



## 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 ARAB STUDENT NETWORK FEE INCREASE REFERENDUM QUESTION

## 2024-02-15

Submitted for: 2024-02-15

**Submitted to:** SSMU Legislative Council

**Document no.:** LEG-PUB-MOT-2024-02-15-005

**Moved by:** Amina Kudrati-Plummer  
VP Finance

**Current  
Status:**

- ☐ FOR APPROVAL
- ☒ APPROVED
- ☐ POSTPONED
- ☐ COMMITTED
- ☐ NOT APPROVED

**Seconded by:** Melanie Renaud  
Athletics Representative

### Issue

The Arab student network (ASN) has been established as an organization that fosters an Arab cultural environment for all community members who resonate with the identity. While the community ASN encompasses has been growing in numbers, the allocated budget has never been increased, consequently failing to catch up with demand or economic inflation. Through this motion, we hope to communicate with clarity our current situation and why a fee increase would greatly benefit the community.

### Background and Rationale

While we evaluate the budget distribution over the past academic year, we notice significant financial restrictions that constraint the frequency and scale of services we can provide to the community. Limitations include but are not limited to:

- Low print quantity of the ASN journals; we were unable to finance a large enough scale printing of the journals – an artistic expression of Arab culture through student submissions – to distribute amongst the McGill community. This journal, which has won the



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SSMU publication of the year, is an important avenue of Arab representation, and a very important aspect of our service.

- Cutting back on staple events capacity; the event capacity for the annual networking event had to be limited because the appropriate size venue could not be financed, restricting the amount of professionals attending and student opportunity to network in the tight space.
- Condensing available arabic class levels to only beginners; because the budget only allowed for a single class to be held, we had to limit the ASN's arabic classes to first level, although many community members expressed interest from intermediate levels to help fine tune their linguistic skills that they cannot practice so far from an Arabic environment.
- Smaller food portions at events; for our BBQ event – a staple to the Arab experience at McGill and social root for flourishing relations within the community – was cut down to 100 tickets because even after raising the budget three times, we still couldn't financially accommodate for the anticipated 250 attendees.

*The ASN has had increased demand in Arabic classes capacity over the past few years, and potentially opening up more sections with different levels. Our current budget can only allow us to have one section with approximately 20 students.*

*Some events like our annual networking event and the Arab fest require a lot of funding, and our current budget as well as inflation have been making it challenging to keep up with the usual capacity of our annual events. The ASN has also seen a significant increase in attendees over the past 2 years.*

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### Alignment with Mission

In alignment with the SSMU mission and the ASN constitution, the motion would greatly benefit the service to fulfill the responsibility of “providing services to strengthen the educational, cultural, environmental, and social conditions of our Members” (SSMU Mission).

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### Consultations Completed

Consultations were completed with the SSMU VP Finance, who reviewed the financial documents, and the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, who reviewed our motion for format consistency.

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## Risk Factors and Resource Implications

The ASN cannot afford the opportunity cost attached to maintaining the current situation, as the benefits of this fee far outways current conditions. However if we were to outline risk factors, the concern of people no longer paying the service fee if it were to increase does arise, however the fee will still be relatively so small this consequence is not forecasted.

The financial impact will be insignificant compared to the quality of services this increase will make accessible.

Should the motion not pass, ASN events could find themselves being underfunded, and some of our services would have a restricted capacity despite high demand.

It is important to note that this fee increase may present a higher financial burden for students. However, given the relatively small fee increase, at \$0.50, and the fact that this fee is opt-outable, this should have a minimal impact on students.

## Sustainability Considerations

This motion works in the interest of addressing ASN's environmental, social, and economic sustainability. By increasing the budget, we are able to expand the services' accessibility parameters, like accommodation and capacity, and improve provided experiences for the community, like environmental awareness and expanded itinerary. With the increased quantity of our service fee, we can upgrade the quality of services.

## Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If approved, the referendum question attached to this motion in Appendix A will be forwarded to Elections SSMU to be included in the Winter referendum.

If the fee is approved in referendum, ASN will:

- Significantly increase the printing budget for the journal to finally distribute copies to the extended community and spread the artistic expression of arab culture
- Increase the available arabic class levels
- Provide better food services at events
- Increase capacity especially for large scale high demand events to allow the opportunity to all interested to attend, without the restriction of ticketing



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The fee will be increased to \$1 per semester.

### Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the following question for the Winter 2024 referendum period:

*Do you agree to the increase of the opt-outable SSMU Arab Student Network Fee of \$0.50 per semester to \$1 per semester (excluding summer) for full-time members, starting in Fall 2024 and ending in Fall 2029 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority 'no' vote will result in the continuation of the fee at its current rate, resulting in the reduction of some the Arab Student Network operations, as well as limitations in the quality of the services offered by the Arab Student Network?*

### Results of the Vote

In favour	(UNANIMOUS)
Opposed	()
Abstain	()



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## Appendix A : Referendum Question

*Do you agree to the increase of the opt-outable SSMU Arab Student Network Fee of \$0.50 per semester to \$1 per semester (excluding summer) for full-time members, starting in Fall 2024 and ending in Fall 2029 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority 'no' vote will result in the continuation of the fee at its current rate, resulting in the reduction of some the Arab Student Network operations, as well as limitations in the quality of the services offered by the Arab Student Network?*

APPROVED



## Appendix B : Fee Increase Determination Process

1) After discussing with the Vice-President Finance of ASN, we discussed the appropriate steps to take through the motion. Together, we evaluated the current distribution – put together by our finance team – which best allocated the current budget. During the consultation, we established the following:

1. Academic portfolio:
  - 1.1. This portfolio is heavily underfunded, sitting at 700\$. This amount is able to cover only the artist and editor commission, and doesn't account for printing and distribution fees. The motion will be very important to ensure that the service is able to expand the capacity of the journal.
  - 1.2. The Arabic class capacity is also lower than ideal. With a 2000\$ budget, the recommendation was to scale this up to hold 3 classes of varying levels, as opposed to the current single one.
2. Events portfolio:
  - 2.1. Although only two months into the year, a recurring point of conversation around event planning has been the maximum capacity the portfolio can accommodate. With taxes up to 32% on venues, it has been increasingly difficult to plan events with the space itself taking up a majority of the budget. The fee increase will allow for the portfolio to actually plan events such as the annual Networking event, and not just pay for a room.
  - 2.2. The food prices have also been difficult to keep up with due to the current economic environment. The original budget for the staple BBQ event was 2000\$, increased to 2200\$, then 2500\$, until the numbers were reworked to be at lowest 2900\$, which covered the food and other equipment we needed. The motion will be key to allowing the portfolio to accommodate for the entire community it serves.



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## Appendix C : Budgets

### [Budget Sheet link](#)

#### 2023-2024 Budget:

ASN budget for 2023-2024					
Value as of 15-05-2023	\$7,100.00				
Fall 2023 levy fee total:	\$10,057.91				
Amount estimated from winter 2024 levy	\$10,000.00		Expenses		
<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>\$27,157.91</b>			Planned	Description
		Totals		\$26,900	
		Training	Training	\$1,000	New Executive Training + Trainings taking place throughout the year
		Marketing, Media and Communications	Printing	\$1,000	Lanyards, posters
			Advertising Fees	\$500	Facebook and Instagram ads
			Videography	\$2,000	Professional videographer for event promotion
			Photography	\$1,000	events + social media promotion
			Merch	\$550	Merch for 11 executive members
		Community Engagement (Social Portfolio)	ArabFest	\$8,000	food, booth decorations, guests, artists, photographer, speakers, dabke group, henna artists, oud player, utensils
			BBQ	\$3,000	BBQ grill, food, utensils, ingredients, propane tanks
			Networking Event	\$4,500	venue, guest speakers, food, utensils
			Monthly Movie Nights	\$150	drinks, snacks, venue, Netflix account
			Weekly Office Hours	\$200	coffee machine, ground coffee, cups, milk, sugar, cream
		Academics Portfolio	Journal	\$700	Designer + editor honorariums
			Arabic classes	\$2,000	teachers, equipment
		Discretionary	Office Expenses	\$1,000	furniture, office supplies
			Storage Space	\$300	
			Student Aid	\$1,000	scholarship/ financial aid

#### 2024-2025 Budget - Without Increase (estimation):



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ASN budget for 2024-2025 (WITHOUT FEE INCREASE)			
Estimated budget	\$21,000.00		
		Expenses	Planned
Training	Training		\$500
	Printing		\$500
Marketing, Media and Communications	Advertising Fees		\$200
	Videography		\$750
	Photography		\$750
	Merch		\$500
Community Engagement (Social Portfolio)	ArabFest		\$7,000
	BBQ		\$2,500
	Networking Event		\$4,000
	Weekly Office Hours		\$200
Academics Portfolio	Journal		\$700
	Arabic classes		\$2,000
Discretionary	Office Expenses		\$700
	Storage Space		\$200
	Student Aid		\$500
Totals			\$21,000

### 2024-2025 Budget - With Increase (estimation):

ASN budget for 2024-2025 (AFTER FEE INCREASE)			
Estimate:	\$40,000.00		
		Expenses	Planned
Training	Training		\$1,000
	Printing		\$1,000
Marketing, Media and Communications	Advertising Fees		\$500
	Videography		\$1,000
	Photography		\$1,000
	Merch		\$500
Community Engagement (Social Portfolio)	ArabFest		\$10,000
	BBQ		\$3,500
	Networking Event		\$5,000
	Weekly Office Hours		\$200
Academics Portfolio	Journal		\$3,000
	Arabic classes		\$7,000
Discretionary	Office Expenses		\$3,000
	Storage Space		\$300
	Student Aid		\$2,000
Totals			\$40,000