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MOTION REGARDING PLEBISCITE QUESTION ABOUT LIBRARY IMPROVEMENT FUND PRIORITIES 2026-10-22

Submitted for: 2026-10-22

Submitted to:	SSMU Legislative Council	Document no.:	LEG-PUB-MOT-2026-10-22-01 (to be assigned by Steering)
Moved by:	Meghan Lai *VP University Affairs*	Current Status:	☐ FOR APPROVAL ☐ **APPROVED** ☐ POSTPONED ☐ COMMITTED ☐ NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Liam Connor *Senate Caucus Representative*		

Issue

This motion seeks approval to hold a non-binding plebiscite question in the SSMU Fall 2026 Referendum to consult Members on the allocation priorities of the Library Improvement Fund (LIF). In particular, it asks whether students would prefer to maintain current extended library hours or reduce some extended hours to make more funding available for other library services and improvement projects.

Background and Rationale

The SSMU Library Improvement Fund was established in 1996 to support improvements to McGill Libraries. It is administered through SSMU and financed by an opt-outable fee of $8.50 for full-time Members, and $4.25 for part-time Members, per semester, with contributions matched by alumni donors.

APPROVED

Historically, the LIF funding has supported extended study hours in libraries across campus, student employment, library technology, additional study space, and improvements to facilities. Examples include furniture and quiet study pods at Schulich Library, furniture at the Music Library, and technology available to students for borrowing or on-site use.

Extended hours are currently offered at the McLennan-Redpath Library Complex, the Schulich Library and the Nahum Gelber Law Library during the last months of the semester, supported through LIF funding. While these hours provide valued access to study spaces, they represent significant recurring financial pressure on a fund that also supports other student-facing needs.

Given finite funding, spending on extended hours can reduce the amount available to support other eligible initiatives. Possible projects include reflection or wellness spaces, improved furniture, updated borrowing technology, and improvements to existing study spaces. These are illustrative options, not approved or guaranteed projects.

Based on the October 4, 2026 internal LIF account forecast, approximately $385,000 is projected for security services associated with extended library operations between September and April.

Alignment with Mission

The proposal in this motion advances Representation by giving Members a direct voice in how their contributions are prioritized, Service by evaluating the balance between access to study spaces and investments in facilities, technology and student support, and Leadership by encouraging transparent and evidence-based stewardship of a student-funded resource.

Consultations Completed

- Governance Affairs Coordinator
- Chief Electoral Officer
- Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary
- President
- VP Finance

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Risk Factors and Resource Implications

Financial: A non-binding consultation does not in itself authorize spending, reduce hours or alter the student fee. Any future reallocation would require verified financial figures, consideration of existing commitments, matching-fund conditions, and any approvals required under SSMU governance documents.

Operational and equity: Reducing extended hours could affect students who rely on late-night access, including students with limited study space elsewhere. Any follow-up proposal should consider library use by location and time, accessibility, employee scheduling, security, and the needs of students across faculties.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If approved, Elections SSMU will administer the proposed plebiscite during the Fall 2026 Referendum. The ballot question and explanatory wording shall be presented in both official working languages as required.

Following the close of polling, Elections SSMU will certify the results, and the President, VP University Affairs, and LIF Commissioner will present a summary of the vote and anonymized thematic feedback to Legislative Council. Where appropriate, the LIF Commissioner and VP University Affairs may then develop feasible funding scenarios, informed by operational data and student priorities, for consideration under the relevant allocation process.

If the motion is not approved, existing funding allocations and library operating arrangements will remain unaffected. If approved, the plebiscite will serve as a consultation mechanism to gauge Members' preferences regarding the allocation of the Library Improvement Fund, informing potential funding priorities and decisions for both the current and future academic years. As the plebiscite is non-binding, its results will not automatically result in changes to existing allocations or library operations.

APPROVED

Motion or Resolution for Approval

WHEREAS, the Library Improvement Fund is financed by opt-outable student contributions and matching alumni donations, and exists to improve the McGill Libraries experience for Members;

WHEREAS, the Fund has long supported extended library hours, student employment, furniture, technology, and other improvement initiatives;

WHEREAS, spending on extended hours involves material recurring costs and may limit the funds available for other proposed projects, while reduced hours may adversely affect students who rely on late-night access;

WHEREAS, Members should have an opportunity to express their preferences before SSMU considers a material change to LIF spending priorities;

WHEREAS, section 5.7 of the SSMU Internal Regulations of Elections and Referenda provides that plebiscites are non-binding and are used to acquire the opinions of Members;

BE IT RESOLVED, the Legislative Council approve the non-binding plebiscite set out in Appendix A for inclusion in the SSMU Fall 2026 referendum;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the Chief Electoral Officer and Internal Counsel and Corporate Secretary review and approve the final ballot format, including the no-preference response and optional comment field, prior to publication;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the result shall be advisory only and shall not independently authorize changes to library opening hours, the LIF fee, existing contracts, or funding allocations;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the plebiscite results and a summary of Member feedback be reported to Legislative Council and considered in subsequent LIF funding discussions, in accordance with applicable governance requirements.

APPROVED

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Results of the Vote	☐ In favour	27
	☐ Opposed	0
	☐ Abstain	0

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Appendix A : Proposed Plebiscite Ballot

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Ballot Information

The SSMU Library Improvement Fund (LIF) supports McGill Libraries through extended library hours during midterm and final examination periods as well as student employment, study spaces, technology, furniture, and other library improvements.

Extended hours at the McLennan-Redpath Library Complex, Schulich Library, and Nahum Gelber Law Library require substantial ongoing funding. As the Fund has a limited budget, maintaining current extended hours may leave less funding available for additional services and improvement projects. Conversely, reducing some extended hours could make more funding available for other projects, but would reduce late-night access at affected locations.

This plebiscite seeks to consult Members' preferences only. It is non-binding and will not, by itself, change library hours or approve specific projects.

Question 1

Given the Library Improvement Fund's limited budget, which of the following would you prefer the Fund to prioritize? (only one option)

☐ Maintaining the current extended library hours during midterm and final examination periods.

☐ Reducing some extended library hours to allocate additional funding toward library services, facilities, and improvement projects. (e.g. reflection or wellness spaces; improved library furniture; updated technology to use on-site or borrow; and improvements to study areas)

☐ No preference towards either option.

Question 2

Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding how the Library Improvement Fund should be allocated?
[Optional text box for written comments]

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