



Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

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Students' Society of McGill University

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SSMU LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PUBLIC MINUTES

January 18, 2024

The regular bi-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, January 18th, 2024 at 18:00.

1. Call to Order: **18:12**

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 18:12.

2. Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker presents the Land Acknowledgement.

3. Attendance

The Speaker takes attendance.

Present are: Councillors Porter, Rajan, Baybayon, Sakajiri, Renaud, Mezni (Proxy Councillor Foster), Rylo, Wehbe, Duncan, Shannon, Qian, Grall-Johnson, Mabia, Zukerman, Foxman, Fournier, Gertsvolf, Maselli, President Ashkir, VPs Koulibaly, Barlas, Dakdouki, Kudrati-Plummer, Gaither, Katchelewa

Absent are: Councillors Li, Tai, Chemaly, Yang, McMechan, Pastrana Mankovitz, General Manager Marcus-Sells

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

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

5. Minutes for Approval:

- a. SSMU Legislative Council Public Minutes 2023-11-23 – **APPROVED**

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Minutes stand approved.



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At the Chair's discretion, the Announcement section of the meeting is moved to point 7.

6. Report of the Steering Committee

Parliamentarian Pennel presents the report of the Steering Committee. They met on January 15 and discussed the Motion regarding the tuition hikes. She reminds everyone to read all documents on the Agenda, and to adequately evaluate consent items. She encourages everyone to use French in speeches and discussion, and reminds everyone that there are spots available on Committees and on the Board, and that Councillors must sit on at least one committee. Parliamentarian Pennel presents the report schedule for the next meeting. There will be a confidential session tonight.

Councillor Porter motions to suspend the rules to move the Scarlet Key announcement to the first announcement.

Councillor Sakajiri seconds this motion.

Seeing no opposition, the Scarlet Key announcement is moved to point 7.a.

7. Announcements:

a. McGill Scarlet Key

Eric van Eyken, President of the Scarlet Key Society and 2005-2006 VP Finance of SSMU, presents the Scarlet Key, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the McGill community. 15-20 students per year are given the Scarlet Key by the Principal in March. He asks Councillors if they know any outstanding leaders in terms of student groups or leadership, outside of academics. He encourages those people to apply to the McGill Scarlet Key so that their leadership is acknowledged; applications are due February 11 and will be awarded March 22 by the Principal. They are looking forward to having the best of the best recognized, especially with the new Principal. The award is non-academic, so grades do not matter beyond being in satisfactory standing. VP Internal Affairs Barlas will circulate the online application to everyone. Applications require two reference letters from involved students who know what people are up to. Van Eyken was at AUS earlier this week and will be at MSS next week, and he would be happy to meet with other faculty associations. He asks Councillors to let their constituencies and student groups know about the Scarlet Key.

Van Eyken stands for questions.

Seeing no questions, Van Eyken leaves the meeting.



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b. Activities Night

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that Activities Night is happening in the University Centre on January 24-25 from 15:00-20:00. McGill Athletics could not let them use the Fieldhouse because of Intramurals, which is why it will take place in the University Centre. All other locations are very expensive. She encourages everyone to attend and advertise the event in their listservs. VP Student Life Dakdouki stands for questions, and states that the Dais will be present as well.

c. Winter Referendum & Executive Nomination Periods

President Ashkir states that the Elections and Referendum period has opened. Nomination period for Executives and referendum questions opened on January 15, and will end on February 16 at 17:00. He wishes those proposing questions and nominating themselves luck, and all information is available on the Elections SSMU website and on SSMU's social media.

The Speaker asks everyone not to leave their referendum questions to the last minute, to avoid a very long meeting right before the voting period. He asks everyone to do all relevant consultations with their constituencies to determine their areas of interest.

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that two services (UGE and WalkSafe) are planning to bring a fee increase, and if anyone is interested in seconding and assisting to draft the motions, it would be appreciated.

Question:

Councillor Chemaly asks where the dates of the referendum can be found.

Answer:

The Speaker answers that they are on the Elections SSMU website.

d. General Assembly on February 5th, 2024 at 6PM

The Speaker announces that the General Assembly is on February 5. He encourages everyone to consult with their constituents to figure out what they are most interested in, so that they can discuss them at the meeting. The Dais can assist them with any needs and wants as they plan the General Assembly. He adds that attendance at the General Assembly is mandatory for all Councillors.



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The Deputy Speaker adds that the Dais will be taking attendance at the General Assembly.

e. Open Consultations for Internal Regulations of Governance Amendments

President Ashkir states that the Governance Reform Committee is working on reforming the Internal Regulations of Governance, and he has been tasked with consulting the Legislative Council. Every Councillor should go through the changes, and to make comments on the document or in an email to him. This is an opportunity to bring much needed changes to the Internal Regulations. Within the table of contents, the portions that have been changed have been highlighted, and there is a section that has been added at the end. President Ashkir stands for questions.

f. Update on Accountability Committee

The Speaker states that the Dais is reforming the Accountability Committee for it to be more applicable to the Legislative Council and other bodies in the Governance department. More details will come soon, but if anyone wishes to be part of consultations they should reach out to the Dais.

President Ashkir adds that the Accountability Committee has not been active for some time, but it is crucial for the functioning of SSMU's governance structures. Those sitting on the Committee will hold Councillors accountable, so it is important to have the Council's input on how the Accountability Committee should function. The terms of reference can be found on the SSMU website, and if Councillors wish to be more involved, they can contact the President or the Dais so they can become involved in the meetings.

g. McGill Moves Event

Councillor Renaud states that McGill Recreation and the Wellness Hub are hosting a McGill Moves event on lower campus, on January 23 from 11:00 to 14:00. This will be a good time to take a break from studies, and there will be free hot chocolate, varsity ticket giveaways, and raffle prizes. In case of bad weather, the event will be postponed to the next day at the same time and place. She asks Councillors to share this information with their constituents.

8. Executive Reports

a. VP Finance

VP Kudrati-Plummer gives her report. The consolidation of duties has been completed, and the financial statements have been uploaded despite delays due to changes with the auditing firms. The French versions will be uploaded soon. There is a new Funding Commissioner and Service Finance



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Coordinator, so people can expect delays in related processes. She thanks Allie for their work in both of these positions. Most clubs have submitted their audits, and those who have not have been sanctioned; processing of audits has begun for clubs who have submitted them. Club workshops are this weekend (January 20-21). She has revamped the Finance presentation to make it more accessible to club executives. The 2024-25 budget development has begun, and she is meeting with departments soon. The presentation to the Legislative Council will be on February 29 or March 14 if complications arise. VP Kudrati-Plummer is working on identifying issues with the finances section on the SSMU website, which improves transparency and aligns with the guidelines of the SSMU SDGs. They note that this is a long-term project that will be done closer to the end of their term. VP Kudrati-Plummer is improving the internal accounting procedures and auditing process, which will be continued once the budget is complete. There are difficulties with improving communications with RBC, but there are challenges with accessing the bank account and clearing up other issues.

b. President

President Ashkir presents his report, which covers mostly his regular activities. The SSAMMOSA Committee is working on reviewing the goals of the Master Plan, and they have assembled a centred plan with amendments to the Master Plan. The EDI Working Group has been working to change its purpose due to changes in legislation, specifically with the Equity and Policy Specialist's changes. The Board of Governors approved the divestment of direct investments in fossil fuels after years of advocacy by students. Work is not complete, as there are more divestments to be made before the investment portfolio is completely equitable, but this is a step in the right direction. President Ashkir worked on the Grocery Program, which occurred on December 12 and 13 and was a success. It provided students with vouchers, food boxes, and Poulet Rouge bowls. He is planning to make changes as he wants the Program to have a more long-term vision. He wants to collaborate with more student groups to better utilize student funds. President Ashkir is also working on more projects, which he will present in coming meetings.

c. VP Operations & Sustainability

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly presents her report. She developed and modified an Incident Protocol for Gerts, and met with the University about sustainability. She worked with the Sustainable Consumption and Disposal Working Group to create a new sustainability strategy, as the current one is coming to an end. There is a question being raised on the moratorium on ancillary fees due to divestment, and VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly plans to consult the Council on this issue as the Policy expires in May. She is reviewing the fee structure of Mini Courses, as they are currently operating at a small loss. The University Centre was closed at the end of last semester, but the building is now fully open with some scaffolding. VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly is still working on the Internal Regulations of Sustainability and Operations, and the Council will be



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consulted once the draft is more complete. She is working with the Sponsorship Coordinator to see if they will renew the Lifeline portable chargers in the University Centre, as their two-year term comes to an end this month. She is working on insurance claims and issues with student groups. She finished interviews for a second Sustainability Commissioner and will finalize the hiring process soon. She is also completing mid-year space check ins, and she may be able to allocate a new space to the next group in line. VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly is looking to create a common area with appliances for student groups, to avoid electrical issues in the building. She also wants to revamp Gerts Cultural Nights to have them centred around a specific holiday or celebration. VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly stands for questions.

The Speaker reminds Councillors that they must each report once per semester, and asks them to check the schedule to see when they are reporting.

9. Reports by Councillors:

- a. Law (LSA) – **POSTPONED**
- b. Nursing (NUS) – **POSTPONED**
- c. PT/OT (POTUS)

Councillor Zukerman presents the POTUS report. The Presidents finalized a Wine and Cheese night, and started using the Zevy platform for events. They have attended meetings with other representatives and the Presidents' Roundtable. VP Communications is working on newsletters, and planning Wellness Week. VP Academic PT is working on a mentorship program for younger students and meeting with the FCPQ for stages. VP Finance is working on confirming sponsors for large events and communicating with SSMU to solve banking issues. VP Internal planned the end-of-semester event after finals, and VP Wellness is working on Wellness Week and attending the Mental Health Roundtable. VP Equity is putting together workshops for Healthcare and graduate students. VP External is attending Legislative Council and Health & Dental Committee meetings, and communicating with UQAC about the OTPT Games. U3 Reps are working on certifications and prerequisite courses, Graduate representatives are planning a graduation event, and Athletics representatives are discussing intramurals. The next POTUS meeting will be next week.

d. Social Work (SWSA)

Councillor Maselli presents the SWSA report. She states that this semester will have more events, as the Field Education department has requested more events. There will be a Wine and Cheese event, a suicide risk assessment training session, and a tote bag project with student artwork. SWSA has been



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working on their committees (Opportunities, field placement, Constitution, and events) to alleviate tasks for individual members. They are planning a Black History Month initiative, a project in collaboration with Indigenous organizations to support the Mohawk Mothers, and a project in collaboration with the Psychology Students' Association. The 2023 expenditures stayed within budget, so they have a surplus for Winter 2024.

10. Reports by Committees:

a. Clubs Committee – **RATIFIED**

VP Student Life Dakdouki gives the Clubs Committee report, which meets weekly. The report needs to be ratified so that clubs can gain interim or full status. Constitutional amendments were also made and need to be ratified. Many clubs were approved and some were rejected, which are not listed on the report.

Question:

VP External Affairs Gaither asks how many clubs there are.

Answer:

VP Student Life Dakdouki does not have the exact number, but they were at around 240 last time she checked.

Seeing no opposition, the Clubs Committee Report is ratified.

b. Accountability Committee – **POSTPONED**

11. Question Period:

Question:

Councillor Fournier asks VP University Affairs Katchelewa where McGill will obtain their funds for the Canadian Scholarship, and if she plans to inquire about this at the McGill Senate or the administration meetings.

Answer:



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VP University Affairs Katchelewa answers that information she received about this is confidential.

VP Student Life Dakdouki adds she heard from a university administrator that the money from the French program that was cancelled because of the tuition hikes will be used for the scholarships. A CBC article outlined that McGill planned to use \$50,000,000 towards a new French program.

Question:

Councillor Qian asks for information about the Mental Health Roundtable.

Answer:

VP Student Life Dakdouki answers that the Roundtable is run by the Mental Health Commissioner and meets monthly. For an invite, councillors can email the Commissioner.

Question:

Councillor Fournier asks VP External if there are plans to protest the added French requirements to the tuition hikes, which many of her constituents believe are inequitable and unattainable.

Answer:

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that there is nothing about French requirements in the governing documents and they have no position against it. If Councillor Fournier wants to bring this forward, that would be great. Students organizing the protest might not feel the same about the language requirements as McGill students do, because support comes from Francophone universities in Montreal.

Seeing no further questions, the Question Period has elapsed.

12. Recess, Consent Items

The Speaker reminds Councillors to vote on whether or not they want to debate motions on the table.

The recess begins at 19:05.



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The meeting resumes at 19:15.

13. Old Business:

a. Motion Regarding Legal Action Against Tuition Hikes 2024-01-18 – **APPROVED**

Councillor Shannon presents Motion 13.a. He worked on it with Rishi, a first-year Arts student who feels strongly about the tuition hikes and proposed the Motion in December. He entered the motion because the Law Faculty drafted a similar motion, and the Council should approve this motion because the Working Group requires no funding. It is a group of students who will sit down and talk about the legal implications of the tuition hikes, and how they could fight them. Likely, no legal action will be taken, and will recommend legal or non-legal action to the Board. The Working Group will only recommend legal action if they find that it is feasible, in which case the Board of Directors would need to approve it. He cedes his time to Rishi. He will automatically cede any questions to Rishi.

Member Rishi states that this Working Group is exploratory, and any funding would need to be authorized through the necessary channels. Any suggestion would go through the Legislative Council and funding requests through the Board. It is a group that will do consultations and research whether legal action against the government is possible, and to explore alternative action. There is a section at the bottom of the motion reasserting their stance against the hike, considering the recent reduction in hikes. He wants the student body to know that they are still against the tuition hikes. The Terms of Reference are outlined in the motion, and the Working Group will research general and legal action (advocacy, collaboration with students, etc.). They will also report to the Council or Board on their findings. Any recommendation to consult lawyers and undertake legal action must be accompanied by a plan to obtain funding. Rishi stands for questions.

The Speaker reminds members not to cross-talk. He entertains a question period.

Question:

Councillor Foxman asks Councillor Shannon to see the motion passed by the Law Faculty, to compare with this motion.

Answer:

The Speaker suggests that Councillor Shannon send this link to the Parliamentarian, who can share it with the Council.



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Question:

Councillor Fournier states that SUS met two (2) days ago, and wants to tweak the policy so that it is stronger. Overall, SUS supports action against the tuition hike. She asks why this is a committee of the Legislative Council even though it deals with legal matters, which are not the Council's purview. Some members think that this should be a committee of the Board of Directors.

Answer:

Member Rishi answers that any recommendations about legal affairs will be sent to the Board. They are going through the Legislative Council because it represents the constituents; the committee does not only pertain to legal concerns. General suggestions will be explored as well, so it is more appropriate to go through the Council.

VP External Affairs Gaither adds that this working group is political too, so it would be relevant to the Legislative Council.

Question:

Councillor Fournier asks why the responsibilities of the working group are very similar to those of the VP External, and asks if this should be a sub-committee of the External Affairs department instead. They are concerned with the redundancy of this working group since these tasks are already being done by the VP External. By opening the doors to more students, a more diverse working group would be formed.

Answer:

Member Rishi answers that there is representation of the External Affairs department on the working group.

Question:

VP External Affairs Gaither asks for more specificity on the responsibilities in question.

Answer:

Councillor Fournier answers that the similar responsibilities include: conducting research on action against the tuition hikes, planning protests, sending emails to departmental representatives, and general action. She suggests combining External Affairs and student forces so that everything can be done under the same committee.



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VP External Affairs Gaither understands this concern, but states that some students are interested in legal action and they should have an opportunity to be involved. Many students who went to the Town Hall in October are interested in legal action, and they have no outlet to explore this interest. Organizing protests and other action is separate from considering legal implications of the tuition hikes. He is in favour of keeping it separate.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that she likes the new format of a Working Group, but it is confusing that the title of the motion is 'Working Group for Legal Action,' even if this is just one aspect of the group. There are limitations to action that SSMU can take, so she would be in favour of changing the name of the Group. She is also concerned that the membership specifically lists Rishi, and states that he can be a member at large without being specified. No other committees have a specific member listed. She asks how long working groups usually last, and if this Working Group should have a specific term.

The Speaker answers that working groups last however long the motion lasts. Otherwise, a new motion would need to be passed to make the working group permanent.

Question:

Councillor Fournier asks if there are any set dates or timelines for the working group.

The Speaker notes that all members are invited to participate in debate.

Answer:

Member Rishi answers that there is no specific timeline for reports because of the nature of the research; it depends on how long it takes to gather information from law professors and legal professionals. Anything that they want to do needs to be passed by the Council or the Board.

Question:

Councillor Sakajiri asks if modifications to the title of the motion require a motion to amend.

Answer:

The Speaker answers yes.



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Question:

Councillor Fournier asks if the Working Group has any set goals, or things they want to accomplish, to keep the working group accountable and to ensure that it will attain tangible results.

Answer:

Member Rishi answers that their greatest goal is for the government to rescind the policy. The other goals are tough to determine, because they have not conducted any research. The whole point is to consult, and any goal will depend on the result of their consultations and research. Once they do so, they can update the committee on their tangible goals.

Councillor Sakajiri motions to amend to change the title of Motion 13a.

Councillor Shannon considers this a friendly amendment.

The amendment is made. The word 'legal' is stricken from the title.

The Speaker states that Councillors can sign up for the committee now.

Councillor Baybayon states that it is important to pass this motion so that the committee can set a timeline and determine action. Once they have their first meeting, they will have a more tangible route to address the issue.

Councillor Shannon states that Rishi is automatically on the committee because he is working the hardest to fight the tuition hikes. When a student brings this type of motion, it is important that they have a seat on the committee it creates. He is happy to be on the committee as a councillor, and highlights that there is not much risk here, and there is no point debating the redundancy of the Working Group. There is no danger of creating this Group. The motion is not perfect, but it has constituent input.

VP Student Life Dakdouki appreciates that there is a low risk of the Working Group, but committee allocations are already quite low, and this is another committee for the VP University Affairs. She does not want to spread Executives too thin. She asks to remove the VP University Affairs from the Working Group.



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Councillor Shannon states that the membership was altered, and agrees that the VP University Affairs might not need to be on the working group, it would be better to have the VP External on the Working Group. He spoke with VP External Affairs Gaither, who made sure that the VP UA was aware. He is open to switching the membership. When consulting one Executive, they had the impression that they consulted all of them, but this might not have been the case. The lack of staffing is not a good reason not to create it, because some committees have not yet met since there are no members, for example the Comité des affaires francophones. This committee will meet and is a priority for members.

Member Rishi states that they met with VP University Affairs, and it is important for them to sit on the committee. Determining whether SSMU can sue the government depends on whether or not the university is doing so. If McGill sues the government, it would be undermining their efforts for SSMU to do so as well. They need a member of the Executive on the Working Group to evaluate how the situation is evolving.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa states that she spoke with Rishi, and would be in favour of solving this issue. She sits on many committees, but she can help out temporarily and shift her participation in other committees. Because of the time constraints of the government's policy, she hopes to resolve this issue soon.

The Speaker encourages amendments.

Councillor Shannon motions to call the question.

The Speaker asks if Councillor Shannon wants to sign up for the working group.

Councillor Shannon answers yes, but does not see why this is a necessary move. The Legislative Council could do this informally.

The Speaker states that they usually appoint Councillors to committees through amendments.

Councillor Shannon motions to amend Motion 13a to make him a member of the committee.

Councillor Duncan wants to sit on the working group as well.

Councillor Shannon states that this amendment is friendly.

The amendment is adopted.

Councillor Shannon motions to call the question.



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Councillor Sakajiri seconds.

Motion 13a is approved unanimously.

Councillor Shannon thanks Rishi for his work.

VP Student Life Dakdouki motions to suspend the rules to add a Notice of Motion.

Councillor Baybayon seconds.

Seeing no opposition, the rules are suspended and the Notice is added.

14. Notice of Motion Regarding Approval of the Student Nutrition Accessibility Club Funding Application

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that she forgot to submit this motion in time, and she will try to pass this motion via email this weekend. Elections SSMU made a mistake in the timing of SNAC's funding, so they cannot operate. The question said that their fee would come into effect in Fall 2024 instead of Winter 2024. Without funding, SNAC cannot provide food boxes to students in need. They can still hold workshops and collaborations, using the money from last semester. They obtained this funding through the SPF, which they cannot apply to again. SNAC applied for funding from the Environment Fund, and it must be approved by the Legislative Council after being approved by the Funding Committee. VP Student Life Dakdouki or VP Kudrati-Plummer can be contacted if there are any questions. She asks Councillors to vote on this via email.

15. Confidential Session

There is a confidential session this evening.

16. Adjournment: **19:54**

The Speaker declares the meeting adjourned at 19:54.

Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024