



## 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 02, 2024

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, May 02, 2024 at 18:00.

Present: Jonathan Dong (Chair, non-voting), Lisa Pennel (Parliamentarian, non-voting), Alexandre Ashkir (Director), Lalia Katchelewa (Director), Liam Gaither (Director), Amina Kudrati-Plummer (Officer, non-voting), Fawaz Halloum (Director), Hassanatou Koulibaly (Officer, non-voting), Maya Marcus-Sells (General Manager, non-voting), Nadia Dakdouki (Director), Jean-Sébastien Léger (Director), Eliot Bergeron (Director), Jacob Shannon (Council Member), Yvonne Bejjani (International Student Representative, non-voting), Incoming Executives (non-voting)

Absent: Jon Barlas (Officer, non-voting), Sierra Fallis (Deputy Speaker, non-voting), Elina Qureshi (Director)

### 1. Call to Order: **18:08**

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 18:08.

### 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.

*L'AEUM reconnaît que l'Université McGill est située sur le territoire traditionnel et non cédé des nations Anishinaabeg et Haudenosaunee. L'AEUM reconnaît et respecte ces nations comme les véritables et constants gardiens des terres et des eaux sur lesquelles nous nous rencontrons aujourd'hui. En outre, l'AEUM s'engage à respecter les lois et coutumes traditionnelles de ces territoires.*

### 3. Attendance



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The Chair takes attendance.

The Incoming Executives, members of the Board, and the Dais introduce themselves.

The Speaker reminds everyone that the Board is a bilingual space and that speakers are more than welcome to present their points in French if they so desire.

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

The Agenda is distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

#### 5. Confidential Session: **18:29**

Director Ashkir motions to suspend the rules to move into a confidential session.

Director Katchelewa seconds.

Seeing no opposition, the Chair entertains a confidential session.

The Chair notes that the NUS Executives will be put into the waiting room until they are invited into the confidential session.

The public session resumes.

The Chair explains that the NUS discussion will be held in the public session.

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#### **Question:**

Director Ashkir asks if they are back in public session and discussing the NUS MOA with the NUS Executives.

#### **Answer:**

The Chair answers yes.

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#### 6. For Discussion:



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### a. NUS MoA (Director Ashkir)

Director Ashkir states that it was determined at the last meeting that it would be useful to have the NUS Executives give their opinion on the cafe project and the MOA. The NUS Executives were invited to give a presentation and answer some questions.

NUS Member Naomi states that SSMU has decided that they cannot support the cafe project because of financial concerns. She asks for details to be ironed out within the MOA to allow the project to go forward. If it cannot, she asks how SSMU will support NUS in achieving an MOA with McGill and how they can move forward.

Director Dakdouki states that the Board has specific questions for NUS. They are happy to discuss, but the decision has mostly been made.

Director Ashkir states that NUS approached SSMU after approving a referendum question to open a cafe. Because NUS falls under SSMU and does not have an MOA with McGill, the SSMU supports NUS. The Board discussed NUS's proposal twice, which would require some changes in the MOA. The Board had some concerns, so NUS is present to address them. SSMU's concerns are about the status of NUS within McGill and work that has been done to achieve an MOA in the past, as well as the needs for the cafe.

NUS Member Naomi notes that they have done surveys with students, which received record-breaking participation and had high approval ratings for the cafe. They met with the Faculty of Nursing, and faculty were on board as well. They have not reached out to McGill for an MOA because they wanted an MOA with SSMU. They do not know how to approach McGill.

NUS Member Sean answers that the cafe needs HR and insurance services, which it would finance itself. It would be complicated to receive these services without an MOA from SSMU or McGill.

Director Dakdouki states that NUS is part of SSMU, so they do not need an MOA with SSMU. The cafe would be run by SSMU, like Gerts, but this creates some difficulties. The Board would like to know if NUS is an accredited association, how they collect student fees while being under SSMU, the history of NUS's MOAs with McGill, which would give them much more freedom in running the cafe, and the needs of the cafe. They also need to work out the logistics of opening the cafe.

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### Question:

NUS Member Naomi asks how much work SSMU would need to do, because NUS has a VP Finance and Cafe Coordinator who would hire the manager and employees.



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#### **Answer:**

Officer Kudrati-Plummer answers that it would be a lot of work for SSMU. HR would do the hiring processes, and they would have to figure out where the employees fall into SSMU's current structures. The cafe would also have a large impact on accounting, because NUS cannot do its own accounting even with a VP Finance. Running a business that brings in revenue is different than running a student association. SSMU will be liable for the cafe, for example if there are sales discrepancies. This is already a risk with Gerts, and would be a large burden for the NUS cafe as well.

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Member Naomi states that the NUS cafe will not be as large as Gerts. They will sell around \$50 of coffee per day.

Director Shannon states that this is more work than can be predicted, because there are many hypotheticals, such as an employee making a complaint to the Labour Board of Quebec. If this information is not provided to SSMU, it would be bad. NUS is not allowed to have an MOA with McGill, so SSMU represents them instead. He was on NUS in his undergrad, and they were not given a refund once because the beer they purchased was not Sleeman, which SSMU has an exclusivity contract with. NUS did not know, as they were not benefitting from the exclusive pricing. The NUS should get an MOA with McGill, which would happen by SSMU setting up a meeting. This is not the right time, because there is a lot going on on campus. During this meeting, they would apply pressure to McGill. NUS should be able to decide for themselves. If NUS is willing to pay SSMU for HR and accounting services, they could run the cafe. This might cost a lot, though. HR usually participates in job interviews, so NUS might not be allowed to run the interviews themselves. The job posting would need to be posted on the SSMU website and NUS would need to follow SSMU hiring procedures. Director Shannon is willing to vote yes on this, if the rules are strictly ironed out and if students realize that this could be done better with an MOA with McGill. They could also run the cafe for a one-year trial, and then get a new MOA with McGill, but Director Shannon thinks that next year's Executives will want to help NUS get a new MOA. He also thinks the Incoming Executives should weigh in on this as they will be responsible for it.

Officer Kudrati-Plummer states that there could be unanticipated costs. If demand increases, there will be more work for SSMU. The accounting team does not have the capacity to add a cafe, even if it is small. NUS probably cannot afford to pay SSMU to hire a new staff member, which would be a full-time employee, which SSMU can also not afford. It is also a burden to manage the new employee. SSMU does not have the capacity to deal with a cafe at this time, even if NUS pays them. She is in favour of helping NUS get an MOA with McGill, which is more realistic than having SSMU take this on.

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### Question:

NUS Member Naomi states that an MOA with McGill sounds like a good option. A one-year trial also sounds like a good option, but she thinks that this vote would not pass. She asks if they could hire a contractual employee, as clubs sometimes do, and if this is the same risk.

### Answer:

Director Dakdouki answers that clubs are doing this through independent contractor agreements, which a regular employee is not. The employee needs to receive vacation pay and benefits, and there is more liability going into a cafe, such as invoicing, which is done by accounting. They have paused new club and service applications because of financial constraints. Everyone sees the benefit of the cafe, but the point of the discussion was to get more information. SSMU supports NUS's potential MOA with McGill, but they want to determine if they have reached out to McGill this year about an MOA before they set up the meeting with NUS and McGill. The one-year trial would still require a lot of work that should be done outside of this meeting, perhaps by Directors Shannon and Ashkir.

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Director Bergeron states that a decision has not yet been made; they invited NUS to the Board to discuss. It might not be beneficial to NUS or SSMU to run this cafe. An MOA with McGill might be more beneficial in the long-term.

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### Question:

NUS Member Naomi asks if the Board will vote on whether or not to support the cafe once the NUS Executives leave, or if they are just having a discussion.

### Answer:

Director Dakdouki states that no consensus was determined; they wanted to explore the options with NUS. If there was a proposal, they could vote on it, but there is none. Their questions have been answered, so a plan can be proposed, which would then be voted on.

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### Question:

Director Ashkir asks if the Board would be open to a trial period of the cafe. This should be discussed before going forward.

### Answer:



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Director Dakdouki does not think they can make this consideration right now, because any proposal should include consultation with VPs Finance and Operations. She is open to a meeting between Directors and NUS, and to evaluating a completed proposal.

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NUS Member Noah states that they can talk with other student associations with McGill to get a better idea of what an MOA with McGill would look like. Once the decision is approved by the NUS Council, they can come back to the Board.

Director Bergeron is open to a conversation about proceeding; the vote will not happen now. It is a good idea to ask other student associations how they got their MOAs. If NUS needs support, SSMU will be happy to help. He has no specific preferred option at this moment.

NUS Member Naomi states that there is a draft one-year plan in the shared folder.

Officer Kudrati-Plummer states that they need to discuss how the cafe will be implemented into SSMU. NUS's current plan is more about how NUS will run the cafe more than how SSMU will be impacted by the cafe.

The Chair notes that the Incoming Executives are welcome to participate.

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### **Question:**

NUS Member Sean asks if they should send a proposal with SSMU's role in the cafe, and how NUS can help SSMU.

### **Answer:**

Director Dakdouki clarifies that NUS would not be sending anything to the Board. NUS's contact should be Director Ashkir, and he can decide what is appropriate to bring to the Board.

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### **Question:**

NUS Member Naomi asks how the Board can help NUS obtain an MOA with McGill.

### **Answer:**

Director Dakdouki states that the Executives can do this rather than the Board. SSMU is happy to help, but NUS could reach out to McGill on their own. If they want to go through SSMU, Director Ashkir can help with this.



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Director Ashkir states that this would be a project for next year's Executives, including the President, and VPs University Affairs and Internal. McGill may not be open to discussing an MOA right now. As things cool down on campus, they could try to start the conversation.

Member Naomi asks if the next NUS Executives should reach out to the SSMU Executives to begin this process.

The Chair suggests that action items be proposed, as they are non-binding reminders for Board members.

Director Dakdouki suggests emailing Director Ashkir or Director Shannon. They do not need an Action Item as these Directors are committed to working with NUS.

Director Bergeron thanks the NUS Executives for their presence.

The NUS Executives leave the meeting.

### 7. Executive Committee Public Report 2024-05-02 – **RATIFIED**

Director Ashkir presents the Executive Committee Public Report. He states that they approved motions and had many discussions. They did some hirings for Services and hired a new receptionist. The motion to approve the changes to management meeting structures was approved. Director Ashkir stands for questions.

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

### 8. Minutes for Approval:

#### a. SSMU Board of Directors Public Minutes 2024-04-11 – **APPROVED**

The Minutes are distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Minutes are approved.

### 9. Announcements:

#### a. Tentative summer schedule (Dais)



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The Chair states that the Dais has worked out a tentative summer schedule. The meeting dates would be monthly on June 13, July 18 or 25, and August 22. The Parliamentarian has mentioned that she will not be available for one of the July meetings. The Chair notes that Directors can still call emergency meetings if needed.

Parliamentarian Pennel states that she would prefer to meet on July 18.

Director Dakdouki states that none of the outgoing Executives will be present, and not all of the Incoming Executives are present, so it would be good to email them.

Parliamentarian Pennel states that the Dais and the Incoming Executives have a meeting scheduled to discuss the schedule.

### 10. Email Approvals and Ratifications:

- a. [Motion Regarding Approval of an Update of Amendments to the SSMU Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy 2024-03-28](#) (Director Ashkir) – **APPROVED 2024-04-17**
- b. [Motion to Ratify Legislative Council Motion Regarding the Association of McGill Professors of Law \(AMPL\) Strike](#) (Director Shannon) – **RATIFIED 2024-04-22**

The Chair notes that there were two motions approved by email between this meeting and the last.

### 11. Legislative Council Motions and Reports for Ratification:

- a. [Motion Regarding Accountability at the SSMU](#) – **RATIFIED**

Director Ashkir states that this motion about accountability was approved unanimously at the Legislative Council. This motion revitalizes the Accountability Committee, which has not met in 3 years and has had difficulty getting things done. The motion solidifies the Committee's mandate and creates the role of the Accountability Commissioner, who will be in charge of the Committee and the Accountability Plan, which seeks to engrain accountability into SSMU's culture. It also includes follow ups on different bodies' mandates, allowing for better institutional knowledge. Director Ashkir stands for questions.

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### Question:

Director Bergeron asks for a rough estimate of the cost of hiring an Accountability Commissioner.





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### Answer:

Director Ashkir answers that the total cost will not exceed a few thousand dollars. It was approved by the VP Finance and deemed a reasonable expense.

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Officer Kudrati-Plummer adds that the maximum this role would cost is \$8,000, for an average work week of 10 hours including the summer. Usually, casual staff are paid for a number of contract hours rather than in hours per week. When committees are more active, the Commissioner will have more work. If they work 400 hours during the school year, the cost will be closer to \$6,500, which is in line with most casual staff. There was discussion about making a separate fee for this, but this Plan was completed after the Winter 2024 referendum. She thinks it is not a good idea to charge students for accountability. Moreover, casual staff are not very expensive. If they want to create a new fee for this, the Incoming Executives should discuss it.

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### Question:

Director Bergeron asks if there are any concerns with the membership of the Accountability Committee, as there are 2 Directors out of 5 voting members.

### Answer:

Director Ashkir answers that the membership of the Accountability Committee allows for a large Board presence, as the Board is in charge of holding SSMU accountable. They did not want to have too many members at large seats, because they are hard to fill. In the past, member seats have never been filled, which means that the committee was not able to meet. The goal is to have people who are interested in the Committee sit on it. He notes that the Board's purview is on the legal and financial aspects of the motion, but he is happy to answer any questions.

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### Question:

Director Dakdouki asks if they can make this contract temporary, because there are concerns about the power of the Accountability Committee. They cannot remove people from their jobs, so they have limited power. Having a commissioner will allow them to set up a structure, but will be quite costly, so she suggests approving the Motion temporarily.

### Answer:

Director Ashkir answers that the Accountability Plan is only coming into place next year, so if the Commissioner is hired for only one year, they would not be able to see the full effect of the Committee. Full implementation will take at least two years. The Plan does not work if they do



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not have an Accountability Commissioner, as shown by the past few years without anyone in charge of accountability.

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Director Léger is concerned that the Directors sitting on the Accountability Committee are not Councillors, but the Executives are the ones being held accountable for the most part. He recommends changing the membership to allow only Directors who are neither Councillors nor Executives to sit on the Committee, to ensure impartiality. Le directeur Léger ne pense pas que le coût de cet employé aura un impact élevé sur les finances, et que les bénéfices de l'employé surpasseront probablement le coût. C'est important d'avoir des mécanismes d'assurer la responsabilité des acteurs. Le risque financier et légal est minimal, et ils doivent implémenter ce plan.

Director Ashkir answers that it was a mistake not to specify that Executives cannot be committee members. He recommends this as an amendment, if the Dais sees fit. If the Dais does not approve it, the change can be proposed at the Legislative Council next year. The most important aspect of the Committee is that it is separate from the Executive, and allows a third-party view of SSMU's functioning.

The Chair states that the Dais is amenable to amendments.

The amendment is made.

Director Ashkir clarifies that amendments are not a regular Board procedure, so he would be more comfortable voting on it if the Dais is amenable. He will modify the Google Document as the PDF cannot be edited.

The Chair entertains a vote on the amendment. As this is a Board of Directors committee and the Board is responsible for operational matters, it is fair for the Board to make amendments to the motion.

Seeing no opposition, the amendment is approved.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11.a is ratified.

Director Bergeron notes that Motion 10.b was sent via email and he did not have access to the motion until the Governance Manager granted him access. If motions are sent over the weekend or when the Governance Manager is out of office, he asks that Directors double check that everyone has access.



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The Chair apologizes and states that he changed the access allowances after receiving Director Bergeron's email.

### b. [Motion Regarding Amendments to the Internal Regulations of Governance](#) – **RATIFIED**

Director Ashkir states that amendments were developed throughout the year to change conflicting sections of the Internal Regulations. They were written by the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator and presented and approved at the Legislative Council. Director Ashkir stands for questions. The amendments are broad, but they make the IRs more aligned with other governing documents.

The Chair asks Director Ashkir to explain how the amendments affect the Board of Directors.

Director Ashkir states that the responsibilities of the Board were modified, including some modifications to how the minutes are taken. Guests' ability to join public sessions has been modified to increase accountability; whisper translation will be available at request. Protocols about vacancies were modified, as there have been times in the past when Directors stop showing up without explanation. The modification allows for a strict vacancy period. The removal section has been changed to specify the removal procedure. A resignation and replacement protocol was put into place, as per the Constitution. There were also some modifications made about reporting to the General Assembly and the way that the Board refers motions and amendments back to the Legislative Council. This modification is essential because amendments by the Board to Legislative Council motions would otherwise not be allowed and makes official an informal process. The Board can also propose amendments to the Council without making them.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11.b is ratified.

### c. [Motion Regarding Clubs Committee Structure](#) – **RATIFIED**

Director Dakdouki states that this motion changes the Clubs Committee structure to have them work on reviewing existing clubs during the fall semester and looking at new applications in the winter semester. This simplifies the process, rather than having rolling applications throughout the year, and prevents the issue of having too many clubs. The motion also adds in a mandate to review existing clubs to not add new clubs without removing some.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11.c is ratified.



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### d. [Motion Regarding Amendments to the Policy on Harmful Military Technology](#) –

#### **RATIFIED**

Director Gaither states that this motion includes amendments to the *Policy on Harmful Military Technology*, the most important one the introduction of a new moratorium on new ancillary fees. Ancillary fees pay for different things on campus, such as facilities. Per the Act Regarding the Accreditation & Financing of Student Associations, these fees must pass by a referendum in order to increase. The SSMU will refuse to put any ancillary fee increase questions on referendum ballots. Should McGill run their own campaign, SSMU will run a no campaign against their questions. Harmful military technology includes investments in companies that are tied to aviation, weaponry, and the military industrial complex. These companies have products for civilians, but make a lot of their money from military investments. SSMU does not agree with this, and their Policy on Harmful Military Technology was approved a few years ago. The moratorium introduced was previously in place until fossil fuel divestment, but it is exactly the same as its previous iteration. The University voted to divest from fossil fuels in December, which is a notable achievement and has come after 10 years of advocacy. It is important to keep up the pressure to ensure that McGill divests from all harmful investments.

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#### **Question:**

Director Léger asks why a certain class of McGill's investments worth over \$100,000,000 was not included in the motion, even though the wording of the motion pledges to refrain from investing in companies who invest in companies producing harmful military technology. Lockheed Martin and Textron are part of this class, so he asks why this occurred.

#### **Answer:**

Director Gaither states that this was an oversight; his staff may have miscommunication. The companies mentioned will be added to the motion.

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Director Léger states that it will be hard to invest in markets if they restrict the companies they can invest in so much. If they are targeting specific companies, that is okay, but if they include a broader range of companies, neither SSMU nor McGill can invest in any companies in this certain category.

Director Bergeron motions to call the question.

Director Gaither seconds.



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Seeing no opposition, Motion 11.d is ratified.

e. [Clubs Committee Report](#) – **RATIFIED**

Director Dakdouki states that there was one Clubs Committee meeting the week after the application pause was approved.

Seeing no opposition, the Clubs Committee Report is ratified.

12. Motions for Approval:

- a. Motion to amend the Motion Regarding Accountability at the SSMU to the discretion of the Board (Director Ashkir) – **APPROVED**

13. For Discussion:

- a. Legal Updates - Fried Case (Director Dakdouki)

Director Dakdouki states that the judge approved SSMU's motion to dismiss, so the case has been dismissed. It was dismissed because the 2022 Policy was disavowed by the Board, so it did not make sense that there was a legal case about a policy that was not in effect.

The Chair asks the Board if they would like a recess.

The Chair entertains a recess until 20:05. He asks all guests to leave before the confidential session.

14. Confidential Session: **20:05**

The Board enters a Confidential session at 20:05.

15. Adjournment: **22:39**

The Chair declares the meeting adjourned at 22:39.

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Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024