



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.

ssmu.ca | (514) 398-6800 | 3600 rue McTavish, Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3

SSMU SPECIAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY MINUTES

December 5, 2024

1. Call to Order: **17:19**

The Speaker calls the meeting to order at 17:19.

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

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

The Speaker, Parliamentarian, and Deputy Speaker introduce themselves.

The Speaker thanks everyone for attending the meeting, especially since a hybrid format was not able to be offered due to the time constraints of the General Assembly.

The Speaker presents the [Standing Rules](#). The Roberts' Rules of Order govern this meeting. He states that the default speaking time is 1 minute and he will bang the gavel when 5 seconds of speaking time remain, and again once speaking time has elapsed. There are a few types of points that regulate how members can participate in the meeting. A point of order is a question raised by a member who believes that the rules have been overlooked; they can interrupt the Speaker. A point of information is used to ask a question to the Dais or another speaker. A point of parliamentary inquiry is a question about procedure. A point of personal privilege is an option that allows members to raise personal



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concerns. If members have any amendments for the motion, they should be submitted to the Dais via email. This is the only way amendments to the motion will be entertained. The Speaker asks that respectful behaviour be maintained throughout the meeting; there is a section of the Standing Rules that regulates behaviour and prevents and punishes disrespectful conduct, harassment, offensive comments, exclusion, disruption of the meeting, and misgendering members. Depending on the severity of the offence, the Dais will end speaking time, limit speaking time, or prevent a member from speaking.

The Agenda is distributed.

Seeing no changes or opposition, the Agenda is adopted.

The Speaker asks that members who wish to speak line up at a microphone, to make discussion more organized. He asks members to state their name when they speak so that it can be noted for the record.

4. Announcements
5. Motions for Approval
 - a. [Motion Regarding the Removal of President Taylor](#) (Member Vogel) - **FOR APPROVAL**

The Speaker reads Motion 5a. After the reading, the Motion will be presented by Member Vogel and there will be a question period. After the member's presentation, President Taylor will speak and there will be another question period. Finally, there will be a debate period. The Motion and other relevant documents are available on the SSMU website.

- i. Presentation of Motion Regarding the Removal of President Taylor (Member Vogel) **(5)**

Member Vogel presents Motion 5a. He states that the motion is a response to the President's actions during the application of a motion to strike in late November. Alongside 80,000 students at universities in Montreal, this strike motion should have sent SSMU on strike for Palestine the weeks of November 21 and 25. During the three weeks between the submission of the original motion and the updated version, the President denied the students their right to a Strike General Assembly; he lied outright about legal constraints and claimed to be at risk of going to court himself. He refused to meet with students and claimed that the strike would not have to be about Palestine in order not to violate the injunction, but a leaked legal document shows otherwise. The legal document states that SSMU and Executives can organize and publicly participate in activities and events supporting Palestine. President Taylor's lie is a reason for removal; he is responsible for representing students and is paid a yearly salary as an elected official. The President will speak later about his good actions and apologize,



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but students will not hear all the details about his consideration of another strike motion. His consideration came only after weeks of students begging him to reconsider, and intervention from another Executive. After the second motion was submitted, the President did not pressure SSMU's legal counsel to respond quickly, resulting in the obstruction of the motion. His actions constitute an abuse of power. The President's words reflect SSMU's legacy of restricting political action and unwillingness to take a stance on Palestine and other issues. Last year, SSMU accepted a safeguard order on the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine, preventing it from passing, and removed SPHR as a club. One year into the genocide in Palestine, students want change and want SSMU to protect them in the face of backlash from the administration and other actors. Member Vogel has already spoken to students willing to replace the President and take decisive action. He hopes that the vote today marks the beginning of a SSMU that defends its students.

ii. Question Period (5)

A Member asks what they can do to prevent the next by-election from not meeting quorum, as the recent by-election did, and to ensure that SSMU's seat on the Board of Governors is filled.

Member Vogel states that students have historically not engaged with SSMU because they feel that it does not represent their best interests. SSMU needs a change, and has discredited itself by years of inaction. This General Assembly is a first step towards improved student engagement. He proposes that SSMU initiate a by-election to fill the President's position as soon as possible.

Member Postovskiy asks how this motion will benefit the student movement for Palestine.

Member Vogel answers that the current situation is an example of SSMU's restriction of motions on Palestine. The motion to remove the President is a first step towards better student engagement with SSMU. This indicates that people will engage with SSMU more in the future if its elected representatives are making decisions that students support.

Member Maitlis asks how this impeachment is representative of pro-Palestine students, and how it will affect students at large.

Member Vogel answers that a student union that is willing to protect its students is a powerful representative force. It can be organized, and manages a lot of money; there are many things that can be done within it. A student union that is willing to take a stance will engage people and lead to action. Concordia and UQÀM's student unions are very different, and they have much more people engaged with them. This is due to fundamental differences between SSMU and the other universities' student unions.



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Member Headrick asks Member Vogel about the democratic steps that followed the acceptance of the strike motion.

Member Vogel answers that the strike motion was submitted through a student petition with 50 signatures. There is nothing restricting the process of the General Assembly, unless the motion is against provincial law. The strike motion was originally portrayed as being against the law, but this was not the case. The General Assembly must reach quorum, and the vote to go on strike must be ratified online. The only request that was denied by the President was the request to hold the General Assembly.

Member Ghandour asks if this motion has broader implications for students.

Member Vogel answers that the last time quorum was reached at a General Assembly was years ago. The fact that there are students present today is proof that this motion is mobilizing McGill students to care about their student government. Going forward, there will be more active collaboration between students and SSMU.

The Speaker states that the last time quorum was met was in 2022.

Member Liang asks if the President's impeachment will result in substantial change. They ask if the issue is one of SSMU's structure, or if the impeachment will resolve the issues mentioned.

Member Vogel answers that this impeachment represents a choice that students are making to hold their union accountable, which affects the structure of the union going forward. This is the only way for students to exercise accountability on the union. All other processes are constrained by bureaucracy and consultation requirements. SSMU needs more processes like the General Assembly.

VP Solomon asks if removing a President, when there will be an election in February, is the best use of their time. They may be better off finding a better candidate for next year's term, rather than seek to replace the current President with only a few months left in his term. He asks why Member Vogel has not suggested any action beyond impeachment.

Member Vogel answers that impeachment is more than just about the President, who has broken the students' trust. Students' trust has been broken over again throughout the past few years. The impeachment is a way for students to hold their union accountable, and keep people engaged. It allows trust to be rebuilt between students and the union, because this is a major problem at McGill.

Member Dube asks how President Taylor is responsible for SSMU's actions before his election, and if the motion seeks to impeach the President or SSMU as an institution.



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Member Vogel answers that the motion seeks to impeach President Taylor, who is responsible for obstructing a motion to go on strike in support of Palestine. He knew that a strike was being organized by 80,000 students in Montreal, and these student unions were brave enough to take a stance.

Member Kim asks, if the President is impeached, if there would be an impact on SSMU's ability to provide services given the multiple vacancies in the Executive.

Member Vogel answers that there is precedent for impeachment of the President, it happened two years ago; SSMU will not collapse in the interim period when there is no President.

iii. Presentation by President Taylor (President Taylor) (5)

President Taylor states that the first strike motion, which was submitted on November 5, was not accepted by the Steering Committee because the wording was almost identical to the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine, which the Quebec Superior Court has an injunction on. This motion also had more than 50% of signatures from one faculty, which caused the Steering Committee to deem the motion invalid, as it was against the Constitution, Internal Regulations of Governance, and the injunction. President Taylor thanks VP Solomon for catching his error, it was not true that Palestine could not be in the strike motion, as he claimed. He misinterpreted the legal advice, and SSMU is not restricted from going on strike for Palestine. The second strike motion, which was submitted on November 20, had different wording and had the appropriate signatures. The Steering Committee did not know whether the strike motion would be in violation of the injunction, so the motion was sent for legal review, as suggested by MMGC in January. MMGC requested that SSMU consult them regarding actions in relation to Palestine, to ensure that they would be compliant with the safeguard order. They wanted to ensure that SSMU would not be held in contempt in court for issues with the injunction, and did not want the Board to have to shut down the motion to strike after it was approved by students. He would be happy to share the relevant documents with the Dais to present them on-screen and discuss them with members. There were portions of the first strike motion that were taken from the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine, and the second strike motion was potentially in violation of the injunction. He apologizes for his mistake in saying that a strike in favour of Palestine would be against the injunction.

The Speaker states that if President Taylor wishes to show something on-screen, it must be sent to the Dais, who will recess to determine whether the documents can be shown.

iv. Question Period (5)

Member Duval asks why, since the first strike motion was too similar to the PAGIP, the President ignored requests from students who wrote the motion, who sought to improve the motion.



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President Taylor answers that he should have answered the request, but he was confused and made uncomfortable by the wording of the motion and his communications with students. He should have met with students to discuss the motion, its issues, and the legal review.

Member Gaafar asks President Taylor if he would be willing to undertake the issue of a strike next semester.

President Taylor answers that if 50 signatures are submitted, which is very possible, and a legal review of the strike is approved, a strike General Assembly could go forward. McGill might have an issue with the strike, but a strike General Assembly could be held and students could decide whether or not to go on strike.

Le membre Ortega dit qu'il y a plein de photos dans l'atrium du Centre universitaire d'étudiants qui sont fiers de leur participation dans les mobilisations du passé, et demande pourquoi le Président ne démontre pas la même radicalité et fierté que les membres dans les photos.

President Taylor answers that SSMU is under an injunction, which limits their options. Legal opinions are also quite expensive, and any question of Palestine requires legal review, which further restricts their options. If they violate the injunction, it could be even costlier for SSMU. Students can get a poster approved by the SSMU office to put up.

Member Massue states that the leaked legal document reveals that SSMU can take pro-Palestine stances, and this is what students expect. She asks why McGill students could not join the other universities that went on strike last week, in Montreal and in Canada. All Quebec student associations have agreements with their universities, so the MOA is not a reason for McGill's failure to participate.

President Taylor answers that because of the injunction, they are not allowed to ratify the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine; they have to ensure that anything they do does not fall under the PAGIP. The Quebec Superior Court is preventing them from taking action similar to action mentioned in the PAGIP; they are negotiating in court now to get the injunction dropped.

Member Merskey asks why President Taylor feared legal ramifications for himself in the instance of the strike motion being approved.

President Taylor answers that if SSMU is held in contempt in court for a violation of the injunction, it could face high fines and the case would be negatively impacted. There is also the small chance of an Officer facing jail time for violating the injunction. However, this is very unlikely.



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Member Headrick states that the legal review allows SSMU to support Palestine. Regardless of whether or not the original strike motion violated the injunction, there was a week-long period where amendments could have been made with the legal knowledge that advocacy for Palestine is allowed. They ask how this represents accountability to students on President Taylor's part.

President Taylor answers that VP Solomon told him that he made a mistake early last week in saying that SSMU was not allowed to support Palestine, and told President Taylor that he was working on amendments to the motion. He trusted VP Solomon's ability to amend the motion because he is also working on the injunction, but perhaps he should have participated in amendments as well.

Member Mousavi asks if President Taylor understands students' anger, and that he is misrepresenting the restrictions placed upon SSMU by the injunction.

President Taylor states that the legal document allows SSMU to support Palestine in terms other than those used in the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine. Legal environments change, and this single legal memo is not necessarily the correct answer, as another legal firm could have had a different opinion. This is why they sent the strike motion to MMGC for legal review.

Member Borg asks for a timeline about the legal review and when the document was leaked.

President Taylor answers that they received the legal review on January 22, and it was leaked December 1.

Member Jeffrey states that students went to President Taylor many times to ask him for help on the strike motion, and asks why it took an Executive to step in for President Taylor to take this issue seriously.

President Taylor states that he has accessible office hours and only received 2 emails about the motion, one of which he referred to the Steering Committee as he does not have the final say on motions. Students could have gone to his office hours. He regrets not meeting with students beforehand, and trusted VP Solomon to meet with students.

Member Coomes asks President Taylor why he has not yet apologized to students. President Taylor should take this opportunity to rebuild trust and apologize to students for his actions.

President Taylor answers that he is sorry for his mistakes. He states that he should have apologized earlier, and apologizes that he did not go about the situation in the right way.

Member Mitu motions to extend the question period by 3 questions.



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The Speaker entertains a vote.

The question period is extended by 3 questions.

Member Mitu asks what the ramifications of violating the injunction are, for the University and for the student movement.

President Taylor answers that if SSMU violates the injunction, they would be held in contempt in court. A violation would give those who do not want the injunction lifted more power, and this may end up being the permanent situation. This would permanently prevent SSMU from adopting the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine, as the courts would seek to ensure that SSMU not violate the injunction through any means possible.

Member Asali asks what President Taylor will do if he is not impeached, in relation to the PAGIP.

President Taylor states that he is working on the injunction case, and an interrogation just took place. He would take accountability for what occurred, and he would help students go on strike.

Member Abdoh asks why the President is so fearful of anything related to the Policy Against Genocide in Palestine and the injunction, given that the legal advice on the safeguard order is vague.

President Taylor states that the lawyers told them that if they take any action related to the PAGIP and the safeguard order, they should consult them before to determine whether the action would be a violation of the injunction.

VP Zahidah motions to extend the question period by one question.

The Speaker entertains a vote.

The question period is extended by 1 question.

A member asks whether questions can be posed during debate.

The Speaker answers yes, but President Taylor will not be on the podium to answer questions.

Member Postovskiy asks why the Steering Committee can block motions from coming to the Legislative Council and General Assembly. It seems that the Committee values rules and procedures more than students' voices; SSMU should support a free Palestine. There are systemic issues



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preventing democracy from fully functioning at SSMU. They ask President Taylor for his thoughts on making SSMU more democratic and how to ensure that students are the ones making things happen.

President Taylor answers that, unlike in the past, the Board of Directors is currently more powerful than the Legislative Council, because SSMU owns Gerts and manages faculty associations. For them to be able to own Gerts, they needed to become a non-for-profit organization, which requires a Board of Directors. He is looking to make Gerts its own corporation, which would allow the Legislative Council to become the highest governing body of SSMU. This would ensure that elected representatives make the most important decisions.

v. Debate

The Speaker reminds everyone that amendments or documents being projected should be sent to the Dais via email.

VP Solomon motions for an extra 2 minutes of speaking time.

The Speaker entertains a vote.

The motion to extend VP Solomon's time by 2 minutes is approved.

VP Solomon states that he did not want to have to make this speech, because the people in the crowd voted for him and worked with him. Because of the importance of this moment, they should acknowledge the harm caused to the strike petitioners. Many concerns raised are valid, and the President has acknowledged his mistakes. President Taylor did not meet students in a timely manner, and miscommunicated legal advice. As VP External, he promotes students' right to protest and mobilize, but he recognizes that students must hold Executives responsible when they fall short of their mandate. The President's actions were not the sole reason for the strike's failure. Having worked with the petitioners himself, there were many logistical hurdles that would have made the strike impossible, which is why the petitioners agreed to move the strike back by a week. Students who mobilized at CSU and UQÀM started organizing their strike in the fall, and SPHR refused to work with them. He is not seeking to assign blame, rather to demonstrate that the outcome of the situation was shaped by errors that occurred on multiple levels; the President should not be scapegoated because of that. Students should find other ways to push forward, for example there was a motion introduced at the law students' motion to subpoena two administrators for their suppression of the pro-Palestine movement at McGill. Students can also get involved at SSMU, for example by joining the Accountability Committee or the Ad Hoc Committee that will ensure that mobilizations are supported by SSMU. The Executive Committee is committed to doing better, and impeachment is not the only tool to get things done.



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Member Muñoz states that they are voting on a referendum to be introduced today. Students need to vote in that ratification vote as well as vote today. She reminds everyone that they should vote in the online ratification form, and asks if they have quorum.

General Manager Marcus-Sells states that they have quorum, with 353 members present.

Member Tragash states that the President admitted wrongdoing. The President is asking them to acknowledge and forgive his breach of his mandate, or he is saying that his mistakes are not grounds for impeachment. They ask if his delaying the strike motion by one week, refusing to meet with students, and lying about the injunction are not worthy of impeachment, or if they can be forgiven.

Member Massue motions to call the question.

The Speaker entertains a vote to call the question.

The motion to call the question is approved.

The Speaker entertains a vote.

With 305 in favour, 45 opposed, and 9 abstaining, Motion 5a is approved.

6. For Discussion
7. Elections SSMU announcement

The Chief Electoral Officer states that the motion still needs to be ratified. There will be a ratification period from next Monday to the following Monday (December 9-16). If anyone wishes to form a campaign committee in favour or against impeachment during this period, they should email her, as those who want to campaign are required to meet with her. There will be a campaign meeting tomorrow at 16:00. If the election does not meet the 10% quorum requirement, the results will be void.

8. Adjournment: **18:46**

The Speaker declares the meeting adjourned at 18:46.