



MOTION REGARDING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS 2026-02-26

Submitted for: 2026-02-26

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Moved by:	Dymetri Taylor <i>President</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:	Seraphina Crema Black <i>VP External</i> Justice Bongiovanni <i>Arts Councillor</i> Charley Letham <i>FYC Councillor</i> Minaal Mirza <i>VP Internal</i> Paul Prendergast <i>Management Councillor</i> James Scott <i>Law Councillor</i> Benjamin Yu <i>Science Councillor</i> Khalil Zaidi <i>Science Councillor</i>		

Issue

This motion seeks to propose amendments to the S.S.M.U. Constitution which has gradually empowered the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors and the Officers of the Society and has diminished the role of, and the trust in, the Legislative Council, and has not included Senate Caucus. In turn, the amendments seek to provide greater accountability of the Officers and increase the power of the Legislative Council.

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Background and Rationale

As per the S.S.M.U. website:

“The SSMU Constitution is a document that deals with all of the most fundamental elements of the Society. It also serves as SSMU’s legal “By-law” for the Quebec government in relation to SSMU’s status as a non-profit corporation. The Constitution outlines the SSMU’s role in providing service, leadership, and representation to McGill’s downtown undergraduates, the basic outline of the six Executive positions, basic electoral processes, and various disciplinary processes. The Constitution can only be altered by Referendum.”

Due to its position as the primary document dictating the operations and essential structure of the Society, the process to change the Constitution is different from other Governing Documents and involves a Referendum

1. The Legislative Council must vote to place a question on the ballot that describes the proposed amendments.
2. The student body then votes and either approves or denies the proposed amendments.

While the Board of Directors is required to be part of the Governance structure of the S.S.M.U. per its incorporation under the Quebec *Companies Act*, and while the Board is ultimately responsible for the decisions and actions of the Society, there is room to have the Board function in a more hands-off manner while receiving important insight and advice from the other bodies within the Society, such as the administrators, Officers, Councillors, and the student body themselves through General Assemblies. Based on discussions with the Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary, transforming the Legislative Council into the Board would represent a significant structural shift that, in her view, should not be pursued without further analysis. She does not consider it a safe option at this time without more thorough consideration of the relative benefits and risks of a smaller, more flexible Board versus a larger, more directly involved governing body. A particular concern is that the S.S.M.U.’s permit obligations, including requirements imposed by the Régie des alcools du Québec in relation to the Society’s permis de réunion, impose specific citizenship and permanent residency criteria for Board members. Maintaining the Legislative Council as distinct from the Board is therefore currently the only way to ensure that international students may continue to participate in governance roles.

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The changes proposed by the Constitution Working Group include:

- Inclusion of new Definitions;
- Updates to what's included under Books and Registers;
- Changes to the name, composition, procedure and running of the Board of Directors;
- Changes to the name, powers, composition, procedure and running of the Legislative Council;
- The inclusion of Senate Caucus in the Constitution;
- Changes to the Officers' qualifications, replacement & vacancy, powers & duties, and descriptions;
- Changes to the Executive Committee's functions, powers, and restriction of powers;
- Changes to the hiring and removal of the General Manager;
- Changes to the process, procedure and quorum of General Assemblies;
- Small updates to the processes of the Judicial Board, with an inclusion of a term of office;
- Institution of a requirement to use the official languages of the Society in meetings/documentation

Alignment with Mission

The Constitution is integral to the Society's operations, and its update will significantly improve them. The changes also align the Society more closely with its goal of democratic representation of the Membership, thereby positively affecting the Society's values and general mission.

Furthermore, if approved, these changes will hopefully lead to a gradual culture shift within the Society and, ideally, across the Faculties Associations that leads to greater involvement in both the Students' Society and a general improvement of Student life.

Consultations Completed

President –
Motioning.

Internal Counsel & Corporate Secretary –

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Provided insight on legal parameters, such as whether the Board could be completely removed, as well as contexts surrounding certain terms and their legal connection.

Policy & Advocacy Coordinator –
Formatting of the document and recommendations about elaboration, wording, and lacking information.

Constitution Working Group (Law, Science, FYC, Arts, Management, Officers)
– After several weeks of effort, the Working Group is open to hearing further feedback and concerns to take back to further develop the proposed amendments throughout this notice period.

Faculty Associations:

- Faculty Presidents provided comments and suggestions. Comments were specifically focused on the role of Legislative Council and of the Board of Directors, and lightly touched on the role of Officers.
 - The remaining feedback from the Faculties we hope to hear tonight from you all, as representatives, and throughout the notice period so the final product going to the membership is as ideal as it could be.
- ~~I have read and completed the requirements outlined in the Consultation Policy.~~

**Risk Factors and
Resource
Implications**

Resource implications will consist of a switch on the part of the Governance team pertaining to the Board of Directors and on the matters brought to the Legislative Council.

Risk factors with this motion failing can include:

- Executives continuing to be the make it or break it surrounding Student representation to the Administration, which has the potential to affect a host of activities surrounding the Society;
- Executives determining the direction of the Society and being able to control its actions without the involvement of Legislative Council or other accountability bodies of the society;

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- Legislative Council being a rubber-stamp for Executive decisions;
- The full-time staff of the society being put into challenging positions due to the lack of checks and balances for the Executives;
- The board's potential to act as a political body of the society;
- Lack of understanding or accountability to how Society funds are utilised or approved for use;
- Full-time staff needing to set-up General Assemblies due to 50 signatures and cancel bookings anytime a petition with 50 signatures is submitted (no limit on number per week), which may result in cancelled bookings for groups in the University Centre and extensive expenses put to the planning of those General Assemblies;
- General Assemblies being able to dictate the legal action the Society takes without consulting legal counsel;
- The Executive Committee would continue to have the ability to create, amend, or rescind any policy of the Society without the approval of the Legislative Council or Board;
- and that the Society would remain an organisation that is governed by the Executives instead of one governed by its legislative bodies (s. 11.1).

Risk factors with this motion being approved can include:

- A cultural shift in the expected expertise of Councillors which may take time to be implemented and may result in little change to the way Council operates without effort on the part of both the Faculty Associations and the S.S.M.U;
- Critical decisions being made by a body that has not made such decisions for 8-10 years and will likely require additional training to ensure that Councillors understand their roles and responsibilities;
- The higher quorum required both to call and to hold Special General Assemblies may render general member action less accessible;

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- Additional amendments to the Constitution may be required depending on how these changes are implemented and how successful they are;
- and to ensure that these changes are properly implemented would require extensive efforts on the part of the Governance team and the current Officers, Directors and Councillors so that when it shifts there are no immense issues.

Clarity pertaining to risks:

- Improvement of resources and training for Councillors are presently being developed, including, but not limited to:
 - changes to how Legislative Council is procedurally run;
 - A physical Councillor handbook;
 - Codes of Conduct for Councillors is in development
 - Onboarding & Offboarding of new Councillors in the months of March and April;
 - Training in Early September on the S.S.M.U, its staff, the position and its responsibilities;
 - Conversations with Faculty Associations regarding expected familiarity of Councillors with rules and procedures
 - Attendance and advice of the General Manager at Legislative Council

**Impact of
Decision
and Next Steps**

If approved by the Legislative Council, the Referendum question as described below will be put forth to the membership during a Special Referendum.

If approved by the membership, the new iteration of the S.S.M.U. Constitution as described in Appendix A will be uploaded to the website and take effect on May 4th, 2026.

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**Motion or
Resolution for
Approval**

Be it resolved that the following two Referendum questions be placed on a Special Referendum 2026 ballot:

WHEREAS the S.S.M.U. Constitution is the Society's primary governing by-law and can only be amended by referendum, meaning that any substantial rebalancing of governance (particularly changes affecting accountability, powers, and representative structures) must be brought directly to the student body for approval;

WHEREAS over time, governing practices have resulted in increasingly concentrated authority in the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, and the Officers of the Society, which has diminished the role of the Legislative Council and contributed to reduced trust and weaker day-to-day accountability of elected representatives;

WHEREAS the proposed amendments are intended to restore and clarify representative oversight by strengthening the powers and procedures of Legislative Council, formally incorporating Senate Caucus into the constitutional structure, and updating governance mechanisms (including officer duties and restrictions, General Assembly processes, and official bilingual requirements) while maintaining compliance with external legal and licensing constraints that require the Board of Directors to remain distinct from Legislative Council;

THEREFORE, do you approve of the proposed amendments to the S.S.M.U. Constitution, as hyperlinked, to take effect on May 4th, 2026, to strengthen representative oversight and officer accountability (including changes to the Legislative Council, Executive Committee, and the inclusion of Senate Caucus), update governance procedures, and institute an official languages requirement, with the understanding that a majority "no" vote will result in the Constitution receiving no amendments and the operations of S.S.M.U remaining the same despite the aforementioned concerns?

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WHEREAS Student strikes have been a historic and powerful tool for advocacy at McGill University;

WHEREAS to ensure these actions legitimately represent the student body, there is a question to consider what the quorum (minimum percentage of all members who must vote for a strike result to be valid) should be for student strike votes;

(For reference, there are ~25,000 undergraduate students at the downtown campus)

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the quorum requirement shall be set at one of the following, as decided by referendum, and that the selected quorum shall serve as the minimum percentage of all Members required to participate in a Strike Referendum in order for the result to be considered valid and binding:

- a) No inclusion (the quorum requirement shall be removed entirely);*
- b) Fifteen per cent (15%) of the Members (approximately 3,750 students);*
- c) Twenty per cent (20%) of the Members (approximately 5,000 students);*
- d) Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the Members (approximately 6,250 students); or*
- e) Thirty per cent (30%) of the Members (approximately 7,500 students);*

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Be it further resolved that the Legislative Council adopts the actionable aspects of this question, and that any grammatical or legal changes necessary do not need the re-approval of the Legislative Council.

Be it further resolved, that the Legislative Council approves a Special Referendum voting period to be held from March 23rd, 2026 to April 13th, 2026 for the membership to vote on the two proposed motions above.

Results of the
Vote

- In favour (17)
- Opposed (0)
- Abstain (1)

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Appendix A: SSMU Constitution (Finalised)

[Clean Amendments: Constitution of the Students' Society of McGill University 2025-03-22](#)

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Appendix B : SSMU Constitution (Rough Amendments)

[Amendments: Constitution of the Students' Society of McGill University 2025-03-22](#)

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Appendix C : SSMU Constitution (Strike Quorum)

[Clean Amendments: Constitution of the Students' Society of McGill University 2025-03-22 - Strike Quorum](#)

The quorum for Strike General Assembly ratification shall be XX per cent (XX%) of the Members.

- a) No Change - Shall be removed entirely.
- b) 15% (~3,750 voters)
- c) 20% (~5,000 voters)
- d) 25% (~6,250 voters)
- e) 30% (~7,500 voters)

Options:

- a) No inclusion;
- b) Fifteen per cent (15%) of the Members (approximately 3,750 students);
- c) Twenty per cent (25%) of the Members (approximately 5,000 students);
- d) Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the Members (approximately 6,250 students);
- e) Thirty per cent (30%) of the Members (approximately 7,500 students);