

MOTION REGARDING MUSLIM STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION (MSA) SERVICE FEE INCREASE REFERENDUM QUESTION 2025-10-16

Submitted for: 2025-10-09

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2025-10-09-002 (to be assigned by Steering)
Moved by:	Student Groups Committee	Current Status:	☐ FOR APPROVAL ☒ APPROVED ☐ POSTPONED ☐ COMMITTED ☐ NOT APPROVED

Issue

Brief summary of issue.

The McGill Muslim Students' Association (MSA) has experienced increasing difficulty in adequately meeting the needs of our community, maintaining essential recurring services, or enhancing our programming under the current fee levy. After careful financial review, it has become clear that continuous inflation, rising costs across multiple budget categories, and the increasing reliance on ticketed events to sustain our operations have negatively impacted the accessibility of our initiatives and our ability to serve students effectively. To ensure the long-term sustainability of our services and allow the MSA to continue providing meaningful and accessible programming, we are seeking an adjustment to our fee levy from \$1.55 to \$2.19.

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Background and Rationale

The MSA is a SSMU Service that seeks to serve Muslim students at McGill by offering essential services, resources, educational tools, and student life activities that enhance their university experience through social, spiritual, and professional growth. This is especially critical for the approximately 10% of the student body identifying as Muslim, although it also serves as a source of support and community for Muslims and non-Muslims alike (including a significant number of PGSS students who consistently use our services but do not pay the fee). A wide range of educational, prayer, social, and community events and services occur on a weekly basis, and are all open to the entire McGill community.

Unfortunately, it has recently become apparent that our current budget does not allow us to fulfill our mandates to the best of our abilities. Over the past couple of years, this has brought about deficiencies in the quality of the services we provide, decreased capacity for participants, reduced accessibility of those services to the wider student body, and, in some cases, the cessation of certain services altogether. Given the rising Muslim population and demand for our services, coupled with increasing costs, our portfolios often exhaust their entire budgets and require contingency funds to hold their events, at times sacrificing quality to meet the demand. Furthermore, we are often forced to lower event capacities and raise ticket prices. It should be noted that the MSA does not profit from these ticket sales; rather, we subsidize the cost to make events more affordable - typically covering about half of the total amount the MSA spends on any given activity. The current ticketing system results in:

- High ticket prices that discourage student participation
- An inability to accommodate the growing population due to capacity limits despite rising demand
- Prioritization of only affordable event ideas, which restricts the improvement of our services.
- Decrease in quality of events to satisfy budget constraints

Resultingly, the MSA believes that an increase in its fee levy remains the best available solution to reestablish and grow the quality and accessibility of

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our services, and meet the ever-growing demands of the McGill community. Additional details regarding reduced services and capacities can be found in the annex.

Alignment with Mission

For years, the MSA's financial constraints have prevented us from improving the quality and accessibility of our services. Ensuring the MSA as a SSMU Service has the resources necessary to fulfil our mandates and continually improve the services it provides to the Muslim student population, enabling them to successfully practice their faith and experience social and cultural fulfillment, is in alignment with the MSA's constitutional obligation to act in the best interest of its Members.

Consultations Completed

Before bringing this motion to the floor, it is expected that you consult with the relevant Commissioner(s)/Committee(s)/Officer(s). Explain these consultations here. Each individual/group consulted must include the rationale and information provided during the consultation. I.e., what did the individuals/groups being consulted conclude about the motion? Were they in favour or against it?

Consultations must adhere to the Consultation Policy.

Motions pertaining to finances must be discussed with the Vice-President (Finance) in advance. All motions must be approved by the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator (pac@ssmu.ca) for formatting and structure.

☒ ~~I have read and completed the requirements outlined in the Consultation Policy.~~

(A minimum of two consultations, with at least one Executive Officer and the Policy and Advocacy Coordinator)

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- The MSA's President and co- VP Finances have consulted the SSMU VP Student Life (Hamza Abu Al-Khair) and SSMU Policy and Advocacy Coordinator (Simone Brown) regarding the proposed fee increase.

**Risk Factors and
Resource
Implications**

The proposed fee levy increase will cause the SSMU service fee to increase by \$0.64 per semester. However, this slight increase does not represent a significant risk factor for students because this fee is minimal and opt-outable. This provides students the option to pay or not pay the additional \$0.64 per semester, eliminating any potential risks associated with the fee. Additionally, attending even just one MSA event would allow a student to recover the entirety of the fee as our per-student subsidy for each event amounts to significantly more than the value of the fee itself. Lastly, the additional financial resources available to the MSA as a result of the fee increase would allow us to significantly reduce the costs of our ticketed events, further providing students the opportunity to recover the cost of the fee. These three factors together contribute to minimal, if any, risk being associated with the proposed fee increase.

**Impact of
Decision
and Next Steps**

Should this motion be approved for a referendum, an MSA Service Fee question will be added to the Fall 2025 ballot, allowing SSMU Members to vote on whether they agree to increasing the opt-outable \$1.55 fee per undergraduate student per semester to \$2.19. The opt-outable fee was determined using the financial breakdown demonstrated in Annex C of this document.

Should the fee question then pass the referendum, the MSA will be able to uphold and improve its operations, carrying out its mandates by providing additional services, counselling, support, opportunities for student life, advocacy, and many more resources to Members and the entire McGill community.

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Specific Commissioner/Committee/Officer being assigned a mandate and the timelines for that mandate (if applicable)?

**Motion or
Resolution for
Approval**

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the following question for the Fall 2025 referendum period:

“Whereas, the Muslim Students’ Association’s Service (MSA) Fee is used, in accordance with the SSMU Constitution, to “provide excellence and quality of service at all times, and shall continue to enhance the quality and scope of these services.”

Whereas, the Muslim Students’ Association (MSA), a SSMU service, serves a growing population of Muslim students at McGill by offering essential services, resources, and activities that are open to the entire McGill community;

Whereas, an increase to the MSA Service Fee would support the continuation and enhancement of programming, ensure the long-term sustainability of the Service, and allow for the subsidization of ticket costs, increased event capacity, improved event quality, and overall enhancement of services;

Do you agree to the increase of the opt-outable SSMU MSA Fee from \$1.55 per student per semester to \$2.19 per student per semester beginning in Winter 2026 through Winter 2028 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal?

A majority ‘no’ vote will result in this optional fee remaining as is, and impede various MSA Services available to the entire student body.

**Results of the
Vote**

- ☐ In favour (20)
- ☐ Opposed (0)
- ☐ Abstain (0)

Appendix A : Current Budget

The current MSA Annual Operational Budget, which is based on a per-portfolio distribution of the current annual total collected fee levy of \$59283, may be found at the following link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1C3uN_Cp5voUp09yb31yLeEexGt2TiT2R/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106814514872930780193&rtpof=true&sd=true

Appendix B : Proposed Budget

The proposed MSA Annual Operational Budget, which is based on a per-portfolio distribution of the proposed (estimated) annual total collected fee levy of \$83905.50, may be found at the following link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1JfeJB_bUXgFZPUf8aKW5xUGKX2WtFYPg/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106814514872930780193&rtpof=true&sd=true

Appendix C : Justifications/Rationales for per-Portfolio Budget Increases

The following table outlines the rationale for the proposed fee increase on a per-portfolio basis. They have been provided by the VP of each portfolio. Included are examples of ways in which initiatives have decreased in quality, become less accessible, lost attendance capacity, or been removed altogether as a result of budgetary constraints.

Portfolio	Rationale/Comments
President	The Presidential budget consists of fixed costs which are exhausted annually. Specifically, the Presidents' budget encompasses salaries for our chaplain, who helps fulfil the mental health needs of Muslim students at McGill, as well as website maintenance and a Google Workspace

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	subscription
Internal	Many MSA events, including Islamic educational events and community engagement, are led by members of the team. As such, the Internal team wishes to expand its involvement in supporting team members to possess the necessary leadership characteristics and experience to do so. The Internal fund is used to train MSA Executives each year and provide training opportunities with qualified mentors. Currently, the minimal budget restricts us to a narrow range of repetitive guest and food options and limited bonding activities, which eventually become less engaging for the team Investing in the Internal portfolio directly supports the growth, motivation, and efficiency of the entire MSA team, which reflects on the quality of service we provide to the community Note: MSA Executives do not receive any wages or financial remuneration for their work
External	The External budget covers social advocacy for Muslims within the university, city, province, & country. Events are often hosted with other CÉGEPs, universities, and the Mac Campus. Examples of this are events with speakers and/or advocacy groups to broadcast the issues facing the Muslims of today to McGill and the world. Having an increased budget would allow us to increase the number of events we put on for the community, invite more prominent speakers and guests, and broaden the scope of our advocacy efforts through community workshops and travel subsidies.
Community	The Community portfolio is responsible for monthly (in the case of Ramadan - weekly) iftars (fast-breaking meals) for around 150 attendees. These are entirely free events. Currently, our budget caps our iftars at 150 attendees, and tickets are sold out within a day, often within hours. Every iftaar, we have many students asking for more tickets, but due to budget constraints, we can only provide food for 150 people. With an increased budget, we would be able to host larger iftars that are more accessible and inclusive. Additionally, the mentorship program would require a dedicated allocation, as it runs four events per year. At the moment, our limited resources restrict us from hosting larger-scale events and inviting professional speakers to lead panels and networking sessions - something that would significantly enhance the program's impact. We would also like to invest in Eid Fest. Considering the significance of Eid, being able to organize a large-scale celebration for both Eids would be essential in building community and marking the occasion in a meaningful way
Social	About our annual ski trip: 1. Mont Bromont (our usual ski partner) increased their fees last year. An increase was seen in the general admission ticket, the snowboarding tickets and the ski tickets. Moreover, they also increased their fees for their beginner classes (figure 1.1)

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Category	Item	Cost \$ (no tax)	Number (pred)	Expenses	Balance
Tickets admission	Regular		59	120	7080
	FREE		-59	5	
equipment rental	Ski		40	90	3600
	Snowboarding		40	30	1200
Lessons (1 hour)	Lessons Ski		20	30	600
	Lessons Snowboard		20	15	300
Food	snacks		200	1	200
Bus	Busses	760.32		3	2280.96
Estimated Purchase Log	Room				
Total				(Tax Incl.) \$	17550.104
					-17550.104

Category	Item	Cost \$ (no tax)	Number (pred)	Expenses	Balance
Tickets admission	Regular		54	92	4968
	FREE		-54	4	-216
equipment rental	Ski		38	65	2470
	Snowboarding		38	20	760
Lessons (1 hour)	Lessons Ski		15	24	360
	Lessons Snowboard		15	8	120
Food	snacks		200	1	200
Bus	Busses (2 BUSES)	1612.1		1	1612.1
Estimated Purchase Log	Room		1500	1	1500
Total				(Tax Incl.) \$	13540.215
					6

Figure 1.1: Prices in 2025 (top) and prices in 2024 (bottom)

- Our skip trip is one of our most popular events. More than 100 students attend. Last year, there were 120 attendees. This increase in the volume of attendees plus the increase in the fees made it so the total cost of the event would be much higher compared to last year (figure 1.2)

Category	Item	Cost \$ (no tax)	Number (pred)	Expenses	Balance
Tickets admission	Regular		59	120	7080
	FREE		-59	5	
equipment rental	Ski		40	90	3600
	Snowboarding		40	30	1200
Lessons (1 hour)	Lessons Ski		20	30	600
	Lessons Snowboard		20	15	300
Food	snacks		200	1	200
Bus	Busses	760.32		3	2280.96
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Food	snacks		200	1	200
Bus	Busses (2 BUSES)	1612.1		1	1612.1
Estimated Purchase Log	Room		1500	1	1500
Total				(Tax Incl.) \$	13540.215
					6

Figure 1.2: Prices in 2025 (top) and prices in 2024 (bottom)

- We received a \$1,000 sponsorship from Penny Appeal which allowed us to subsidize the cost but this was unfortunately still not enough which is why Social had a meeting with Finances.
- A meeting with Finances was conducted to increase the budget towards this event. After a

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- lot of back and forth, Finances provided Social an additional \$1,000 from the contingency.
5. Even with this additional \$1,000, the regular tickets were priced at \$81 and the ones with beginner lessons were \$96. We believe this is too high of a price to ask students to pay for a one-day event. They should be able to have fun at a more affordable price.
 6. Given the high cost of the trip, we cannot afford to include food (despite it being a day trip, to ski, in the winter). We always bring snacks since they're cheaper to buy but this is not filling at all. Students are going on a *full day trip*. They already pay so much just to partake in the activity but then they have to put in some more money into feeding themselves. This event would be a lot more inviting if we included a meal in the tickets. On top of this, with the same ticket prices as last year, this would lead to a reduction of 30 students to reduce a payment of ~ \$875 on an additional bus.

About Frosh:

We managed to stay under budget this year, but this is due to a few modifications to the schedule compared to last year's:

1. Our water activity on Day 2 this year was canoeing, which we went for because of the very affordable pricing. Last year, they did a boat tour at Old Port which was a more touristy activity (the captain was explaining all the spots around us). While canoeing was still a very fun activity, it did not offer the introduction to Montreal's spots as much as the boat tour in Old Port would've.
2. We were able to afford La Ronde this year thanks to a huge amount of leftover tickets from last year's events (MSA and non-MSA). If we had to pay all of the tickets full price, it would've ended up costing us more than \$1,000 (even with the group discount).
3. The amount of attendees is always limited because of our budget. Having more attendees costs more money. Frosh is one of our more popular events with more than 50 attendees each year. If we want more attendees, then we need to increase the ticket price but if we want more affordable tickets then we can't welcome as many people.
4. Many attendees request long sleeved merch but because of the cost of long sleeve compared to short sleeve (\$9 vs \$17), we unfortunately cannot accommodate their request. Moreover, the merch design lacks a pop of colour because of the restraint on it (if we add an additional colour to the design, it costs more money). We have to stick to one colour which leaves the merch looking a little bland and does not match the quality of the design.
5. Given all the budget went towards activities and food, the prizes for the winning team were created with things we already had on hand. To award the winning team a prize worth the effort they put in through those days of tough competition is quite important, but we unfortunately could not. We wish we also had the budget to award each attendee a small bag of goodies for their efforts, sportsmanship, and their presence throughout the event.

As you can see, an increase in the budget would allow for a more exciting Frosh!

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About small social events:

1. Every year, we are limited on the kind of activities to hold because of the limited budget. Most of our budget goes towards skiing, so we're left with dividing the rest amongst all the other events we need to hold during the year (around 4-5 events). Moreover, because of the limited budget and the high cost of activities, we cannot subsidize the cost as much as we wish to.
2. Last year, we had BJJ events for brothers and sisters. Tickets were priced at \$10, yet the attendance was very low compared to how many we expected (less than 40 but we were aiming for 60). If we compare this event to Ice Skating, which was priced at \$5, (we had around 68 attendees and the \$5 was refunded if they were present). While the date and time of BJJ could've affected the attendance, it's also clear that students do not like to participate in events that cost more.
3. We were organizing this cooking competition in Fall 2024 which was cancelled due to circumstances unrelated to budget. We're bringing up this event because the tickets were priced at \$15 yet we only had 1 sign up (who ended up canceling their ticket and asking for a refund). Again, this makes it clear that students do not like to attend events that cost a lot.
4. We wish we could subsidize the events much more but unfortunately, as you already know, the current budget would not allow us to, not for the quantity of attendees we wish to have.
 - o Each of our smaller social events should hold around 60 attendees
 - o Fun activities like archery or escape rooms cost around \$30/person
 - o More than half of our budget goes towards the large events, so we're left with around \$3,500 for 4-5 events throughout the year
 - o Then, depending on what activity we're doing, each ticket could be priced from \$15 to \$20
 - o While this in itself may not be a cause of concern, if all of our events are at this price point, we are asking members of our community to put in almost \$100/year (for just the small activities, if you include large activities, it's almost \$200/year). We want to allow them to socialize while not breaking the bank, and this unfortunately is simply not possible with our current budget. We can either make it happen for a smaller number of attendees or go for cheaper activities that wouldn't interest the community as much as the ones listed prior.

About the Fall Hike:

1. A lot of hiking spots (Mont-St-Hilaire, etc.) have an entrance fee, which is around \$10 per visitor. Additionally, in 2024, we had 140 attendees and in 2023, we had around 90 attendees (figure 4.1 and 4.2). Given that 140 attendees would denote an added \$1000 dollars for a third bus, we are forced to reduce capacity on this highly popular event.

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Figure 4.1: Mont Tremblant Budget 2024

Figure 4.2: Mont Tremblant Budget 2023

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	2. Our yearly budget for the fall hike ranges around \$1,000. Given all of the above costs, if we want to hold the event for as high a number of people as last year, then we will need to increase the budget. That being said, to keep tickets at the same price as last year, we had to subsidize the event to \$2,000 - double the amount.
Education	With an increased budget, the first big project we'd like to focus on is bringing in well-known scholars and teachers from outside Montreal. Our team has been looking at various prominent speakers across North America, which requires covering flights, hotels, food, and honorariums - which can get expensive. While we may not land all of them, setting our sights high will push us to organize better, collaborate more, and hopefully achieve far more than we would otherwise. Another area we want to invest in is Islamic literature. Right now, the MSA's book collection in the storage room is pretty random - some books are by unknown authors and are on random topics, while others are classical Arabic texts that are inaccessible or too intimidating for most students. We'd like to build a small but intentional library of accessible, relevant, and in-demand works that people would actually benefit from. We could also use books as prizes during events and start a book club initiative. This would allow our library to actually serve the student body in a meaningful way instead of having loads of random books tucked away for no one to benefit from. In terms of making our programs more engaging - there's a lot of potential to diversify beyond the usual lecture or Halqa (circle) format. We'd love to host workshops and short courses on practical topics like Islamic finance, wellness and mental health from an Islamic perspective, or leadership skills from the Seerah (prophetic tradition). We would also like to make events more interactive through quizzes, discussion circles and small competitions with prizes kind of like the trivia we did last year for an MSA night. Another direction we foresee for the education portfolio is collaboration. Partnering with Concordia, Dawson, UdeM and other MSAs would allow us to co-host larger speakers and conferences while splitting costs. We could also create an inter-MSA 'Sakinah' (tranquility) retreat where students from across campuses come together and spend a few days away immersed in remembrance, Quran, halaqaahs, nature walks, and maybe we could do a campfire depending on the season. We additionally want to explore making our programs more lasting for future generations and accessible. We could put together a small digital resource hub for students with curated lectures, readings, and event recordings. It's about making sure the benefit of what we do doesn't just stop at one event. Furthermore, the Education portfolio plans and hosts an 'Islamic Awareness Week' in the winter which essentially focuses on explaining our religion to non-Muslims, and also on educating muslims on topics they might not be familiar with or struggle to grasp. This is a week-long event meaning there are

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	activities planned for each and every single day - something like this would for sure take a huge portion of the Education budget, which they want to be our hallmark event. With regards to why this all matters and how can it positively contribute and add value to our community: All of this matters because education and the path of seeking knowledge is at the core of what we offer. The Final Prophet ﷺ informed us: “Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.” (Sunan Ibn Majah 224), and that obligation doesn’t stop when we step onto campus - in fact it becomes even more important here. Students come to the MSA looking for spaces where they can fulfill that obligation: strengthening their connection to Islam, learning more about their deen, and holding on to their religious identity in an environment where it’s so easy to lose it. That puts a big responsibility on us to provide the right resources, create opportunities to learn, and connect students with people of knowledge who can answer their questions (and alhamdulillah for our chaplaincy program but it is something we need to advertise more). Another thing is that this narration also reminds us that knowledge is meant to be shared, and that’s where our work comes in. In a university setting, we’re surrounded by young intellectual people who are open to dialogue and some are curious about what Islam really teaches. If we can offer thoughtful educational programs, lectures, and spaces where people can ask honest questions, we not only help clear misconceptions but also present Islam in its true light. This kind of work is essential because the image of Islam in the West is so incredibly distorted and often shaped by stereotypes or misinformation. By putting education at the center, we’re able to show the depth and relevance of our faith, and in doing so, we become a positive representation of Muslims on campus by the permission of God. Given all these new ideas and initiatives, we would greatly need and benefit from an increased budget.
Prayer	Our prayer portfolio is tasked with organizing Friday Prayers on campus, maintaining our prayer spaces, and facilitating the teaching of knowledge related to acts of worship. Given the smaller scale of these events and assuming our space agreement bookings on campus remain in place, the portfolio has generally been able to stay within budget. With that being said, this year a Motion was passed to relocate our MSA office and prayer space to a larger location. While this move provides much-needed additional space to accommodate growing demand, it also brings new financial responsibilities. Following the relocation, we anticipate higher costs for routine cleaning, maintenance, and repair, as well as potential installation and improvement work to the new space. These investments are essential to ensure the space is properly maintained, accessible, and welcoming for students. Without additional funding, the portfolio would be forced to cut corners, leading to diminished quality and long-term costs that outweigh any short-term savings. A modest increase in fees would allow us to sustain this essential service responsibly and ensure the new

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	space continues to meet the community's needs.
Communications	One of the main limitations we face right now is equipment. At the moment, we rely on borrowed or very basic tools, which means the quality of our content does not reflect the scale of the events we are trying to capture. Having our own dedicated equipment with strong video capabilities would allow us to produce higher-quality reels, and recordings of our lectures and sermons. This kind of purchase would be a long-term investment that serves the MSA for years and directly supports every portfolio, since all events depend on Communications for promotion and documentation. That includes portable microphones for speeches and events, as well as podcasting microphones for our podcast project. Audio quality is one of the biggest weaknesses in our current setup, and fixing it would immediately improve the professionalism of our work. A basic lighting kit and small accessories like tripods, SD cards, and external hard drives are also essential to make sure we can work consistently and keep our files safe, and these are all added expenses that are not reflected in our current budget. When we do purchase equipment, it is often spread out over long periods of time. For example, it took us a full year to budget and buy microphones, and then we had another year before we were able to purchase a camera, which only became possible because it was partly donated. This pattern makes it difficult to build a reliable setup quickly and delays the quality improvements we know are possible. The podcast is another area we plan to grow in a more structured way. Our goal is to move from occasional recordings to a regular schedule that highlights student voices, Islamic knowledge, and broader community issues. To make this possible, we would start with proper podcasting microphones and simple soundproofing materials so that our episodes have clear, professional audio. We would also use audio editing software to clean up recordings, add intros and outros, and make the episodes more polished overall. With these tools, we can focus on releasing episodes consistently. Part of our vision for expansion is also inviting guest speakers, including local scholars, student leaders, and professionals. Providing honorariums would allow us to invite these voices respectfully and ensure they are recognized for their time and contribution. With the right equipment, editing tools, and honorarium support, we believe the podcast can grow into one of the strongest platforms for community engagement that the MSA offers. Software is another area that requires ongoing funding. Subscriptions to design tools are key for creating posters, graphics, and templates that give the MSA a consistent and professional brand. On the media side, video editing software is currently not accounted for in our budget. For the podcast, dedicated audio editing software is also needed as it would give us the ability to refine recordings and maintain a consistent sound across episodes. These programs may feel like background costs, but they are the foundation of everything Communications produces. All together, these investments would give Communications the ability to raise the quality and reach of our work while directly supporting every other portfolio. Stronger communications means stronger turnout, better documentation, and a more lasting impact for the MSA, benefitting the Muslim

Bureau du président du conseil de l'AÉUM
SSMU Office of the Speaker

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.
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	community from different angles.
Financial Aid	The MSA currently maintains a financial aid fund that is used to support students in circumstances of need who experience financial difficulty in attending our events. This fund allows us to increase the accessibility of our events to these people, ensuring that everyone feels welcome and included in all our initiatives. An increased budget would allow us to increase the amount of financial aid we can provide to students, making our events even more accessible and to a greater number of students. Additionally, the MSA hopes to establish a scholarship fund to support students in financial need. Such a fund would allow us to provide scholarships through an application-based system, but would only be possible if an increased budget could be allocated to the financial aid fund.