



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

January 16, 2025

The regular bi-monthly Legislative Council Meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held in Leacock 232 on Thursday, January 16, 2025 at 18:00.

1. Call to Order: **18:07**

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 18:07.

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'ÉUM reconnaît que l'Université McGill est située sur le territoire traditionnel et non cédé des nations Anishinaabeg et Haudenosaunee. L'ÉUM 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'ÉUM s'engage à respecter les lois et coutumes traditionnelles de ces territoires.

3. Attendance

The Speaker takes attendance.

Present: Councillors Chen, Kalaga, Weissman, Renaud, Tick, El Murr, Bérubé, Crema Black, Kohler, Zhao, Gowdy, Abu-Alkhair, President Taylor, VPs Zahidah, Jolicoeur, Berglas, Solomon.

Absent: Councillors Hamele, McKay, Punjabi, Engo, Farhat.

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



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The Agenda is distributed.

President Taylor moves the confidential session up so that the confidential Elections SSMU presentation can take place directly after the public one. He adds Motion 15e.

The Speaker convenes the Steering Committee to review Motion 15e.

After being reviewed by the Steering Committee and approved by the Legislative Council, Motion 15e is added to the Agenda.

Seeing no further changes or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

5. Minutes for Approval
 - a. [SSMU Legislative Council Public Minutes 2024-12-05](#) – **APPROVED**

The Minutes are distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Minutes are approved.

6. Presentations
 - a. [Elections SSMU Fall Semester Presentation](#)

The Chief Electoral Officer introduces herself and presents the Fall 2024 election results. She states that the Fall Referendum had 17% voter turnout, which is lower than last semester by 2%, but above the quorum requirement of 15%. They are trying to improve voter turnout this semester by increasing in-person campaigning. There were 9 questions, all of which were fee questions, one of which was a fee creation question. All but two questions were approved. Email blasts help voter turnout, and they send multiple so that people do not forget to vote; the data shows that people usually vote on the first day after receiving an email reminder. The fall by-election for the two VP positions did not meet quorum as there was only 11% turnout, 4% below quorum. The two questions concerned the election of a VP Student Life and VP Operations & Sustainability, both of which are invalid. The timelines for the fall referendum and by-elections were not held at the same time, which may have contributed to low turnout as students felt that they had already voted and did not want to vote again. They sent multiple email blasts, but they did not have the same effect as they did for the fall referendum, especially the second email blast. The referendum question to impeach the President had high voter turnout, with low abstention rates. Most people voted against the impeachment, and there was a low abstention rate, which is important. Elections SSMU sent out three email blasts, which increased voter turnout especially in the beginning of the voting period, as the issue was quite contested so people were more inclined to vote early in the polling period. As usual, there are issues with voter apathy and SSMU



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image. Students do not feel represented and they do not feel as though their vote will have an impact. Elections SSMU wants to share more information about the importance of elections for students and make processes clearer. During the impeachment referendum, it was difficult to monitor online posts because Elections SSMU cannot control who posts on social media. They also want to increase the number of candidates to make elections more exciting and representative, so that students feel as though their vote has an impact. They will seek in the winter to have a low number of uncontested positions. Potential solutions include promoting elections and referenda, such as having Executives involved in elections; increasing in-person voting and campaigns, such as tabling events to inform students about elections; and amending the IRs of Elections & Referenda. Regulations on online campaigning will be changed, to improve Elections SSMU's ability to monitor campaigning on social media. The CEO stands for questions.

VP Solomon asks why the Community Solidarity Fee question was put on a different ballot than the other referendum questions.

The CEO answers that this issue occurred because it was sent as a separate message from the other questions, so she missed it when creating the ballot.

VP Solomon asks if the CEO plans to transmit the documents differently in the future to prevent this.

The CEO answers that she will do so in the future by consolidating all the questions into one Excel sheet and having them double-checked by her colleagues.

VP Zahidah asks if there is a conclusion on the quorum issue, as it was brought up at the Board of Directors. It is unclear whether the quorum will apply to elections, referenda, by-elections, or all three.

The CEO answers that there is no conclusion right now, but the IRs specify that the 15% quorum requirement only stands for referenda. The IRs should be modified to add the quorum requirement for elections and by-elections as well.

7. Confidential Session

- a. There is a Confidential Session this evening.

The public session resumes at 18:46.

8. Announcements

- a. Welcome to the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator!



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The Policy & Advocacy Coordinator introduces herself, and states that she will be attending all Legislative Council and Board of Directors meetings from now on. She notes that she is a mandatory consultation for any motions, and she is happy to help with anything related to governance. Councillors will receive an email from her with important information.

b. Committee Recruitment Call (Speaker Dong)

The Speaker states that he will send out another call for committees next week. There are many new Councillors, so the Speaker reminds everyone that Councillors need to sit on at least one committee.

c. [Motion template update](#) (Speaker Dong)

The Speaker states that the Dias and the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator have been updating the Motion template following feedback from Councillors. All the changes are highlighted, and will hopefully help Councillors write better motions. If anyone has any questions or feedback, consultations are open until the weekend.

d. Looking for a Fridge (VP Solomon)

VP Solomon announces that he is working on a food bank project to start at the end of the month. If anyone has leads on a fridge, they should let him know.

Councillor El Murr states that EUS might have an extra fridge, since Frostbite just got a new fridge. He will ask around to see if he can give it to VP Solomon.

Councillor Crema Black states that the MUSA office has a small fridge as well.

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

The Speaker presents the Report of the Steering Committee, which met on Friday to review business for tonight and earlier this week to review the motion template. They looked at the Elections SSMU presentation. Faculties reporting at the next meeting should submit their reports on time, otherwise their reports will be counted as late. Late reports accumulate and are referred to the Accountability Committee. The Speaker stands for questions.

10. Executive Reports (3)

a. [President](#)



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President Taylor presents his report. He attended the Board of Directors meetings. On November 26 they ratified fee motions, approved the new Committee Terms of Reference, amended the Internal Regulations of Sustainability & Operations, appointed 2 Directors to the Nominating Committee, and mandated the VP Student Life to work on the 3-year Services Plan. On December 3, they appointed 2 Directors to committees, and on January 7, they appointed a Director to the Finance Committee, appointed a candidate to the Judicial Board, and approved a budget for a legal review on the Motion on Gender Neutral Washrooms. The Nominating Committee is conducting interviews for members at large, and conducting its last round of interviews for Board of Directors members. The Governance Reform Committee is meeting for the first time this week, to continue working on the IRs of Elections & Referenda and begin working on the Consultation Policy. He received information from SHHS this afternoon that students did not want their reading break reduced, and that they want frosh to be longer. This puts the administration in a tough spot, because they need to try to extend frosh without affecting the academic year. There will be a meeting about this next week, so frosh coordinators should expect an email about this. The Board of Governors met on January 7, where the VP Communications made an interesting remark about withholding information from students. The Management Agreement is currently at a standstill because the MOA needs to be renegotiated. MOA discussions are beginning to ramp up before the deadline in February. The services meetings took place to outline changes to the evaluation process to make it clearer and more institutionalized. They have received 15 club applications, most of which are for interim club status. They will be looked at by the new Director of Clubs & Services, who will send their recommendations to the Legislative Council. Gerts Cafe is being set up soon, and will hopefully open in the next few weeks. Gerts Bar opened last Monday, and had about 150 people show up on the first night. Mondays are popular due to trivia, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are slower, while Thursdays and Fridays are the busiest days. Tuesdays will be Taco Tuesdays once they can serve food and Wednesdays are karaoke night. There is a band on Thursdays and Friday is club night. President Taylor notes that he was not impeached and celebrated a birthday recently.

11. Reports by Councillors (9)

- a. Arts (AUS) - **POSTPONED**
- b. [Sciences \(SUS\)](#)

Councillors Kohler and Zhao present the science report.

Councillor Zhao states that the President is planning the upcoming SUS Gala, and held an open house in November. VP Academic worked on elections, which went well.

Councillor Kohler states that Grad Fall occurred in December, and it was a great success. The VP Academic is working on many academic events.



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Councillor Zhao states that the VP Finance presented their budget in October, and fresh finances have been completed.

Councillor Kohler states that the VP Internal planned a successful Science Games, which Computer Science won. The SUS Grad Ball is taking place in April, and the team is being organized. There are also many events coming up this semester.

Councillor Zhao states that the VP Communications ran Executive takeovers on social media in the fall, and began an interview series and a SUS Tik Tok account. He encourages everyone to follow the account to stay up to date with SUS.

Councillor Kohler states that the VP External secured a sponsorship with Chef on Call for the SUS Council meetings and will organize trivia events this semester. They are also working on club applications.

Councillor Zhao states that VP Sustainability attended a sustainability roundtable and they are starting to work on the human library project, which allows people to share experiences.

Councillor Kohler states that the SUS Deputy Senator was hired, and that the Senator dealt with complaints about the Wellness Hub. There is an accessibility working group taking place.

c. [Management \(MUS\)](#) – **POSTPONED**

Seeing as the Management Councillors are not present, the Management Report is postponed.

12. Committee Reports (3)

a. [Accountability Committee](#)

The Speaker presents the Accountability Committee report on the issue brought up at the last meeting. There was a false appointment made, and the Committee decided that this person's votes should not count. There was only one motion impacted by this. The Committee recommends that Councillor Bongiovanni be removed from his position, that the VP Internal and Elections SSMU coordinate to run FYC elections, and to allow Mr. Bongiovanni to run in said elections. The Speaker stands for questions, and notes that if he cannot answer any questions, he will refer them to the Accountability Commissioner.

VP Solomon asks if the motion impacted by the nullification of Mr. Bongiovanni's vote changes the outcome of that vote's results.



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The Speaker answers that the motion was eventually passed, so this issue does not need to be debated again.

VP Solomon states that the issue in the injunction brought against the Policy Against Anti-Semitism, the vote that was nullified, was the way in which the policy was voted on. If the outcome changes because of the nullification of one vote, the implications would be significant.

The Speaker recommends that VP Solomon follow up with the Accountability Commissioner.

VP Zahidah asks if the Accountability Commissioner suggested a date to run the FYC by-elections.

The Speaker answers that they did not.

13. Question Period (5)

Seeing no questions, the question period is exhausted.

14. Recess, Consent Items (5)

The recess begins at 19:08.

The meeting resumes at 19:18.

The Speaker notes that the motions held for debate include Motions 15a and d.

15. Motions

- a. [Motion Regarding IRs of Representation & Advocacy](#) (VP Berglas) – **APPROVED**

VP Berglas presents Motion 15a, which gives faculties more control over senators' elections. The IRs were also shortened. They stand for questions.

Councillor Bérubé states that the motion is not available.

Councillor Weissman is concerned about the vagueness of this motion, and asks what impact the lack of specificity will have.

VP Berglas answers that rules tend to be overwritten, because those who write the rules want to account for all possible scenarios, which effectively causes confusion because this is not possible. Removing rules gives people more freedom to work within the rules. These IRs were not followed at all



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last year, which does not mean that the rules are not important, but it means that the IRs should be modified to become more relevant and respected.

Councillor Weissman states that there was a change to prioritize student senators and students most affected by issues on issue-specific University committees. He asks why this change was made, how they determine those most affected by an issue, and how the choice will be made between students and student senators.

VP Berglas answers that being a senator and being impacted by the issues debated by the committee are factors that give students precedence for appointment. Some committees affect all students, but some are quite specific, for example the Scholarship Committee. People who have experienced financial difficulty might be better suited for this committee. This rule is not always applicable, because some committees affect all students.

VP Solomon states that this makes sense, and suggests an amendment to make the section clearer.

VP Berglas states that this is a friendly amendment.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.

Councillor Kalaga asks if the appointment process for University committees usually only considers senators. If this is not the case, he asks what the motivation for the change is.

VP Berglas answers that a form is sent to students to gauge interest in University committees. There are not enough student senators for them to fill all the committee seats, because there are about 115 possible students, so most seats are filled by students. VP Berglas also does some targeted outreach as they feel necessary, for example to various clubs.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote by Google Form.

With 10 in favour, 3 opposed, and 5 abstentions, Motion 15a is approved.

- b. [Motion Regarding Interim Club Status for the Green Olive Chinese Christian Club \(GOCCC\)](#) (President Taylor) – **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**
- c. [Motion Regarding Constitution Changes for the McGill Students Chinese Society](#) (President Taylor) – **UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**
- d. [Motion Regarding Interim Provision of IR Elections and Referenda](#) (President Taylor) – **APPROVED**



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President Taylor presents Motion 15d. He states that the IRs of Elections & Referenda are outdated, and the Governance Reform Committee has been working on updating them since August to make them more enforceable and clearer. These are the most recent changes, but the GRC will be working on these through February. This motion serves as a training period for the new changes and will be adjusted accordingly if needed. They will last until the end of the election period, and then the GRC can re-evaluate the changes and make further consultations. The definition of the SSMU was added to the IRs; decisions must now be documented and reasoned by the CEO for institutional knowledge; employees can no longer be removed due to the Collective Agreement, so the section concerning employee removal was changed to suspension to abide by the law. Interim provisions for elections were modified to make it clearer when they can be used, and to allow the Legislative Council to approve interim provisions, since previously only the CEO could do so. A clause was added to mandate the CEO to report to the Legislative Council at the end of each academic year to summarize that year's elections. So, there will hopefully be another presentation in March or April. The transition period for sending motions to the CEO was lowered from 10 to 7 days, because this makes more sense. Referendum periods were modified to account for the MOA regulations, but this might be changed depending on further MOA discussions. Special referendum periods were modified to ensure that they are conducted during the academic year, because the IRs were not clear about this. The campaign period was changed so that it no longer overlaps with the polling period, to measure the effects of campaigning on voting. The nomination period was extended, and members who nominate themselves for Executive positions must now sign a statement of understanding to confirm their agreement to regulations. The signature requirement for the First-Year Council was lowered from 50 to 25, to encourage more first-years to run in positions, especially among non-Quebecois students who are younger than their Quebecois counterparts. Student emails instead of student ID numbers will now be required for elections, because McGill does not give SSMU student ID numbers as they claim that SSMU does not need them; however there are concerns with this, as student emails can easily be forged. The withdrawal clause was modified to allow withdrawal at any time, as in the past withdrawal was only allowed until an hour before the election. A quorum requirement of 15% was cautiously added, and a quorum will be added for by-elections as well, but the percentage will be deliberated by the GRC. Candidates can now be punished for not attending the candidates' meeting, and questions during the candidates' debate must be submitted to the CEO beforehand to prevent inappropriate questions from being posed and to better structure debate. Questions can be submitted during the debate, and regulations on who can ask questions and what kind of questions can be asked are outlined. Candidates must now submit the names of the students involved in their committee, to ensure that only McGill students are involved in campaigns. The rules for student-initiated referendum questions were changed to ensure that at least 1% of students must agree on a question for it to be proposed, because the current requirement does not add up to 1% of students. Referendum questions can now be sent to the Judicial Board for review, and the procedure for doing so is outlined. The IRs were modified to ensure that fee questions are clearer and more regulated. SSMU can no longer be forced to collaborate or sign contracts with external bodies if they are approved by referendum. SSMU



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can be forced to sign contracts with faculty associations, but not to external associations or organizations, to prevent issues such as the Student Support issue. Campus media outlets can now endorse candidates, as they did previously in contravention of the IRs; the IRs were modified to allow an existing norm to continue. The regulations on paper campaigning and handbills were modified, as it is slowly becoming extinct. Sanctions will now be definitively imposed on those who do not follow the rules for putting up posters, as the punishment for illegal campaigning was previously unclear. The practice of setting up candidates' websites was removed, because it is no longer feasible nor requested by candidates. External campaigning was defined and a sanction was developed for it, as was slanderous campaigning. The distribution of gifts to candidates was clarified; making an electoral promise after receiving a gift is not allowed. The provision preventing slate campaigning was removed, to potentially prevent conflict among Executives who do not have a united front. Slate campaigning will be allowed for candidates with a common vision, but students will still vote for individual candidates. Further changes are still to come as the GRC continues to review the IRs. A table of sanctions was created and demerit points were outlined for each violation of the IRs, with a maximum of 20 demerit points, which would cause disqualification from an election. President Taylor stands for questions.

Councillor El Murr asks what prevents someone from illegally campaigning, getting demerit points, and skewing the results in their favour.

President Taylor answers that it is good to have a demerit point scale in the interim period, as there is nothing in place right now. It will be difficult to enforce the demerit points system and to deter people from getting demerit points to campaign illegally to better promote their candidacy.

Councillor Weissman motions to set the adjournment time to 20:05.

Councillor El Murr seconds.

Seeing no opposition, the adjournment time is set to 20:05.

VP Solomon asks if the legitimacy of a referendum question could be referred to an Internal Counsel if the position is filled.

President Taylor answers yes, as they are currently hiring for this position. He suggests adding this as an amendment to the IRs. The IRs still say that the CEO reports to the Governance Manager, but this position has been eliminated so this will need to be changed.

VP Solomon asks if President Taylor considered mandating that questions appear in both English and French on the ballot.



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President Taylor answers that this was not considered, and asks the Policy & Advocacy Coordinator to make note of this suggestion.

President Taylor asks which section VP Solomon wants to modify.

VP Solomon answers that he wants to modify Section 1.7. He asks if Councillors will be consulted on these changes, as it affects the student body.

The Policy & Advocacy Coordinator answers that there will be a form sent to Councillors and students after the Governance Reform Committee has finished its review. They will be welcoming feedback via participation in the GRC or by email.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker entertains debate.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 15d is approved.

- e. [Motion Regarding an Interim Provision to Student Groups](#) (President Taylor) –
UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

16. For Discussion

- a. Scarlett Key Awards (VP Zahidah)

VP Zahidah states that the Scarlett Key Awards are coming up, organized by the McGill Alumni Association. She will send the relevant information to the Council, but notes that Councillors should encourage their constituents to apply.

Councillor Kalaga adds that applications are due on January 31 and require two reference letters.

17. Adjournment: **20:00**

The Speaker declares the meeting adjourned at 20:00.