



**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

December 5, 2024

The regular bi-monthly Legislative Council Meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held in Leacock 232 on Thursday, December 5, 2024 at 18:00.

1. Call to Order: **19:23**

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 19:23. The Acting Speaker for this meeting is Deputy Speaker Fallis.

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.

VP Berglas states that there is no First-Year Council right now, so they should start to follow the Constitution and ensure that all members of the Legislative Council are valid.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that his report will address the lack of elections for the First-Year Council. They need to have elections, and the SSMU should elect First-Year Council representatives.



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They had to appoint a representative to the Legislative Council this year because they could not hold elections.

The Speaker states that the Steering Committee will recess to discuss this issue after attendance is taken.

Present: Councillors Chen, Kalaga, Weissman, Hamel, Renaud, Kim, El Murr, Bongiovanni, Bérubé, Nounke, Engo, Crema Black (proxy Dylan Seiler), Kohler, Zhao, Kumar, Abu Alkhair, Gowdy, Tick, Punjabi, Islam, President Taylor, VPs Zahidah, Jolicoeur, Solomon, Berglas.

Absent: Councillor McKay, Li, Farhat, VP Baltes.

VP Berglas asks if their point of order will be adopted by the Speaker.

The Speaker states that it will be discussed after the agenda is adopted.

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

President Taylor adds Motion 6.

VP Zahidah motions to allow the General Manager to be able to participate in the campaign against President Taylor's impeachment.

The Speaker states that the Steering Committee will need to review this, and a formal motion will need to be submitted.

VP Berglas adds Motion 13b.

VP Solomon adds Motion 13c.

The Speaker states that motions from the floor need  $\frac{2}{3}$  approval. She entertains a vote on Motion 6.

Motion 6 is added to the agenda.

The Speaker entertains a vote on Motion 13b.

Motion 13b is added to the agenda.

The Speaker entertains a vote on Motion 13c.



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Motion 13c is added to the agenda.

President Taylor moves his motion up to point 6.

VP Solomon states that the Policy Against Anti-Semitism will be legally reviewed before it reaches the Board of Directors.

Speaker Dong states that legal review only happens once a policy reaches the Board.

VP Solomon states that legal review will have to occur.

The Speaker states that the Board will decide whether to send the Policy to legal review .

VP Solomon states that he wanted to assuage concerns that the Policy was not legally reviewed, because it will be reviewed before it is ratified by the Board of Directors.

The Speaker states that this can be brought up when the motion is debated.

Seeing no opposition, the agenda is adopted.

The Speaker entertains a 2-minute recess for the Steering Committee to convene.

The Speaker states that the Steering Committee will defer the issue of the point of order to the Accountability Committee. For tonight, the representative in question will be allowed to vote. However, if the Accountability Committee finds that their position on the Legislative Council is unconstitutional, their vote will be nullified. The representative will be allowed to present their report.

Councillor Zhao asks if the First-Year Council representative was appointed.

The Speaker answers that the problem was that the Chief Electoral Officer position was vacant when the FYC should have been elected, so there is no FYC right now.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that he is glad that his vote will count today because there is no FYC representative.

VP Zahidah states that she is the Chair of the First-Year Council and they have not met. She submitted the documentation for the FYC election to Elections SSMU.



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The Speaker states that the election did not take place because there was no CEO at the time.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that he was appointed by the President.

President Taylor states that there should have been a CEO at the time of the FYC election, because the current CEO was hired at the end of September. He received a request in October regarding the FYC representative position, and appointed a representative. He made a mistake in not letting the Council know that the FYC representative was appointed. The correct process would be to elect First Year Council representatives following the FYC elections, per the IRs of Elections & Referenda, for one-year terms. There is not an appointment process, so President Taylor has made a mistake.

The Speaker states that the matter will still be referred to the Accountability Committee. Councillor Bongiovanni will be allowed to present his report.

VP Zahidah asks if they will remove his ability to vote.

The Speaker answers that they will maintain the procedure she outlined earlier, and nullify the vote if needed.

Councillor Kalaga asks if this would require the nullification of each of Councillor Bongiovanni's votes.

The Speaker answers yes.

VP Zahidah states that now that the Dais is aware that the FYC representative was not correctly appointed, they should remove his voting right but allow him to present his report.

The Speaker entertains a recess.

After the recess, the Speaker states that the FYC representative will not be allowed to vote tonight, and the matter will be sent to the Accountability Committee to come to a definitive decision on the situation.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that his votes could be retroactively removed, but given that he is present tonight and presenting a report on behalf of the first-year students, he should be allowed to vote.

The Speaker states that the Dais's decision will stand.

## 5. Minutes for Approval



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a. [SSMU Legislative Council Public Minutes 2024 -11-21](#) – **APPROVED**

The Minutes are distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Minutes are approved.

A member asks if the minutes are for tonight's meeting.

The Speaker answers that they are the minutes from the last meeting.

6. Motion to allow the playing of music at the final LC of the semester (President Taylor) –  
**UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED**

President Taylor states that the music was going to wrap up the semester, but if there is serious business to attend to, he can strike this motion.

Speaker Dong asks what the music is.

President Taylor answers that it is Fleetwood Mac.

The Speaker suggests that the music can be played in the background, if no one minds. She would really like to hear the music.

VP Zahidah suggests putting the record player in the corner of the room.

The Speaker entertains a vote on Motion 6.

Motion 6 is approved.

7. Report of the Steering Committee **(3)**

Speaker Dong presents the Report of the Steering Committee. It has been a busy week, and they met twice. Once on Monday night, where they verified the signatures on the petition for the General Assembly, and once on Tuesday, with the movers of the impeachment motion. Following that meeting, they discussed the Legislative Council meeting. Due to the events of the last meeting, the Committee has formed an ad hoc working group to hear Councillors' concerns. He will send an invite to Councillors soon regarding that. He notes that in cases with large numbers of members present, members will be asked to leave the room when the vote is to take place. They will also look into provisions where Councillors come up to the Dais to vote, because voting should be private. If there



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are large numbers of members, Councillors should wait before leaving the meeting. If members do not leave, the Dais will ensure that Councillors leave safely.

The Speaker reminds everyone not to talk during a presentation.

### 8. Executive Reports (9)

- a. President - **POSTPONED**
- b. [Vice-President Operations & Sustainability](#) — **POSTPONED**
- c. Vice-President Internal - **POSTPONED**

### 9. Reports by Councillors (6)

- a. [First Year Council \(FYC\)](#)

Councillor Bongiovanni presents the report of the First Year Council. First year students are upset about the lack of diet-appropriate foods, such as Halal and kosher options. They have also expressed concerns about commuting and are upset about the failure to implement a shuttle bus from Leacock to McIntyre buildings. They are also upset about the lack of study spaces that allow eating, and a lack of grade contestation infrastructure. There is currently a lack of elections for FYC, which are important despite that the constitutionally-regulated period to have these elections has elapsed. It is important to represent first-years, which is not the case right now; Councillor Bongiovanni's presentation today is integral to first-year representation. There should be more first-year representation, which requires more collaboration with the VP Internal, and improved student interest in student government. Managing the Instagram account is also important, because it is currently inaccurate, meaning that first-year students are missing out on key resources. Councillor Bongiovanni coordinated with clubs and services' struggles, for example funding and inclusivity. The biggest struggle for first-year students is the transition from CEGEP to university, and they need more support in terms of study spaces. Many students are also struggling because of international conflict, and require mental health resources. SSMU's VP Internal and President were consulted on mental health resources and the issue of First Year Council elections.

VP Berglas asks if it would be possible that VP Zahidah has advocated for first-years' mental health resources in a way that Councillor Bongiovanni is not aware of.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that FYC does not exist; mental health outreach is separate and is also important for first-years. The underlying issue is that there is no First-Year Council to provide mental health resources to new students.

- b. [Senate Caucus](#)



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VP Berglas presents the Senate Caucus report, which meets weekly on Monday evenings. Meetings are open to the public. SSMU has been very active this semester; they have been working with professors on various projects.

c. [EdUS](#)

Councillor Tick presents the Education Report. They state that they planned a student-run conference targeting ESL teachers to exchange practical teaching practices, which will take place in February. They are creating a budget and have reached out to the Dean for sponsorship. They have had many wellness events that have been very successful, such as self-defence events. There is a winter clothes drive taking place; winter clothes are being donated to Dans La Rue and perishable food items are being collected. The Faculty of Education is also sending a representative to sit on the Valedictorian Committee. The EduBuddy mentorship program is going well so far, and the Education Council meets every other Wednesday.

#### 10. Reports by Committees (18)

- a. Services Review Committee - **POSTPONED**
- b. [Accountability Committee](#)

Speaker Dong presents the Accountability Committee Report. He states that he sits on the Committee as a non-voting member. The Commissioner has taken measures to ensure committee and executive accountability. The Committee will soon be addressing Legislative Council accountability, so Speaker Dong reminds everyone to send their reports on time and to justify their absences as needed. They will be looking to create more spaces to express accountability concerns at SSMU, and they are looking for a new member. If anyone knows anyone with experience on a governing body at SSMU, they should refer them to the Accountability Committee. The Committee is also looking for two members at large who are neither Directors nor Councillors. Those interested should contact the Accountability Commissioner.

Member Dube asks if SSMU staff can be on the Accountability Committee.

Speaker Dong answers that he will need to refer to the Committee's terms of reference.

c. [Building and Operations Management Committee](#)

VP Jolicoeur presents the BOMCOM report. They met once since the last report, and discussed primarily the proposed policy on gender neutral washrooms which is being voted on tonight. If approved, the policy would require all washrooms to be gender-neutral except one set of gendered washrooms. The committee found that regulations are specifically for gendered washrooms in legislation. Given the occupancy rate of over 1,000 occupants of the University Centre, they have precisely as many gendered washrooms as required. During the HVAC renovations, a female washroom was added because it was discovered that they were one short of regulation, and a gender



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neutral washroom was added as well. Therefore, if all washrooms except two became gender-neutral, they would no longer be abiding by the regulation. SSMU is considered a tenant in the University Centre, and they are prohibited from making changes to the building without McGill's approval. Thus, they could present a plan to McGill, but they would need to approve it. McGill has communicated this to them. There are three gender-neutral washrooms in the University Centre right now out of ten washrooms in the building, all of which are accessible by elevator. The BOMCOM recommended formalizing the structure to access these washrooms, especially when Gerts is the only part of the building that is open. This could include signage with directions to the gender-neutral washrooms. The following changes can be accomplished to make a compromise on gender-neutral washrooms: putting menstrual product boxes in each stall, putting privacy screens between urinals, and updating signage depicting the presence of urinals and baby changing stations. There have been issues with the menstrual product boxes being tampered with in the first-floor washrooms.

#### d. Solidarity Funding Committee - **POSTPONED**

11. Question Period **(5)**

12. Recess, Consent Items **(5)**

The Speaker entertains a recess to allow the Parliamentarian to update the voting form. She will let everyone know when it is available to be voted on.

Councillor Abu Alkhair states that there is no second for Motion 13b.

The Speaker answers that she will ask for a second once they reach Motion 13b.

VP Solomon asks if Executives can second motions moved by Executives.

The Speaker answers that they cannot.

#### 13. Motions

a. [Motion approving the Winter 2025 Referendum Dates](#) (President Taylor) – **APPROVED**

President Taylor states that Motion 13a approved next year's referendum dates. The nomination period would be from February 3-25, and the campaign and polling period would be from March 10-21.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote.

Motion 13a is unanimously approved.

b. [Motion on Gender Neutral Washrooms](#) (VP Berglas) – **APPROVED 18-5-1**





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VP Berglas states that the Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Commissioner spoke to the Building Director about this motion, and he said it was a good idea but that it would require collaboration in order to be implemented. The Building Director subsequently took issue with McGill regulations; McGill has a gender neutral washroom policy that requires a gender neutral washroom on each floor. The Building Director was unable to find McGill policy and provided irrelevant and out-of-date Quebec legislation instead. BOMCOM never reviewed this policy, which does not restrict gender neutral bathrooms. The Building Director has not found concrete issues with the proposed plan; the Gender and Sexuality Advocacy Commissioner is happy to work with McGill. The Burnside, and other buildings, are already composed of mostly gender neutral bathrooms, so McGill would likely be happy to collaborate with SSMU on this project. The pushback against this plan is disturbing and likely transphobic.

Councillor Islam seconds Motion 13b.

Seeing no further speakers, the Speaker entertains a vote.

Motion 13b is approved with 18 in favour, 5 opposed, and 1 abstention.

- c. [Motion to approve the Policy Against Antisemitism in its final amended form from 2024-11-21, with the caveat that legal review will have to occur](#) (VP Solomon) –

#### **APPROVED**

VP Solomon states that this Policy has been proposed before, but it needs to be brought up again and voted on once again. The first vote was handled well, but there was a vote that was invalidly cast. Pending the determinations of the Accountability Committee, the vote may be illegitimate and invalid, requiring a re-vote. Many voting councillors felt uncomfortable with the way in which the vote occurred two weeks ago; VP Solomon suggests voting by secret ballot while members of the gallery are temporarily excluded from the room. At the last Legislative Council meeting, disgruntled students in attendance used defamatory and discriminatory language against anti-Zionist Jewish gallery members, and accused them of supporting Hamas. At the Board of Directors, Directors discussed the need for provisions to prevent this type of harassment, which would be provided by the Policy Against Anti-Semitism. After the meeting, it was chaotic, which cannot be prevented because the Standing Rules do not apply once a meeting ends. VP Solomon pleaded with students to get them to behave respectfully and calm down. Having witnessed the chaos of the last meeting, and acknowledging that recourse can be taken if they allow it to, they should re-vote on the Policy. He adds that councillors favour legal review before the Policy reaches the Board of Directors for ratification.

Member Benzaquen asks if VP Solomon was as disturbed about the chaos that occurred at the last meeting as he was about the singular comment made by a member at the very end of the meeting.



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The Speaker reminds everyone to direct their questions to the Speaker.

VP Solomon asks for clarification; he pleaded with all students at the end of the last meeting to behave with decorum and to respect each other, regardless of the group they belonged to.

Member Benzaquen clarifies that a member made a concerning comment at the end of the last meeting; he asks if VP Solomon was as concerned about the chaos at the meeting as he was about this specific comment.

VP Solomon answers that he is concerned.

Member Epstein states that the President has been accused of providing inaccurate legal information, and the VP External claimed that someone's comments were defamatory. Comments about a general group that cannot be attributed to a specific individual cannot be considered defamatory, as per the Supreme Court. He asks, if one can impeach the President for making legal mistakes, if they can also impeach the VP External for doing so.

Speaker Dong asks members to raise points of orders if they have points of orders; questions being posed during this time should relate to the motion.

Member Epstein asks, given that democratic bodies should function transparently, why this motion was put forward at the last minute and why the VP External is trying to expel members of the gallery before the vote.

The Speaker clarifies that voting members of the Legislative Council are allowed to bring motions from the floor, and to reconsider motions that have already been voted on, if the Legislative Council approves it.

Member Epstein asks VP External why this is happening.

VP Solomon states that the procedure for voting in-camera is outlined in Robert's Rules of Order.

Member Epstein clarifies that his question is not about the rules; it is about why VP Solomon is choosing a backdoor way to pass a motion that is inconsistent with transparency.

Councillor Zhao asks for speaking times to be timed.

The Parliamentarian sets up the timer.



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VP Solomon answers that he attempted to remedy a vote that was confirmed by the Dais to be invalid. It is incumbent upon the Council to respect the democratic outcomes of these votes, and to do them properly if needed. He submitted this motion in advance, but the Dais recommended that it be added from the floor. This Policy has reviewed 6 hours of discussion, letters relating to it, weeks of consultation. Councillors have expressed their desire to vote on it. They have gone above and beyond in ensuring that members' voices are heard while protecting Councillors' ability to vote.

Councillor Weissman motions to move into debate. They can ask questions during debate.

Seeing no opposition, the Speaker entertains debate.

Councillor Engo states that this motion is riddled with complexities that as a non-Jew, she would never be able to understand. Many Councillors are not Jewish, and she asks how many of them surveyed their student bodies to ensure adequate representation of their constituencies.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that the premise of the invalid vote has not yet been determined to be true. The Accountability Committee will decide if the vote in question is invalid; until that point, the vote on the Policy was not invalid and it is problematic to say so.

VP Zahidah states that those who have not been elected do not have voting privileges on the Legislative Council.

Councillor Chen states that VP Zahidah appointed Councillor Bongiovanni to his role.

VP Zahidah answers that she did not do so.

Councillor Weissman states that the behaviour at the last Legislative Council meeting was unacceptable. He thinks that it is important not to point fingers, despite that there was one comment about councillors being Hamas supporters, which is unacceptable. As a Councillor, he felt that the environment was very toxic. He was surrounded by people arguing at one point. A confidential vote is a good idea given this situation; they are not trying to be avoidant, but it is important to have a private vote.

Councillor Bongiovanni states that having a First-Year representative is important for democracy. They need to wait until the Accountability Committee makes its ruling.

The Speaker states that debate should pertain to the motion.



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Councillor Kalaga states that they are asking whether or not they can vote in good faith on a motion of such high contention that was proposed from the floor. He urges councillors to support postponing the motion, because students have not been notified that they are voting. SSMU already suffers from transparency and accountability issues, so Councillors should postpone if they recognize these issues within SSMU. A motion of this importance being proposed from the floor, with no notice, is not transparent.

Councillor Renaud states that  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the Legislative Council voted in favour of discussing this motion again. It is coming to the floor in a democratic, legitimate manner. She does not understand these concerns about the lack of transparency when democratically elected Council members voted to reopen the question.

VP Solomon states that Councillors' distress is not a reason to call into question the democratic nature of the vote. It is incumbent upon the Council to vote in-camera. This is not an anti-democratic process, and VP Solomon rejects accusations of transparency issues when it is agreed upon that voting at the last meeting was not done properly. He requests that during the vote only, councillors will be the only ones in the room. He motions to call the question.

Councillor Islam seconds the motion to call the question.

The Speaker entertains a vote on calling the question.

The motion to call the question is approved.

VP Solomon motions to vote on Motion 13c in-camera and by secret ballot.

The Speaker asks the Parliamentarian if the voting form is ready.

Parliamentarian Bakar answers yes.

The Speaker asks members of the gallery to leave the room, and they will be invited back once voting is concluded.

VP Solomon states that Councillor Bongiovanni should leave because his voting rights have been suspended.

The Speaker answers that Councillor Bongiovanni is doing so.

The Speaker entertains a recess to allow Councillors to vote.



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With 16 in favour, 6 opposed, and 2 abstentions, Motion 13c is approved.

VP Zahidah motions to suspend the rules to add Motion 13d to the agenda.

The Speaker entertains a 5-minute recess to allow the Steering Committee to review Motion 13d.

- d. [Motion Regarding Interim Provision to the IR of Elections and Referenda IR-05: Campaign to The No Campaign Opposing President Taylor's Impeachment](#) (VP Zahidah) – **POSTPONED**

14. Notices of Motion

- a. [Notice of Motion Regarding IRs of Rep & Advocacy](#) (VP Berglas) – **POSTPONED**

15. For Discussion

16. Adjournment: **21:15**

The Speaker states that the Steering Committee will review Motion 13d and send it by email. She states that they must adjourn the meeting because the Leacock Building is closing. She declares the meeting adjourned at 21:15.