-season and provide more services during the school year.

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

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly motions to postpone Motion 15a, pending consultation with Elections SSMU.

Councillor Nitu seconds this motion.

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**Question:**

Councillor Porter asks, if this Motion were to pass at the next Council, if the question would still appear on the referendum.

**Answer:**

The Speaker answers that he does not know.  
VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly answers yes.

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The Speaker entertains a vote on postponing Motion 15a until the next meeting.

With 13 in favour, Motion 15a is postponed until the next meeting.

VP Student Life Dakdouki clarifies that the deadline for referendum questions to be passed is October 30.

- b. Motion Regarding an Interim Provision to the Internal Regulations of Elections & Referenda – **APPROVED**



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VP External Affairs Gaither presents Motion 15b. He states that this Motion would change the IRs of Elections and Referenda, given the upcoming referendum. The appendix contains the changes. VP External Affairs Gaither stands for questions.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa asks VP External Affairs Gaither to repeat his presentation because it was difficult to hear him.

Seeing no questions, the Speaker entertains a debate period. He reminds everyone that this Motion was held for debate, so he expects to see debate about it.

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**Question:**

Councillor Porter asks if this motion makes it more difficult for referendum questions to pass.

**Answer:**

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that this was brought up last year, because there were too many referendum questions in the Winter compared to the Fall. Limiting the number of questions per referendum would distribute the questions evenly throughout the school year, and would motivate groups to bring their questions forward in the fall.

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The Speaker reminds everyone that this Motion was held for debate, so he expects to see debate about it.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly asks VP External Affairs Gaither for his thoughts on amending a section of the Motion. Questions about fees that already exist could be excluded from the 10-question limit, because it might mean that all referendum questions would concern fee renewals.

VP External Affairs Gaither would be more amenable to a motion that postpones a section of the appendix that addresses this issue, which could be brought back at the next meeting.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly motions to divide the question on section IR-04, and then postpone it to the next meeting.

Councillor Pastrana seconds this motion.



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The Speaker explains that dividing the question means that section IR-04 will be removed from tonight's debate, and it will be debated and voted on at the next meeting. They will still vote on the other parts of the Motion tonight. He entertains a vote on dividing the question.

With 12 in favour, the question is divided. Section IR-04 will be voted on at the next meeting.

The Speaker entertains debate on the Motion, minus Section IR-04.

President Ashkir motions to call the question.

Councillor Baybayon seconds this motion.

Seeing no opposition, the Speaker entertains a vote on Motion 15b (minus section IR-04) by form. He asks Councillors to use the voting form in the shared Drive to vote on the Motion.

Motion 15b passes by majority vote.

16. Adjournment: **19:48**

The Speaker declares the meeting adjourned at 19:48. The next meeting is on October 26, 2023.

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Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024