

MOTION REGARDING THE INCREASE OF THE SSMU FOOD BANK FEE

2026-02-12

Submitted for: 2026-02-12

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2026-02-12-002 (to be assigned by Steering)
Moved by:	Seraphina Crema Black <i>Vice President External</i>	Current Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> FOR APPROVAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> POSTPONED <input type="checkbox"/> COMMITTED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Annette Yu <i>Athletics Representative</i>		

Issue Rising food costs and inflation have significantly increased demand for the SSMU Grocery Program. As the program has expanded in practice to operate through a food bank model, its scope and funding must be formally expanded to sustainably meet current and projected student needs.

Background and Rationale

The Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) dedicates its time and resources to providing its members with services, representation, and leadership. Among these services, the SSMU Grocery Program plays a critical role in addressing food insecurity by providing free groceries and food-related resources to students in need.

Since its implementation, the SSMU Grocery Program has expanded organically in response to growing demand. Although initially conceived as a grocery distribution program, it has evolved in practice into a centralized food pantry model. This model enables SSMU to distribute groceries more efficiently, respond to demand fluctuations, and provide consistent access to food in a dignified manner. This evolution reflects the realities of food

insecurity on campus rather than a departure from the program's original purpose.

In recent years, food insecurity has intensified due to rising grocery prices, inflation, and increased living costs in Montréal. The SSMU Grocery Program currently supports over 50 students each week, and demand continues to exceed capacity: the pantry is consistently fully depleted within 30 minutes of restocking. At present, the pantry is replenished twice weekly with approximately \$100 worth of food per restock. As outlined in the budget proposal, the majority of additional funds generated through the proposed fee increase would be allocated directly to grocery purchasing to meet this demand.

The existing opt-outable SSMU Grocery Program Fee was implemented to support the program's initial scope. However, as the program has expanded in practice, the current fee structure no longer reflects operational realities or future demand. This motion proposes formally expanding the permitted use of the fee to support the SSMU Food Bank, aligning the fee's name with its expanded scope, and increasing the fee amount. Any such changes require approval by referendum in accordance with SSMU bylaws, and Legislative Council must authorize the placement of this referendum question.

Alignment with Mission

This motion aligns with SSMU's mission of service and representation by strengthening access to essential resources, addressing food insecurity, and ensuring that evolving student services are supported through transparent, member-approved funding mechanisms.

Consultations Completed

Consultations were conducted with the Vice-President (Finance) to review financial implications and projected budgets associated with expanding the scope and increasing the SSMU Grocery Program Fee. The Policy and Advocacy Coordinator was consulted to ensure compliance with SSMU governance procedures and referendum requirements, along with Internal Counsel. Additional consultations were held with Food Pantry staff to assess operational needs, capacity constraints, and demand trends.

All consulted parties acknowledged the necessity of formalizing the program's expanded scope and securing additional funding to maintain service levels, contingent on clear communication to members regarding fee usage and opt-out provisions.

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

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

The primary risk associated with this motion is potential member opposition to increased student fees, particularly in a period of financial strain. This risk is mitigated by the fee's opt-out status and by transparent communication that emphasizes funds are directed primarily toward grocery purchases and essential food support services.

Failure to approve the proposed expansion and increase risks reduced service capacity, food shortages, or waitlists, undermining the effectiveness of SSMU's food insecurity response. Approval would stabilize funding and allow the program to continue meeting rising demand without compromising accessibility or dignity.

Human resource implications are minimal, as additional funds are intended to support core operations rather than significantly expand staffing. Socially and environmentally, the motion supports holistic sustainability by ensuring consistent access to food, reducing reliance on short-term emergency funding, and enabling more effective long-term planning.

Clear accountability and reporting will be essential to maintain member trust and address communications and optics concerns.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If approved, this motion will authorize the placement of a referendum question to formally expand the permitted use of the existing opt-outable SSMU Grocery Program Fee, align its name with its expanded scope as the

SSMU Food Bank Fee, and increase the fee amount. Following Legislative Council approval, the motion will be brought to the Board of Directors for ratification and subsequently included in the next appropriate referendum period.

If the referendum passes, the expanded and renamed fee will take effect beginning in the specified semester. Additional funds will be allocated primarily toward grocery purchasing and essential operational costs. Relevant SSMU executives and Food Bank coordinators will oversee implementation and provide transparent reporting to the membership.

**Motion or
Resolution for
Approval**

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the following referendum question:

“Do you agree to expand the permitted use of the opt-outable SSMU Grocery Program Fee to include the operation and support of the SSMU Food Bank, to rename the fee the “SSMU Food Bank Fee”, and to increase the fee from \$1.00 per student per semester to \$2.00 per student per semester, payable by all SSMU members, beginning in Fall 2026 and ending in Fall 2029 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority ‘no’ vote will result in no change to the existing SSMU Grocery Program Fee, its amount, or its permitted use?”

**Results of the
Vote**

- In favour (26)
- Opposed (0)
- Abstain (0)

Proposed Budget:

[SSMU Food Pantry Projected Budget 2026-2027 \(1\).pdf](#)

APPROVED