



Bureau du président du conseil de l'AEUM

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

SSMU Office of the Speaker

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MOTION REGARDING ACTION AGAINST TUITION HIKES 2024-01-18

Submitted for: 2023-11-23

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2023-11-23-002
Moved by:	Jacob Shannon <i>Law Councillor</i>	Current Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Keith Andre Baybayon <i>Arts Councillor</i>		
Supported by:	Rishi Kalaga <i>SSMU Member</i>		

Issue

This motion seeks to mandate the SSMU Legislative Council to take an official position opposing the Government of Quebec's proposed tuition hikes for out-of-province students including a commitment to take the appropriate actions to combat the policy. This would include forming a special working group to investigate the methods available to combat such tuition hikes, including but not limited to consulting law firms to evaluate the possibility of a legal challenge to the tuition hikes and conducting research and consultations to evaluate the impact the tuition hikes will have on the student population. This will be a working group of the Legislative Council. This working group will report to the SSMU Legislative Council. The working group will present legal suggestions directly to the SSMU Board of Directors.

Background and Rationale

The tuition increase proposed by the Government of Québec would have dire consequences for McGill University and its students. The tuition hikes will make attending McGill almost impossible for thousands of students, particularly those with socio-economic disadvantages. The specific implications for McGill [outlined by Principal](#) and Vice-Chancellor Deep Saini on December 14th included enrollment and revenue drops, program cuts,



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layoffs and major reductions in the varsity teams. These effects all risk a decrease in the quality of programming and services that McGill can provide to its students, both present and future. This is a clear and direct threat to the vitality and diversity of the student population at McGill.

Passing this motion is an important first step if the SSMU chooses to pursue a legal challenge of the government proposal. The SSMU must act swiftly to be able to meet legally-mandated timelines for a challenge. Although the tuition increases have not yet been formalised, once they are, it will be beneficial to have mechanisms in place to act swiftly.

Alignment with Mission

The proposed tuition raise would undermine McGill's financial security and reduce the quality and accessibility of its education, among other potential consequences. It is within the SSMU mission to support the financial accessibility of education and strong opposition to any mechanism or legislation that would permit a non-consensual increase in student fees for any student, whether Quebecker, Canadian, or international. ([GD 3.2](#))

Consultations Completed

The lack of time to mount a legal challenge has impacted the possibility for wide-spread consultations before the presentation of this motion. There have been three categories of consultations performed nonetheless.

First, there was a public town hall on October 25th to discuss the tuition increases. Support for a legal challenge was raised and endorsed by the attendees of this town hall. This town hall included SSMU executives including the President and VP External, all of whom expressed a desire to take strong action.

In addition, the SSMU VP External has been consulted throughout the drafting of this motion. The VP External has discussed the motion with the VP Finance and VP University Affairs.

The SSMU Law Councillor has also been consulted throughout the drafting of this motion as the Faculty of Law passed a similar motion.



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Risk Factors and Resource Implications

There is widespread support among the student populace opposing tuition hikes, therefore little risk is anticipated in taking an official position. Some SSMU resources would be required, such as staff time, access to bookable spaces, and other minutia. Further, this motion, in itself does not commit SSMU to any significant expenditures on legal expertise.

This is an unfunded exploratory Committee that will potentially make recommendations that will come at a cost. These costs must be approved by the Board of Directors. Any recommendation for consultation with a lawyer must be paired with a fee levy or other financial sustainability plan in order to fund such an endeavour.

Sustainability Considerations

The proposed tuition hikes directly act against the financial accessibility of education. The proposed tuition raise represents a direct attack on the sustainability of a diverse and representative student population.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

This motion would obligate the SSMU to uphold their official policy of opposition to the tuition raise. This includes advocacy efforts, information campaigns, and the formation of coalitions with other student groups.

Furthermore, the working group would be tasked with investigating the impact of the tuition hikes and evaluating the ways in which they could be combatted. This would include reporting on general progress to the Legislative Council and reporting on legal suggestions to the Board of Directors.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the SSMU Legislative Council adopt an official position of opposition to the proposed Quebec out-of-province tuition increase as written in Appendix I.

Be it further resolved that the SSMU is authorised to take the necessary actions to support its official position opposing the proposed Quebec out-of-province tuition increase, including but not limited to advocacy efforts, information campaigns, and the formation of coalitions with other student groups.

Be it further resolved that the SSMU Legislative Council create a working group to investigate potential actions to combat the proposed



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out-of-province tuition increase, referred to as the “Combating the Tuition Hike Committee” to be under the VP External portfolio. The terms of reference of this working group shall be outlined in Appendix II.

Results of the Vote

In favour	(UNANIMOUS)
Opposed	()
Abstain	()

APPROVED



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Appendix I

In light of the statement on December 14th, 2023 of a reduced fee increase, SSMU remains committed to opposing the tuition hikes targeting Quebec's two English language universities that were implemented without consultation of either university. Any increase to tuition costs raises the barrier to education and threatens the composition of McGill's student body. Tuition increases will make education inaccessible for thousands of students. The SSMU officially opposes these tuition increases.

The SSMU will continue to explore the ways in which these tuition hikes can be opposed. The actions that have been taken to date include: Mobilisation and protest movements (click [here](#) to join the Volunteer Mobilisation Committee) as well as coordination with Concordia University for a joint statement opposing the tuition hikes from both unions' Executive Committee.

The formation of the "Combatting the Tuition Hike Committee" under the Legislative Council is aimed at investigating the methods by which we can combat the tuition hikes including the possibility of legal action. If you are interested in joining this Committee please email external@ssmu.ca.

Signed,

The Students' Society of McGill University Legislative Council



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Appendix II

Terms of reference for the **Combatting the Tuition Hike** Committee

Oversight

The Combatting the Tuition Hike Committee will be a working group of the Legislative Council. This working group will report to the SSMU Legislative Council. The working group will present legal suggestions directly to the SSMU Board of Directors.

General

The Combatting the Tuition Hike Committee will investigate, research and perform consultations on the available methods of combating tuition hikes including the possibility of legal action. This working group will report general opposition suggestions to the SSMU Legislative Council and legal opposition suggestions to the SSMU Board of Directors. This working group will require approval from these bodies to enact suggestions. In the process of consultations regarding the tuition increase, this working group is authorised to officially represent the SSMU.

Responsibilities

The Combatting the Tuition Hike Committee shall:

- a. Conduct research on the plausibility of taking legal action to combat the tuition hikes put in place by the Quebec government;
- b. Conduct research on general action to combat the tuition hikes put in place by the Quebec government;
- c. Perform consultations to aid in research on combating the tuition hikes;
- d. Prepare reports for the Legislative Council on general opposition suggestions;
- e. Prepare reports for the Board of Directors on legal opposition suggestions;
 - i. Any recommendations to the Board calling for legal proceedings or the consultation of a lawyer must be accompanied by a plan for how to fund these services, such as a fee levy.
- f. If given approval by the Board of Directors or Legislative Council, to enact opposition suggestions;

Membership

- Chair: To be chosen by consensus at first meeting
- Member Rishi Kalaga
- Member of the SSMU External Affairs staff
- Vice-President (University Affairs)



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- 4 Members-at-large
- 2 Councillors (Councillor Shannon & Councillor Duncan)

Alterations to the Membership

The Committee shall have the right to alter its membership at the discretion of its members during regular meetings where quorum is met.

Meetings

Given the urgency of the matter, the Committee shall strive to meet once per week.

Quorum

Quorum shall be 5 members, or a simple majority, depending on whichever is larger.

Reporting

The frequency of the Committee's reporting shall be at the discretion of the Committee Chair.

Committee Specific

To renew the Committee, a motion for renewal shall be put forth by the last Winter 2024 session of the Legislative Council.