



## Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

## Students' Society of McGill University

Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

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# SSMU BOARD OF DIRECTORS PUBLIC MINUTES

February 18, 2025

The Board of Directors meeting of the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) will be held by teleconference and in the SSMU Boardroom on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 19:00.

Present: Jonathan Dong (Chair, non-voting), Jessica Bakar (Parliamentarian, non-voting), Sierra Fallis (Deputy Speaker, non-voting), Abe Berglas (Officer, non-voting), Hugo Solomon (Officer, non-voting), Pauline Jolicoeur (Director), Maya Marcus-Sells (General Manager, non-voting), Fawaz Halloum (Director), Sophia Garofalo (Director), Rishi Kalaga (Council Member), Emma Chen (Council Member), Honoah Xu (Director), Simone Brown (Policy and Advocacy Coordinator, non-voting), Rajan Duncan (Director)

Late: Dymetri Taylor (Director), Hamza Abu Alkhair (Council Member), Seraphina Crema Black (Council Member), Dylan Seiler (Director), Zeena Zahidah (Officer, non-voting)

### 1. Call to Order: **19:07**

The Chair calls the meeting to order at 19:07.

### 2. Land Acknowledgement

The Chair presents the Land Acknowledgement.

*The SSMU acknowledges that McGill University is situated on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee nations. The SSMU recognizes and respects these nations as the true and constant custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Further, the SSMU commits to and respects the traditional laws and customs of these territories.*

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

### 3. Attendance



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The Chair takes attendance. He notes that some Board members will be late due to the SSMU candidates' debate.

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

The agenda is distributed.

The Chair notes that some items will be skipped since some Board members are late.

Director Jolicoeur notes that the debate is wrapping up.

Seeing no opposition, the agenda is adopted.

#### 5. Announcement

- a. Welcome to Rajan Duncan!

The Chair welcomes Director Duncan.

Director Duncan introduces himself to the Board.

#### 6. Email Motions

- a. [Motion Regarding SSMU Menstrual Health Fee Referendum Question](#) 2025-02-05 – **APPROVED (7 in favour, 1 abstention)**
  - b. Motion to approve the signing of the proposed MoA with the Farmers Market, as seen at the February 4th meeting, for \$7,000 for the years 2025-2026, 2026-2027 and 2027-2028, for a grand total of \$21,000 from the SSMU's Environmental Fund 2025-02-07 – **APPROVED (6 in favour)**
  - c. [Motion Regarding Renewal of TMV Fee 2025-02-10](#) – **APPROVED (7 in favour)**
  - d. [Motion Regarding Renewal of Indigenous Equity Fund Fee](#) 2025-02-10 – **APPROVED (7 in favour)**
7. Executive Committee Public Report 2025-02-18 – **POSTPONED**
  8. [Nominating Committee Public Report 2025-02-18](#) – **RATIFIED**

Parliamentarian Bakar presents the Nominating Committee Public Report, which was hiring for the two Alumni Representative positions. Two of the three applicants were ineligible for the position since they were not alumni. The remaining candidate was shortlisted and interviewed, and the committee recommends the applicant for the Alumni Representative position. He has past experience in SSMU as a Medicine Representative and Senate Caucus Representative, in addition to other leadership positions. He had a strong interview and analyzed SSMU's structure and function, and how the SSMU and the role of the Board have changed since his time as a student. He has a strong background and



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relevant professional experience in conflict management. Overall, the committee is excited about his candidate and strongly recommends him for the Alumni Representative role.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, the Report is ratified.

### 9. Minutes for Approval

- a. [SSMU Board of Directors Public Minutes 2025-02-04](#) – **APPROVED**

The minutes are distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the minutes are approved.

### 10. Approved Motions from 2025-02-13 Legislative Council

- a. Motion to appoint Councillor Punjabi to the Steering Committee until the end of her term – **RATIFIED**

The Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 10a is ratified.

### 11. Motions for Approval

- a. Motion to accept the Nominating Committee's nomination recommendation for Candidate 1 to the Board of Directors Alumni Representative role for a term beginning immediately until November 14, 2025 – **APPROVED**

Seeing none wishing to speak, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11a is approved.

Director Jolicoeur suggests a recess until the rest of the Board arrives.

The Chair entertains a recess until the rest of the Board arrives.

The meeting resumes at 19:18.

- b. Motion to approve the spending of \$22,400 from the Student Support Fee to purchase 800 bilingual Antidote seats (Director Taylor) – **APPROVED**



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- c. [Motion to approve the UGE fee increase for the Winter 2025 Referendum ballot and send the motion to McGill expeditiously](#) (Director Abu Alkhair, seconded by Director Crema Black) – **APPROVED**
- d. [Motion to approve the MUSCO fee increase for the Winter 2025 Referendum ballot and send the motion to McGill expeditiously](#) (Director Abu Alkhair, seconded by Director Duncan) – **APPROVED**

### 12. Legislative Council Motions for Ratification (continued)

- a. [Motion for Interim Status Recommendation for 7 Clubs](#) – **RATIFIED**

Director Abu Alkhair states that the Legislative Council approved some new clubs after he evaluated and recommended them.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 12a is ratified.

### 13. For Discussion

- a. [Increasing Antidote Seats](#) (Director Taylor)

Director Taylor states that Antidote is the French version of Grammarly, of which they bought 1,000 seats out of the Student Support Fee. It cost around \$26,000 for 1,000 seats. They have hit the maximum number of seats, but more students want access. He contacted Antidote about buying 500 more seats and it would cost \$13,500. They have the money to purchase more seats as the Student Support Fund still has money in it. He thinks that they should purchase an additional 800 seats because there are 1,600 total students who have signed up. He suggests approving a budget for 800 additional seats, which cost \$27 each.

Director Halloum states that he has been using Antidote since it has been introduced, and notes that he supports this motion. He adds that Antidote was founded in Montreal and has its headquarters here; it is good to support a Canadian company.

Director Taylor motions to suspend the rules to add Motion 11b.

Director Jolicoeur seconds.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11b is added to the agenda.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11b is approved.



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### b. IRP Update (Director Taylor)

Director Taylor states that the HR Manager was mandated by the Board to provide the IRP list to the Equity Commissioners and to look into the GSVP and equity complaints backlog. The backlog was investigated and resolved, and the IRP was sent out to faculty Equity Commissioners.

### c. [UGE Fee Increase](#) (Director Taylor)

Director Taylor states that the UGE requested that the Board approve a fee increase for them. The fee increase would increase UGE's revenue to \$73,000 from \$27,000 per academic year. He suggests that Directors review the appendices to see where the funds are being spent. There is an issue because McGill has to review all fees to ensure they are actionable, and the fees were approved and put on the ballot today. McGill would probably not have enough time to review the fee before Friday, which would result in a second ballot being sent out. This occurred last semester, which resulted in the question not reaching quorum.

Officer Berglas states that UGE sent Director Abu Alkhair the motion on February 2, and they ask him to explain the reason for the delay.

Director Abu Alkhair states that he suffered an emergency and had to host the clubs workshops around the same time, and he forgot to follow through with the motion for UGE's fee increase.

Director Garofalo asks if fees usually have budgets attached.

The Chair answers that usually fee increases provide budgets. It is up to the Board to evaluate them.

Director Abu Alkhair states that the Background & Rationale section of the motion is also very important for the reasoning for the fee increase. The background section explains potential funding issues and justifies the fee increase.

Director Garofalo asks if there is enough demand to warrant the increase of UGE's fee and the SSMU Menstrual Health Fee.

Director Abu Alkhair answers that there is a lack of variety in the menstrual products provided on campus, which is what the UGE fee increase seeks to address.

Director Crema Black asks why the casual salaries have increased from \$11,000 to \$28,000 in the budget.



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Member Bellec answers that the UGE offers different supplies than the SSMU Menstrual Health project. People come to UGE with specific requests and order different products for those with particular gender or medical needs; some brands of reusable products do not work for everyone. UGE advises on products and menstrual health as well. The cost of reusable menstrual products has increased since 2020, which is why the SSMU fee is also increasing. Gender-affirming products such as clothing and prosthetics have also increased in cost, and UGE saves money by ordering them in bulk. These supply costs are not always visible. Member Bellec notes that UGE has tried to pass a fee increase many times over the past few years to no avail, so they have had an insufficient fee of \$0.75 per semester for a while, and the minimum wage has increased twice during that time. They have had to reduce their staff, whose contract hours are insufficient. They have reduced their staff from 6 members to 3 because they can no longer afford to pay their staff. UGE wants to hire more staff so that they can increase their ability to provide services.

Director Crema Black asks if the UGE needs six employees.

Member Bellec answers yes.

Officer Berglas notes that the Menstrual Health Project is renewing its fee, not increasing it.

General Manager Marcus-Sells states that it is important that this be on the ballot as the motion was submitted on time, and she asks about the logistics of getting it on the ballot.

Director Taylor answers that if the motion is approved today, the fee would be sent to McGill first thing tomorrow morning. However, it took the administration until yesterday to review the four questions that were sent. So, a response by Friday is not guaranteed, which would mean that the question would not be on the main ballot.

Officer Solomon states that he had a fee increase on a separate ballot last semester, and it is not ideal because it came out later and was a separate link. The Community Solidarity Fund increase was on a separate ballot, and did meet quorum in the end and passed after the voting period was extended, but it did not take effect this semester. The fee increase will take effect in the fall. The question can still be sent out, but might come into effect later.

Member Bellec states that UGE has already been patient for a long time, and it would be important to add the fee question to the ballot.

Director Crema Black thought that they could put the question on the ballot internally, but it makes more sense that there is an external process for this.

Director Abu Alkhair motions to suspend the rules to add Motion 11c.



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Director Crema Black seconds.

The Chair notes that the fee increase also needs to be approved.

Director Abu Alkhair amends Motion 11c.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11c is added to the agenda.

Director Jolicoeur states that the Musicians' Collective also submitted a fee increase late, so they should make exceptions evenly.

The Chair asks Director Abu Alkhair to share this motion with the Board.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains debate.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11c is approved.

Director Abu Alkhair motions for a 2-minute recess to allow him to find the MusCo motion.

The Chair entertains a recess.

The meeting resumes at 19:50.

Director Abu Alkhair motions to suspend the rules to add Motion 11d.

Director Duncan seconds.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11d is added to the agenda.

Director Abu Alkhair states that the Musicians' Collective is losing their jam space because of the renovations in the University Centre parking lot. They also want to expand their operations to provide rentals.

Officer Berglas states that they are not opposed to adding this motion, but notes that the situations are not the same for UGE and MusCo. UGE submitted their fee on time and MusCo did not.

Director Seiler motions to call the question.

Director Abu Alkhair seconds.



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Seeing no opposition, the Chair entertains a vote on Motion 11d.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 11d is approved.

### 14. Legislative Council Motions for Ratification

#### a. [Motion Regarding Amendment to the Constitution](#) – **RATIFIED**

Officer Solomon states that the amendment would merge the VP Operations and VP Internal positions to rebalance the distribution of labour between the two positions. VP Internal lost a lot of committee assignments and tasks after the VP Operations position was brought back. Another amendment would make the role of VP Finance hired instead of elected. They would have the same rights and responsibilities as before, but would have to be qualified to manage the funds of the Society in order to protect the full-time staff who depend on SSMU for their livelihoods. The hiring would be ratified by the membership. Another small change clarifies that the process to remove Officers can only be done by members, as the constitution does not specify this.

Officer Berglas states that the proposed changes do a disservice to those running in the current election. It would be nice to have more time to develop this and approve the amendments next semester or next year.

Director Halloum agrees with Officer Berglas. He asks what qualifications the VP Finance would need, and what potential hiring difficulties could be. He asks what led to this decision given that most VP Finances are elected, and the position has been elected at SSMU for a long time. He also asks for clarification on the amendment about the removal process.

Director Jolicoeur states that two years ago, the SSMU was run into a \$1,200,000 deficit. This led to the decision to make the VP Finance a hired position. They had to make some layoffs because of the deficit, which affected the remaining full-time staff, the office environment, and trust between students and SSMU.

Officer Solomon states that the constitution does not specify who can remove Officers. The change specified that the Special GA to remove Officers is voted on by members. He adds that it is important to have financial stability and that the VP Finance has a financial background. That way, the VP Finance does not need to learn accounting while also learning how to be a SSMU Executive, which is already extremely difficult. The person hired for the position would need to be ratified by members, which acts as an election process. The person chosen would not simply be unilaterally appointed by the Executives, and would still be a student.

Director Halloum states that the VP Finance did not cause the deficit. There is someone new coming into the role each year, and it takes each person at least half of the academic year to grow into the role.





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The issue is with the structure and high turnover rate in key management staff, who should guide the Executives and financials of the Society. If last year's VP Finance got them into the deficit, this year's VP Finance got them out of it. He adds that finance classes may not be very helpful to the VP Finance position, and only students in their third or fourth year would have these skills. This narrows the eligible candidates in an already undesirable position. He supports merging the VP Operations and Internal portfolios, but takes an issue with electing and ratifying the VP Finance. This is similar to how members at large are appointed to the Board, which he thinks is problematic. He asks what the constitutional amendments would imply for the current candidates.

Director Taylor motions to call the question as this has been discussed at the Legislative Council. Board members can review the minutes for the answers to their questions.

Director Abu Alkhair seconds.

Seeing no opposition, the Chair entertains a vote.

With 10 in favour and 1 opposed, Motion 14a is ratified.

b. [Motion to add the plebiscite questions to the 2025 Winter Referendum](#) – **FOR RATIFICATION**

Officer Solomon states that the questions were written at the Legislative Council and they should be approved. He yields his time to Officer Berglas as they organized the initiative.

Officer Berglas states that they solicited questions from Councillors, received five responses and consolidated the responses into five questions.

Director Garofalo asks what the purpose of question 2 is, because there seems to be a consensus that security guards on campus do not make students feel safer.

Officer Berglas answers that they wrote this question, and the topic has been debated at the Senate as there are some professors who claim that security makes them feel safer. Both sides are claiming to be a silent majority, and they want to put an end to the debate. They think that most people do not feel safe with security guards' presence. There is nothing concrete that they can do with the response, but it might be useful when speaking to McGill administrators about security.

Seeing no further speakers, the Chair entertains a vote.

Seeing no opposition, Motion 13b is ratified.



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15. Confidential Session:

- a. There is a Confidential Session this evening.

16. Adjournment: **21:08**

The Chair declares the meeting adjourned at 21:08.

APPROVED