



## 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 LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PUBLIC MINUTES

April 18th, 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, April 18th, 2024 at 18:00.

*La rencontre régulière bimensuelle du Conseil législatif de l'AEUM se tiendra dans la salle Lev Bukhman du Centre universitaire et par vidéoconférence le jeudi 18 avril à 18:00.*

### 1. Call to Order: **18:09**

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 18:09.

### 2. Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker 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

The Speaker takes attendance.

Present are: Councillors Rajan (Proxy Sofia Garofalo), Baybayon, Sakajiri, Renaud, Tai, Yang, Wehbe, Shannon, Nounke, Grall-Johnson, Mabilia, Foxman (Proxy Asma Khamis), Fournier (Proxy Amelia Whitcomb), Gertsvolf, Maselli, President Ashkir, VPs Koulibaly, Dakdouki, Kudrati-Plummer, Gaither, Katchelewa.



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Absent: Councillors Porter, Li, Chemaly, Trica-Mavrodin, Rylo, Fraser, Duncan, Li, Zukerman, VP, Barlas, General Manager Marcus-Sells.

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

The Agenda is distributed.

The Speaker notes that Elections SSMU is present for a presentation and asks for someone to move their presentation up.

VP External Affairs Gaither motions to this effect.

Seeing no opposition, this change is made.

Seeing no opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

#### 5. [Report of the Steering Committee](#) (3)

The Speaker presents the Report of the Steering Committee. They met on Tuesday and discussed two new motions and notices of motions that are now being presented as motions. They finalized the end-of-year feedback form, which will be distributed at the end of the meeting. He asks everyone to fill it out to help improve meetings for next year. He thanks everyone for a great year and notes that there will be a confidential session for the Elections SSMU report.

#### 6. [Presentation by Elections SSMU](#)

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) gives the report on the Winter Referendum and 2024-2025 Executive Elections. There were 4,306 (19.1%) votes in the Executive elections, an increase from last year. This was attributed to the extended campaign period and a combined campaign and polling period, which allowed for a more efficient period. Two positions did not have any candidates, which is why they are holding a by-election for the President and VP Finance positions now. Only two positions were contested, and three were uncontested, which disincentivized voting. The election was promoted online through Instagram and FaceBook, and Executives promoted the election as well. There is a high abstention rate despite promotion efforts. The Executive election and Winter referendum were on different ballots this year, unlike last year, because voter apathy has been attributed to too many questions on one ballot overwhelming students. Having two ballots makes voting more accessible, and increased voter turnout. There was a high spike of turnout after the first email blasts, followed by peaks during following emails. There is also a last-minute peak during the last hours of the election,



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which is not attributed to email blasts. There is an important relationship between email blasts and voter turnout, although many people have unsubscribed from the emails and are hard to reach. Many people complain about election emails being spam, even though the emails stop being sent once they vote. There are some ways to improve email communications while encouraging students to vote. In the referendum, there were 4,332 votes (19.2%), up from last year. Having separate ballots helped. There were 19 questions, and 18 were fee-related, and the other one regarded the nomination of next year's auditor. The Queer Equity Support fee, Walksafe fee increase, BSN fee increase, LICM fee renewal and increase, Clubs fee increase, Campus Life fee renewal and increase, Student Academic Support Services fee increase, ASN fee increase, Library Improvement Fund fee renewal, Keep Me Safe fee renewal, creation of Students Rights fee and fund, the nomination of the auditor, and the MUSTBUS and Student Support student-initiated questions were approved. The only questions that failed were the SSMU Membership fee increase, the Student Services Referral fee increase, and the First-Year Fee renewal. There is a general apathy towards SSMU generally, resulting in the failure of some fees. Often, students do not research the policies and fees and vote based on the names of the fees. This can be reflected in the referendum results, and students vote no without knowing what the fee is for. Email blasts were more successful than they were for the Executive election, so they are clearly effective. Students are more enticed to vote in the referendum than in the Executive elections. There were instances of violations, which will be explained in the confidential session. There were reports of slate campaigning and some people were found responsible. Elections SSMU has internal processes to regulate elections and ensure fairness. There is also not enough clarity for online campaigning. The last time the IRs of Elections & Referenda were updated was in 2017, and since then online campaigning has increased. There are also too many referendum questions. If they were split into different referendums, more students would vote. They could have a referendum for fees and another for other questions. They would like to see ISGs taking more initiatives and having their own referendums, because they are independent from SSMU. The Daily ran their own referendum this year. There were not many candidates for Executive positions because the election was not well advertised, and students do not read the listservs. So, people who wanted to run for President were only able to do so in the by-election. There is also low voter turnout and they had a discrepancy between the departure of the previous CEO and the new one, meaning that many internal processes were delayed and caused disruptions. There are also no rules for online campaigning, because the rules are left up to the CEO. This causes reports of violations, and they urgently need to determine regulations because online platforms are the principal manner of campaigning. Elections SSMU is working on some initiatives such as renewing in-person voting, as SSMU has not done so in many years, and adjusting the IRs to reflect the current situation. For example, the IRs govern where posters can be placed but each building has its own rules, so many times porters rip posters down. There are also norms on how to campaign in our outside buildings, and often these norms contradict themselves. The CEO stands for questions.

The Speaker entertains questions.



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VP Student Life Dakdouki states that Services have suggested that Services' names be included in the referendum questions themselves, and that campaign and voting periods be separated to ease campaigning and advertising. She asks if there is any chance of changing the voting and campaigning this to reduce overlap, because it is difficult to reach voters before they fill their ballots.

The CEO answers that he agrees that the campaign period should overlap less with the voting period, but this was not possible this semester because the Legislative Council approved the dates in advance. This is important though, because often students vote when they receive the email notification that elections are open. Concerning the names of the fees, Elections SSMU uses the wording proposed in the Council motions, so it is up to the Service to decide on the name and Elections SSMU cannot change them once they are approved by the Legislative Council. Students can change the name of questions that are signature-led, though.

Proxy Garofolo states that AUS got complaints that there was no advertising for the by-election, and they ask if this is typical of by-elections and if this could happen again.

The CEO answers that this by-election had a short time period, as they wanted to get it done before the end of the year and it overlapped with final exams. They did send emails and advertised the election on social media, but many students unsubscribed from the emails which makes it hard to advertise. The link to the debate was published on Instagram, too.

7. Confidential Session:
  - a. There is a Confidential Session this evening.
8. Reports by Committees **(12)**
  - a. Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy Committee – **CANCELLED**
  - b. [Indigenous Affairs Committee](#)

VP University Affairs Katchelewa presents the Indigenous Affairs Committee Report. She states that the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner left at the beginning of term, so she is trying to find a new commissioner but it has been difficult due to the low number of Indigenous students at McGill. She has had other applicants, but they did not fit the mission of the portfolio. The Committee has not been convened since the commissioner left, but they voted by email in the meantime. Mohawk Mothers are continuing to push for an investigation into the New Victoria Hospital site, and VP University Affairs Katchelewa is following this as well as McGill's Office of Indigenous Initiatives' fulfillment of the 52 calls to action. This is in line with the Truth & Reconciliation mandate. They plan to review the land acknowledgement and the committee's mandate. They might celebrate National Indigenous People's Day on June 21 at SSMU, depending on if they find a commissioner or not. The committee approved emergency funding for a student, and they are doing parking reimbursements for some students. VP University Affairs Katchelewa stands for questions.



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#### c. [SSAMMOSA Committee](#)

President Ashkir presents the SSAMMOSA Committee Report. It has been quite active this year, and has been reviewing the Master Plan to recreate it out of its many amended versions. Five key strategic initiatives have been developed to build a new Master Plan next year. The goal of this change is to make the Plan more strategic, as the current version is very operational and specific, rendering some of it irrelevant to SSMU's current situation. They want to have a broader Master Plan with more specific plans for each department. Next steps include better accountability for the Plan's deadlines, which is in line with the new Accountability Plan; reassigning items from previous plans to specific departments and operational plans; creating a maximum of 3 sub-points for each strategic initiative and developing metrics to meet deadlines and ensure accountability. President Ashkir stands for questions.

The Chair entertains questions. He notes that Gallery Members can also participate.

VP Student Life Dakdouki asks if this Committee gets things done, as in her experience last year, it has not been very useful. The Clubs Representative and Service Representative have not been active so their seats are empty, and there are many seats on this committee, so it might require refocusing.

President Ashkir answers that the composition of this committee needs work, as there were many vacant seats. This did mean that the committee met more efficiently. The committee is not responsible for enacting the Master Plan, they are just responsible for its review. Therefore, it is reasonable for the committee to maintain its workload as it did much of it this year, so the workload will be reduced in following years. The addition of the Accountability Committee, which would have the ability to enforce the Master Plan's deadlines, will allow for shared responsibility of the Master Plan.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly adds that there are staff members on this committee as well, who communicate with student members to get things done. Monthly meetings were well attended, even if not all the seats were filled. The committee is not a lot of work, and will hold departments accountable with students' visions for SSMU.

#### d. [Clubs Committee](#) – **RATIFIED**

VP Student Life Dakdouki presents the Clubs Committee Report. They have stopped accepting club applications, per the motion passed at the last meeting. Two clubs were approved, but since then the Committee has stopped meeting since it is the end of the semester. Meetings will resume in the fall.

Seeing no opposition, the Clubs Committee Report is ratified.



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e. [Solidarity Funding Committee](#)

VP External Affairs Gaither presents the Solidarity Funding Committee report. They passed a question for a new fund at the Fall Referendum, which collected \$19,000 this winter. They met once this semester and dispersed \$14,000 in funding, and they may meet again in May to disperse the rest of the funding and refine their internal processes. All groups funded are doing grassroots work in Montreal and Quebec that aligns with SSMU's positions and missions. VP External Affairs Gaither is happy this committee came together smoothly and is excited to pass it on to the next VP External.

VP Student Life Dakdouki asks if there is a plan to limit funding, to avoid running out of funding as they did with regular club funding.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that they have not run into this issue yet, so they do not need to limit funding. Many of these groups need more than \$3,000 to cover things like legal expenses, so they do not want to preemptively limit funding. They are continuously considering how much money they have and how much they can give out to each group.

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that they have \$5,000 left, about enough for one group, which is why she pointed this out. It is easy to run out of funding.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that they are not trying to hold onto a surplus. If they run out of funding, they will go from there.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa asks what proactive means.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that pro-active funding means that groups are funded before their event takes place, and retro-active funding is done based on receipts. They superseded pro-active funding in some cases, for example one Indigenous land defence project. They are too busy to submit receipts, but they asked the person who submitted the funding request, a McGill student, to submit a report on the project's activities by June 1.

The Incoming VP External, Hugo, adds that they discussed having two separate donation periods of \$10,000 each, one in the middle and one at the end of the semester, to prevent funding from running out.

Councillor Sakajiri asks who requests can come from.





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VP External Affairs Gaither asks that there are no criteria, as the fund is open to people beyond McGill. They need direct deposit information or proof that the person who received the funding sent the money to the cause in question, for example via a Go Fund Me.

#### 9. [Generative Discussion on Federal & Provincial Advocacy at SSMU \(VP External\)](#)

VP External Affairs Gaither presents the Generative Discussion on Advocacy at SSMU. He states that this discussion concerns student advocacy bodies, either at the provincial or federal level to lobby specific things. Student associations come together to try to do this. If SSMU wants to associate with a student coalition, they need to pass it via a referendum. It would then be the VP External's job to liaise with the federation to get things going. They would also need a fee to contribute to the federation's advocacy. At the provincial level, there are two student coalitions: the Quebec Student Union that represents 93,000 students. Their members are mostly campus-wide student associations rather than departmental organizations. They do mostly lobbying to make small gains for students, but also host protests and produce research papers which can be used in advocacy. They also distribute surveys to members to bring in new research. Their fee is about \$4.50, and PGSS held a referendum to affiliate, which did not pass. VP External Affairs Gaither thinks that the QSU's politics are not associated with SSMU's, because the QSU is looking for small reforms rather than systemic change. The climate campaign they held pushed universities to decarbonize campus emissions and called upon the government to help fund this. SSMU is more focused on dismantling the systems of oppression that caused the climate crisis. The QSU is also aligned with the Quebec Liberal Party, which is not ideal for SSMU. During the mobilization around the tuition hikes, the QSU, the PLQ, and Bishop's Student Representative Council took credit for it even though SSMU and the Concordia Student Union did most of the work. There is also conflict between the PLQ and the student movement because of the friction of 2012 about those tuition hikes, when the PLQ was in power. The Liberals decided to call an election to quiet down student protestors. SSMU does not want to be seen as a partisan organization to the PLQ, so VP External Affairs Gaither does not think they should align with the QSU. He thinks they should attend their meetings as an observer member and benefit from their research. La CRUES is a broad student mobilization coalition based on collective action. It was founded in 2023 and represents 35,000 students, which followed ASSÉ after its dissolution. La CRUES is made up of faculty and departmental organizations which use combative syndicalism to achieve gains. Combative syndicalism has an important history in Quebec, and many gains have been made through this tactic, such as the development of the public university system. VP External Affairs Gaither encourages everyone to look at La CRUES's position book, because it is more in line with SSMU's positions than that of the QSU. He does not recommend that they affiliate with La CRUES, because they are not interested in campus-wide student associations as they cannot mobilize students. There has been energy for departmental and faculty organizations to associate with La CRUES after the tuition hike mobilizations. This way, students can directly participate in advocacy. SSMU should support the re-emergence of La CRUES by providing resources that smaller student associations may not have. He



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recommends that SSMU be a point of contact between La CRUE and departments and faculties, help disseminate information, assist students or associations in the creation of mobilization campaigns, share resources, assisting delegates at CRUES congresses 4 times a year with travel or translation expenses, and helping address financial needs. He also suggests creating a student mobilization fund to allocate funding to student associations to afford materials or translation services. Moving to the federal level, VP External Affairs Gaither reminds everyone that the federal government is not responsible for education as this is a provincial responsibility. However, the federal government funds provinces, and both governments fight on what to use money for. So, advocating at the federal level is important for making gains for students. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) are the two principal federations, and they represent close to 100,000 students. SSMU has belonged to both associations in the past, with CFS in the 1980s and they left CASA in 2005. Both advocate on different issues: CASA is known to be present on Parliament Hill, but they have only succeeded in organizing a meet and greet with ministers this year; CFS has been silent this year and VP External Affairs Gaither has not contacted them much. He will link a memo about how the first Canadian student federation began at McGill in the 1920s for further reading. The Undergraduates of Canadian Research-Intensive Universities (UCRU) is made up of the student associations of the U15, ideally with all 15 members, which are from Canada's elite universities. UCRU was formed in 2015 and SSMU joined in 2021 after leaving CFS. The Board of Directors passed an interim provision to affiliate SSMU to UCRU, and this provision must be renewed every year but has never been. Last year, the VP External Affairs participated in UCRU on their Board, despite not being officially affiliated. VP External Affairs Gaither and President Ashkir went to Ottawa in February for their lobby week, and he participated in some of UCRU's other activities. UCRU has some issues, despite being a good idea. They struggle with a strong sense of membership. They have many observer members who are not willing to fully participate, making the organization unstable. UCRU is trying to be the alternative for CASA and CFS, but no one is participating. Some issues include lack of finances, because no student associations fund UCRU's activities. There is no organizational stability; people are interested in participating but some are not. Student associations also have a turnover each year, meaning that there is no institutional stability and slow advancement. There is no public presence, so no one knows what it is. There is no political strategy, and their goals are unclear. It is unclear how different UCRU is from other student federations, and there is no justification for membership exclusivity to U15 universities. Concordia is not in the U15, even though VP External Affairs Gaither has done much meaningful work with the CSU this year. He recommends that SSMU should continue to participate in UCRU as a non-official member, and try to invite them to hire an Executive Director to get things flowing. Perhaps one of the students on their research committee could be their Director. They might want to talk with other federations, but this decision will be up to the next Executives. There is a demographic of students who are interested in working on Parliament Hill in the future, perhaps in professional lobbying. SSMU should form a committee or ad-hoc group to put together research for the SSMU that advocate for their interest and help link students to Parliament. The McGill name is very important, more so than the U15 name. Many ministers have passed through McGill, so they will be





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more willing to meet with SSMU. Executives and students should do more of the work themselves. VP External Affairs Gaither is not recommending associating with any provincial or federal organization, but recommends staying in touch with them and trying to support their initiatives. They should not wait for a critical juncture to get involved in politics. Through the Community Solidarity Fund, SSMU is beginning to contribute to the political space outside SSMU by funding grassroots groups. The same thing can occur with lobbying groups.

The Speaker thanks VP External Affairs Gaither for his discussion.

President Ashkir motions to constrain the rest of the discussion to 10 minutes.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa seconds and amends the time limit to 5 minutes.

President Ashkir is amenable to this.

Seeing no opposition, the discussion is extended by 5 minutes.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa states that VP External Affairs Gaither did not recommend continuing association with UCRU but recommends supporting their activities, and asks for clarification on his recommendation. He also mentioned that he sits on their Board of Directors, so she asks for clarification on the link between SSMU and UCRU.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that SSMU will no longer be an affiliated member of UCRU and thus will no longer be on their Board. They were a Board member this year because of a logistical error from last year, which had no monetary effect. He suggests continuing to be an observer member, and they can lend a hand with research and advocacy committees without being an official decision maker, Board member, or Executive. The problem is low engagement among other member associations, so he worries that without SSMU's support, UCRU will collapse. They should participate more in UCRU than CASA or CFS.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly clarifies that translation needs are only for La CRUES, rather than UCRU.

VP External Affairs Gaither states that there are translation needs for both, La CRUES is provincial and UCRU is federal. La CRUES's meetings are mostly in French so they would require French to English translation to allow McGill to participate. The issue with UCRU is that there is not enough French spoken to invite francophone universities such as Université de Montréal and Université Laval to the association. Ensuring English to French translation is important for UCRU.



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Councillor Sakajiri asks about the pros and cons of advocating on McGill's own behalf rather than with a student association at the federal level.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that they have had mixed success writing and meeting with MPs, because many former students are willing to meet while MPs from other provinces are less so.

President Ashkir motions to extend the discussion by 5 minutes.

Councillor Sakajiri seconds.

Seeing no opposition, the discussion is extended by 5 minutes.

VP External Affairs Gaither adds that many ministers in the Liberal Party of Canada are from Quebec or even Montreal, so they are generous to SSMU. It would cost a lot for SSMU to mobilize itself, as it would require preparing research and policy documents, travelling to Ottawa, and more. The UCRU Lobby Week cost more than \$10,000, just for a week in Ottawa for two people. This option could be explored if future Executives wish to do so.

Incoming VP External Hugo states that VP External Affairs Gaither discussed giving students a framework to mobilize against issues they care for, and that he mentioned that Concordia students are very involved in politics. He asks if it would be possible to share lobbying efforts with Concordia, as opposed to advocating alone.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that this would be possible. He notes that Concordia's politics agree less with lobbying as a tactic; they are looking to join La CRUES. McGill students agree with lobbying a bit more, rather than combative syndicalism. The political situations on both campuses are different as well. It would take some work to figure out how to create a committee of student mobilizers.

Councillor Sakajiri states that it already feels as though SSMU is self-representing at UCRU, because VP External Affairs Gaither and President Ashkir went to Ottawa and advocated on McGill's behalf.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that his trip to Ottawa was part of the UCRU Lobby Week, where they discussed student grievances. McGill's name was useful sometimes, but sometimes it was not useful at all. It was interesting to see the results based on the different discussion tactics used.

Seeing no further speakers, the discussion item is elapsed.

## 10. Recess, [Consent Items](#) (5)



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The Speaker asks everyone to fill out the Consent Items form. If someone holds a Consent Item for debate, the Speaker will call on them to debate.

#### 11. Motions for Approval

The Speaker states that Motions 11c and d were consented to.

- a. [Motion Regarding the Association of McGill Professors of Law \(AMPL\) Strike](#) –  
**APPROVED**

Councillor Shannon presents Motion 11a. He states that the AMPL is a union of law professors. Most professors at McGill are attempting to unionize, and the Law Faculty started this trend a few years ago. The Faculty of Arts also tried to unionize this year. AMPL is on strike, and they have used one strike day out of five. Their strike day was not very effective. AMPL is conscious that going on strike right before grades are released is a big deal, as it will delay grades being released and could even delay graduation. AMPL does not think this will occur and this is not their goal, but they want students to reach out to the University claiming this so that their cause moves faster. SSMU should support AMPL because AMPL supported the TAs' labour union, and labour unions support each other. They believe that McGill is negotiating unfairly with AMPL and taking advantage of an imbalance of power. AMPL is asking for a 1.5% inflation increase; comparatively, the Dean's salary is much higher than the professors' salaries, which are already lower than other Canadian universities' law professors. The salaries are similar to other schools in Quebec, but not other universities comparable to McGill outside the province. U de M is going to pay their professors more than McGill does. This strike may impact a conference being held this summer, and it will likely be cancelled if the strike continues and will look bad for McGill and SSMU. If the motion passes, SSMU would be writing a statement in support of AMPL; the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator was consulted and VP University Affairs Katchelewa is seconding the motion because she represents them at the University and knows that the statement is not too harsh. They are not calling on students to go on strike; the statement supports the professors. All exams will go on during the strike, and professors are still allowed to answer exam-related questions. Councillor Shannon stands for questions.

The Speaker entertains questions.

Councillor Sakajiri asks if a similar motion could have come through for the AGSEM strike, to confirm SSMU's position on the TA strike. He does not recall discuss a statement for that issue.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that he wrote a statement in support of AGSEM and it was released on behalf of the Executive Committee. The Executive can release statements; the law statement would be released on behalf of the Legislative Council rather than the Executive and would be signed by the Council. They could also sign it from SSMU.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.



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The Speaker entertains voting.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11a is unanimously approved.

b. Motion Regarding Accountability at the SSMU – **APPROVED**

President Ashkir presents Motion 11b. He states that it was presented two meetings ago and has since undergone minor changes, but has not changed in substance. There is an Accountability Plan in the motion that will be implemented to allow a stronger accountability culture at SSMU. Normalizing accountability will enshrine it in SSMU's procedures and is the central goal of the Plan. The Plan also reconvenes the Accountability Committee, which has not met in a few years, and changes its mandate in order to better govern accountability and rebuild active trust with the membership. An Accountability Commissioner will also be hired, and the job description is in the motion along with terms of reference Committee. President Ashkir stands for questions and is excited to see the changes this motion will have on SSMU.

The Speaker entertains questions.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly asks if there were significant changes made since the last meeting.

President Ashkir answers no.

VP External Affairs Gaither makes a wording change.

Councillor Sakajiri asks where the committee's work will begin, as it has not met in a long time.

President Ashkir answers that the Committee's failure to meet has played a significant role in stagnating SSMU's public accountability. The first steps will be in the hands of the Commissioner, who will be building the committee. Getting people to attend meetings will be the most important step. The committee will need to develop mandates for public accountability to become enshrined in SSMU, which will be presented at the Legislative Council next year. These should be the first priorities of the committee. Once this is done, the committee will start to meet and changes will be made to the committee's structure and mandates each year to allow it to remain dynamic concerning SSMU's accountability needs.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.

VP Student Life Dakdouki states that it makes sense to have a new position for accountability, because no other staff has the capacity to undertake these tasks. She is worried that all the steps to be



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transparent are too heavy for most portfolios, and the Accountability Commissioner can help fill the holes when needed, and help develop strategies to fill the holes. Things will not be fixed instantly, because there will still be limited capacity to address accountability in some portfolios.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly states that this might not be the best way to improve accountability, and that the Plan contains things that are already being done. For example, Executives report to the General Assembly. She is apprehensive about the Commissioner position, because it works closely with the President, who also needs to be held accountable. SSMU also has a tendency to hire new people to solve problems, and this position might not be needed permanently. It might be best to have the Accountability Commissioner hired temporarily to put accountability measures in place. She does not see how accountability will be improved with this plan. That being said, this is a first step, which is a step in the right direction, considering that there are no real accountability measures right now.

President Ashkir answers that this Plan is a first step. At least 60% of the plan are things that are already being done, because these practices are not written down in a single place. The Plan formalizes these procedures as accountability processes at SSMU. The Commissioner's first mandate is to create accountability measures at SSMU; once this is done they can re-evaluate whether the position is necessary. President Ashkir thinks that this would be a few years down the line, though. The role was put into the Governance Department to avoid having the commissioner fall under any Executive's portfolio. They wanted the Accountability Commissioner to have as little oversight as possible, to allow the Accountability Department to work independently and not be controlled by an Executive. There are clauses to ensure that the Committee meets, and if the position is not filled the President will do this job.

VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer is concerned with the Plan's superficial measures. Her biggest concern is that the Accountability Committee does not have much power; the Executives are most often accused of not being held accountable. It is difficult for them to be publicly accountable, and the only real accountability measure is impeachment, which is difficult to do. She feels that the Plan does not change anything for Executives, so if they are not meeting their mandates, the Committee cannot do anything other than tell people about it. Even when people have known about inefficient Executives, changes in leadership have not occurred. This Plan is a good first step to acknowledge SSMU's accountability issues, but VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer does not know how much this will change.

President Ashkir answers that this concern came up a lot in consultations. The Committee cannot fire an Executive or put them on probation, but it is better for them to be able to call Executives out than to do nothing. SSMU currently has accountability measures based on their democratic values, such as impeachment. The Committee's role would be to present other measures than impeachment, and make it easier to impeach Executives only when it is needed. The Committee will present



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accountability violations that are punishable. By making this information available, it will make things more accountable. He hopes that more work will be done in the long term to encourage accountability, with this Plan as a first step.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly states that the Accountability Committee will help the Executive prioritize mandates, because sometimes they have difficulty seeing which goals can be achieved during their term. It would be interesting to make the Commissioner responsible for creating a more specific plan after assessing what is needed, because the current version is hard to follow and needs more role-specific clarifications.

President Ashkir states that the Plan emancipates Executives in many ways, because it makes it clever when their mandates are being achieved. In many cases, Executives are accused of not being accountable, when this is not occurring. He hopes that the Accountability Committee will be effective in this way. Some of the responsibilities of the Commissioner encompass improving accountability procedures; special projects will be created to tackle issues, as the Plan is very broad and needs to be specified for different departments. By maintaining clear mandates and having Executives report on them, they will help Executives.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly motions to amend the Plan to make the Commissioner responsible for updating the plan. As it is right now, the Plan does not allow much flexibility.

President Ashkir is open to this amendment.

The amendment is made.

VP External Affairs Gaither asks if someone will be hired by the end of the year.

President Ashkir answers that there were some delays in passing this motion, but they had hoped to hire someone before the end of the year. There are some internal candidates who have expressed interest, so it could be possible to hire someone soon. The idea of this clause is that at the end of each term, the successes and failures of the Plan will be reviewed, for example by updating training.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote by unanimous consent.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11b is unanimously approved.

- c. [Motion Regarding Amendments to the Internal Regulations of Governance](#) – **APPROVED BY CONSENT**
- d. [Motion Regarding Clubs Committee Structure](#) – **APPROVED BY CONSENT**





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

VP External Affairs Gaither presents Motion 11e. He states that it was sent out earlier as a Notice. Since its presentation, the policy was modified to make the wording clearer. The External Affairs staff will now be responsible for reviewing McGill's investments semi-annually, in June and December and will present their findings as part of the External Affairs report at the end of the year. He hopes everyone has had a chance to read the motion; he stands for questions.

The Speaker entertains questions.

Councillor Renaud asks VP University Affairs Katchelewa about the initiatives taken to communicate the position of SSMU to the Board of Governors.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa asks if Councillor Renaud is referring to the SSMU's Board of Directors or McGill's Board of Governors.

Councillor Renaud answers that she was referring to the university's Board of Governors.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa asks for Councillor Renaud to repeat her question.

Councillor Renaud asks that, since the motion states that it is the VP University Affairs' prerogative to inform the University of the moratorium and SSMU's position, she provide a list of things that have been done to communicate the SSMU's position against harmful military technology and their positive position on divestment.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa answers that only the President sits on the Board of Governors. There have been no questions to the Senate about harmful military technology, as the topic has not been discussed this year because the policies are only discussed when they are renewed. Senators may pose questions in coming years.

President Ashkir clarifies that the Policy would mandate the VP University Affairs to communicate the result of the vote, after the Legislative Council approve or votes down the motion.

VP External Affairs Gaither adds that most of this section is imported from the Policy on Climate Justice, which is expiring this year. This Policy demanded that McGill divest from its fossil fuel investments via a moratorium on ancillary fees. The University divested, but they are maintaining the moratorium and applying it to harmful military investments. The position on divestment would have been communicated as soon as the Policy on Climate Justice was approved, by the VP University



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Affairs. This news will be communicated once the policy is ratified by the Board of Directors. Communication needs to be immediate but can be done in many different ways by the VP UA.

Proxy Whitcomb asks for examples of new ancillary fees and asks how these fees are relevant to harmful military technology, or if this is a pressure tactic used by SSMU.

VP External Affairs Gaither answers that they do not have control over McGill's investments, aside from the President's vote on the Board of Governors. Ancillary fees are not relevant to military technology, but a moratorium is a pressure tactic to encourage McGill to divest because it causes them to draw funding from other sources to invest in their infrastructure and other things on campus. Ancillary fees include administrative charges, technology charges, and more. SSMU could do a better job of communicating their preferences to McGill and perhaps they will do so in the next year, but this is a very interesting tactic due to the tuition hikes, which cause the university to be cut off from funding from below and above.

Councillor Renaud states that Executives reiterated at the winter General Assembly that the moratorium would be renewed in the context of the Climate Justice Policy, despite the Board of Governors' commitments. She asks what has changed at the Board of Governors, leading to the decision not to renew the policy.

VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer answers that there was no concrete plan at the time of the GA, but they did not decide to renew it under the Climate Justice Policy. They discussed it in this context at the time because there was a concern of ending the moratorium early.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly adds that amendments to policies are not made by the Executive as a whole. At the General Assembly, she wanted to extend the moratorium under the Climate Justice Policy, so she may have given Councillor Renaud the impression that this would occur. She wanted to renew it for the Climate Justice Policy, but ultimately decided not to.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.

Councillor Renaud asks for the timer to be shared on Zoom.

The Speaker answers yes.

Councillor Renaud states that her constituency, the Varsity Council, endorses this policy and wants to see the university divest from the military industrial complex. However, they are opposed to the proposed pressure tactic, which disproportionately affects Athletics and prevents them from obtaining funding for crucial renovations to the athletics facilities, which are used by 10,000 students and 20



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varsity teams. It is not specified in the motion what funding is being sought after, but prevents them from seeking an increase or bringing a new fee. Athletics does not want to increase the Athletics Fee, they are looking to re-introduce the \$10/semester fee in place between 2004 and 2019 that contributed to many projects in the Currie Sports Complex, such as resurfacing the Forbes Field and Molson Stadium, creating gender-neutral washrooms in the Currie Gym, expanding the fitness centre, renovating the pool, and collaborating with the City of Montreal to create Rutherford Park. The moratorium has prevented crucial renovations in the past four years; for example, the arena will be closed next year so hockey teams will need to relocate and free skating will not take place. This could happen for the pool and fieldhouse if funding is not obtained. This lack of funding affects all students using the recreational facilities, not only varsity athletes. It is unfair that this issue has been consistently brought up since 2019, and that it is being renewed when there has been no initiative to communicate SSMU's desire for divestment from the military industrial complex to the Board of Governors. This should occur before any moratorium is approved for the next five years. Councillor Renaud clarified that Athletics is a self-funded unit, so they do not get any money from the government and they do not get much from McGill. McGill only gives them a fraction of the money they receive from the Minister of Higher Education, so most of their funding comes from ancillary fees and donations. This lack of funding has created major issues for Athletics, and the moratorium will have a huge effect on Athletics, and she asks for SSMU's position to be communicated to the Board of Governors.

VP University Affairs Katchelewa states that the first time the policy was adopted, the VP University Affairs notified the Board of Governors once the position was approved via a vote. The notification would come after the policy is adopted by the Legislative Council, so they cannot notify the Board of Governors beforehand.

VP External Affairs Gaither states that there are many considerations being blindsided by Athletics' loss of funding. They are discussing \$10,000,000+ in investments into companies involved with the military industrial complex. SSMU's position will be communicated, but this disruptive tactic is being used to pressure the University to divest from institutions of harm. The disruption will be unpleasant for some, but he encourages Athletics to mobilize on this topic to resolve this issue and re-introduce the \$10 athletics fee. He can discuss with Councillor Renaud about an athletics-specific campaign that pressures the Board of Governors to divest. This is an important policy to bring forward at this time.

Councillor Renaud clarifies that this pressure tactic has been disproportionately disruptive for Athletics only, and they have been the only ones advocating for this issue over the past five years. She does not want to take away from the urgency of divestment, but it is difficult to support it given that there has not been a strong position communicated to McGill. Athletics has constantly explained how this moratorium is bad for McGill students over the past five years. Sports might seem trivial, but they are crucial to student life and well-being. The Currie gym is accessible for all Milton Parc residents



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outside of the McGill community, not only students. If they do not have money to renovate the complex, it will reduce access for customers. She wants to see Athletics mobilize on this issue; several athletes have been involved in Divest McGill. They want to see an official communicated position before the motion is approved. The motion would starve them for another five years.

Proxy Whitcomb asks if Executives have considered making an exception for Athletics' ancillary fees, and if this is even possible. Many students complain about the gym and athletics facilities without knowing about this policy. It would be useful to have student support for the moratorium by publicizing SSMU's stance, because they are concerned about the athletics facilities.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly states that exceptions cannot be made for a specific fee, because SSMU does not manage them. Funds are managed in any way that the University sees fit. Consultations were done with many student groups to share information about the moratorium. She agrees that if this motion is approved, there should be efforts made to educate students about the moratorium and its consequences.

Councillor Renaud states that when the Facilities Improvement Fee was in effect, it was subjected to reporting to the Legislative Council. They have specific projects to prove how the fee was used. They are asking for a \$10 non-opt outable fee every semester, which is not a large financial burden considering some of the SSMU fees considered this year.

Councillor Renaud motions to amend Motion 11e to allow the \$10 Facilities Improvement Fee to go to referendum.

VP External Affairs Gaither does not consider this a friendly amendment as the fee is not managed by students. The Policy can be amended after this Motion, once it is determined whether or not SSMU can run this fee instead of McGill.

Seeing no second, the amendment fails.

VP Student Life Dakdouki commends the work of Councillor Renaud. She will reach out to her to see if there is anything SSMU can do to help Athletics pressure McGill or run an information campaign. It would take more research than they have time for today. She would be happy to set up Councillor Renaud with the incoming VP Student Life to work on this.

Councillor Renaud thanks VP Student Life Dakdouki. Athletics would be open to discussing with SSMU to change the funding model to renew their fee, and perhaps make it similar to the Library Improvement Fund. It is perplexing that such a big measure is being taken without a strong position being communicated about this policy to the relevant body. She proposes a statement being released before the policy is adopted.



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VP External Affairs Gaither states that it is important to pass these amendments now given the expiration of the Climate Justice Policy. He notes that Councillors have the power to bring forward motions; there has been and will be more time to amend the policy further. The changes proposed can be implemented now, and at a later date, they can discuss further amendments for Athletics. Proxy Khamis states that it is important for SSMU to work with Athletics, and it is unfair to say that they had ample time to amend the policy as many changes occur over the years. This is an important pressure tactic but it is unfair that it has a disproportionate effect on Athletics. They encourage collaboration between SSMU and Athletics to help Athletics make changes to the fee and circumvent the moratorium.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote by unanimous consent.

Councillor Renaud is opposed to Motion 11e.

The Speaker entertains a vote by Google Form.

Motion 11e passes with 8 in favour, 3 opposed, and 2 abstentions.

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly understands that this Motion passing is upsetting for Athletics. As discussed at the General Assembly, the University has discretionary funding, so SSMU and Athletics can explore alternative means of funding so that McGill reprioritizes where the funding goes. They have an obligation to provide decent buildings if they want to maintain their reputation. She is happy to help figure out a solution, along with the VP Student Life.

The Speaker states that they have reached their adjournment time of 21:00.

President Ashkir motions to extend until 21:30, and asks the Dais to be strict on time.

VP External Affairs Gaither seconds. He asks to forgo his report.

The Speaker states that VP External Affairs Gaither can present a short report.

Seeing no opposition, the meeting is extended until 21:30.

## 12. Reports by Councillors (3)

### a. [Nursing \(NUS\)](#)



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Councillor Mabia presents the Nursing Report. She states that the President and COO worked on updating their constitution and bylaws, which passed at referendum, meaning that NUS has a new Council structure. Elections were held and winners were announced April 15. The VP Academic worked on the Faculty's accreditation and they will hold a preparation session. Students were given an incentive to fill out course evaluations by providing a 1% grade increase if a 75% response rate was reached, and it was successful. The VP Global Health is working on the Warm Hearts project, but this was moved to next year due to bad weather. The VP Internal sent out the final newsletter and there is an upcoming council retreat. Nursing Prom is also happening, as well as the Nursing Grad Gala. The VP Sustainability is hosting a scrubs resale at the end of the semester, and they are working to collect expired materials from hospitals, which will be used for lab training. A student café will be opening in the fall and NUS was approved for a Sustainability Fund grant of \$2,500. The Café Coordinator role will be included in the constitution and will oversee the café. There were several issues with summer placements, meaning that many students are not yet in a placement. Class representatives are in communication with clinics to resolve the issue by May 1.

#### 13. Executive Reports:

##### a. VP External

VP External Affairs Gaither presents his report. He states that Councillors can read it. He did not include that he wrote up the Generative Discussion earlier. He stands for questions.

##### b. VP University Affairs

VP University Affairs Katchelewa presents her report. She states that the bulk of her time is spent hiring, as she is hiring for 7 new positions but wants to hire people who represent the will of students and have a good match with the role they will be filling. She has been prioritizing the Indigenous Affairs Commissioner role, because she has had difficulty filling this position. She has attended her regular meetings at SSMU and with the University. Every McGill hiring committee requires a student representative, and VP University Affairs Katchelewa sat on the Re-Appointment Committee for the Deputy Provost Student Life & Learning, the Vice-President Administration & Finance Hiring Committee, and other committees have elapsed. Meetings are long but it is a good place for her to communicate SSMU members' needs; new hires need to understand the current climate on campus and that the University's mission is to serve students. She also sits on the Academic Policy Committee which is working on the PASL implementation, which will have a large impact on all faculties and will prioritize learning in line with modern technologies. A Student Rights & Advocacy Commissioner has been hired and will be working on this.

##### c. VP Student Life – **CANCELLED**





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#### 14. Question Period:

##### a. Questions from Constituent

- i. The SSMU has announced that the University Centre and SSMU Office will be closed, services will be reduced and there will be delays in inquiries. Will the Executive committee elaborate on the changes that have been implemented by sending out a mass email to all students to ensure transparency?

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly answers that the 2-week closure was intended to allow staff to prioritize internal work, which has not previously been possible due to their overwhelming amount of outward-facing work. There will be no fundamental changes as a result of the closure, but as they assess staff's internal and external workload, any changes to operations and Services will be communicated to students via email and other usual channels.

- ii. The VP finance has said that the 2023-2024 budget accounts for a \$723,000 deficit, whereas the following year's budget accounts for a \$460,000 deficit. What will actually be reduced during this time?

VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer answers that the 2024-2025 budget cuts every possible cost and will impact the quality of services, including software expenses, professional fees, event budgets, and spending that does not come from specific funds. There is a document linked in the budget motion that outlines all changes. VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer is also reachable by email.

- iii. Kudrati-Plummer explained that 92 per cent (%) of next year's proposed budget will go toward salaries, and the remaining 8 per cent accounts for other fees and costs. Did the executives take any pay cuts to attempt to keep SSMU open?

VP Finance Kudrati-Plummer answers that no staff nor Executives have taken any pay cuts. Executives are paid the lowest salary of all full-time staff (\$37,842 or \$18/hour). With benefits, their salaries make up 7% of the salaries budget. Executives' salary cuts would not have prevented the closure as the closure was not a cost-saving measure.

- iv. The McGill Daily and Tribune reached a settlement with SSMU's ex-president Daryanani during the same time as SSMU made the announcement for the interruption in student services. Has the SSMU settled with Daryanani, or is the SSMU still defending the lawsuit?



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VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly answers that settlements with the newspapers and the service interruption are separate events. The SSMU has not settled with Daryanani.

v. When will the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine be ratified?

VP Student Life Dakdouki answers that there is a safeguard order in place that prevents the Board of Directors from ratifying the Policy. There was a public hearing on the injunction request on March 25, and they are still waiting for the hearing. The safeguard will be in place until a judgement is made.

### 15. Announcements:

a. End of Year Feedback Form

The Speaker announces that there is a feedback form available to Councillors, which will help the Governance department understand how they can improve for next year.

b. IRs of Sustainability & Operations

VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly announces that there will hopefully be tenants in the University Centre in the next year. McGill is interested in putting a food vendor in the Building, but any tenants have to be approved by the Legislative Council. Many people are not happy with the dining halls, and Councillors are responsible for being students' voices. VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly would not want to see a dining hall in the University Centre. This will be a long-term decision as tenants remain in the University Centre for 10 years.

c. Closing Statement from the President

President Ashkir thanks Councillors for their attendance and good work this year. It is important that their voices are heard, to maintain democracy through the Legislative Council and SSMU. He has seen the Council for three years now, and has seen different meetings with conflicts and amazing work being done to improve many different things. He believes that Councillors deserve commendation for attending long meetings and doing good work. He also thanks the Dais for their great work.

The Speaker acknowledges the Legislative Council and SSMU veterans, including VP Student Life Dakdouki, VP Sustainability and Operations Koulibaly, Councillor Sakajiri, and Councillor Tai.

### 16. Adjournment: **21:22**

The Speaker declares the meeting adjourned at 21:22.



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Alexandre Ashkir, SSMU President 2023-2024

APPROVED