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Attending

Danni Cai, David O'Connor, Elisabeth Li, Emilie Michalovic, Emily Moore, Entisar Abdulkader, Environment Commissioner (Amir Nosrat), Erik Larson, Erin Sheedy, External Affairs Officer (Jacob Lavigne), Felicia Gabriele, Financial Affairs Officer (Mina Moradi), Flavie Arseneau, Health Commissioner (J. Andrew Dixon), Hsien-Wei Chen, Jaaved Singh, Jason Blakeburn, Jason Hirsch, Jenna Giubilaro, Katie MacMillan, Konstantina Chalastara, Laurence Benoit Dube, Liam Murphy, Matthew Satterthwaite, Matthew Timmermans, Melissa Manganaro, Member Services Officer (Jenny Ann Pura), Member Support Commissioner (Billy Liu), Nanqing Zhu, Nickoo Merati, Paul Gomes, PGSS Council Speaker (Logan Smith), Qiushi Cui, Rajat Bhateja, Roxanne Vandenbeek, Roya Jamarani, Sarah Colby, Secretary-General (Victor Frankel), Selya Amrani, Sienna Clark, Stephanie Mok, Tareq Hardan, Thomas Colbourne, Tim Mack, Yony Bresler, Zoya Dare, Dana Pearl, Corina DeKraker, Chief Returning Officer (Colby Briggs), Charles Brunette, Brenda Janice Sanchez Sanchez, Barbara Mindt, Angella Wagner, Angela Tam, Amir Nosrat, Alex Magdzinski, Alex Enescu, Aiden Hallihan, Academic Affairs Officer (Nicholas Dunn)

Guests

Anne Gabrielle, Xavier Richer Vis, Philip Quintal, Marc Gelinas, Mazern Bahadi, Aaron Rose, Angelique Mannella, Lauren Benson-Armer, Anna Otto, Siyana Kurteva, Vatsal Sachan, Stephen Kutcher, Andreanne Morin, Elizabeth Margaret Cormier, Annie Gong, Marie-Ève Assunçao-Denis

6:51 PM Call to order

1 Approval of the agenda

Motion to move reports to end of the agenda.
Motion passed by 2/3 majority (39/42 in favour, 3 opposed).
Motion to approve agenda passed.

2 Floor Items

2.1 January 18th Council Meeting

Motion passed.

3 Speaker’s report
4 Announcements

4.1 SG to council: PGSS support in troubled times, CFS settlement, input for principal reappointment,

6:57 PM

Dear PGSS community,

We find ourselves in a difficult time on many fronts, and we need to stand together.

In light of the recent tragic killings in Quebec City and the travel ban imposed by the Trump administration, we express our solidarity with marginalized communities, at McGill, in Canada and around the world.

PGSS executives have been working closely with the office of the Provost, the Dean of Post-Graduate studies and other members of the McGill administration to develop a plan on how to respond as an academic institution to the restrictions on travel for members of our community and to help to broaden the doors to our university to people affected by bigotry and ignorance projected from the highest levels of governance in the United States. While our university has acted quickly and has shown sincere commitment to our shared principles of diversity and inclusivity, we will continue to work with the McGill administration to enhance the support services we provide to members of our community in these difficult and uncertain times.

At PGSS, we are also working to increase our support for wellness programs for graduate and post-doctoral students at McGill. I will take this opportunity to invite PGSS to engage with one or more of our support programs:

Peer Support Centre, a group of students that have received training in active listening. They’re open Monday-Friday, 11am-7pm in SSMU room 411 for drop-ins or by appointment.

WRAP, a peer-facilitated group wellness session (can anyone just attend WRAP or do they need a referral?)

Nightline, a phone-based active listening support service with trained volunteers. They can be reached everyday from 6pm-3am at 514-398-6246.

In addition, our Equity and Diversity Commissioner can provide valuable resources for people in marginalized communities as well as guidance for people in positions of privilege to be allies to marginalized communities. We also have a guided mindfulness meditation at noon at Thomson House every Wednesday.

This is an opportunity for us to stand together and unite against intolerance, racism and hate. No action is enough, and all actions of support, compassion and kindness are needed. We invite you to join us in this processes.

With warmest regards,

Victor M. Frankel
Secretary General
Post Graduate Student Society
McGill University

Need student comments for committee to reappointment principal
The following is a message to the McGill community from Mr. Stuart (‘Kip’) Cobbett, Chair of the Board of Governors on the Advisory Committee for the Reappointment of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor:

Professor Suzanne Fortier will complete her first term as Principal and Vice-Chancellor on June 30, 2018 and will be eligible for reappointment. Professor Suzanne Fortier was appointed Principal and Vice-Chancellor on September 5, 2013. Pursuant to the Statutes, an Advisory Committee for the Reappointment of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor has been established.

The Advisory Committee would welcome any written comments by members of the McGill community with respect to the renewal of Professor Fortier’s appointment. All comments will be treated in the strictest confidence by the Committee. Please submit your comments in writing by February 15, 2017. Comments should be addressed to Mr. Stuart (Kip) Cobbett, Chair of the Advisory Committee for the Reappointment of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, c/o the Secretary-General, University Secretariat, James Administration Building, 845 Sherbrooke Street West, Room 313, Montreal, QC H3A 0G4, or by e-mail to: advisories@mcgill.ca


Following up on January discussion on more clarity on booking fees, we have put this up on the website so people can see what they are billed for and what our policy is for each of the spaces.

http://thomsonhouse.ca/event

Public meeting with board of governors… please let me know If you would like to present, or attend the meeting (March 8th)

The SG spoke about how recent events, including the travel ban, are being addressed on an academic level. He also spoke about the impact of these events on student mental health and the role of PGSS in improving peer support services. He then provided an update on the activity of the Board of Directors, and announced that the legal battle with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) has ended. He also mentioned that he is sitting on the Committee for the Reappointment of the Principal, and welcomed members to submit in writing any comments, questions, or concerns by the end of the day. He stood for questions.

Questions:

E. Larson (GSAN) asked about how settlement of the CFS case will be reflected in the PGSS budget.

SG answered that it will be reflected in the budget, but he cannot officially make an announcement of how much was settled for. He said he will have a better idea of where it’s going to be put in the budget by next Council.

E. Larson (GSAN) asked whether this involves all PGSS and CFS related disputes, or if there are there any outstanding.

SG answered all.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) thanked everyone who has put time and effort into the CFS case over the years.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) asked if anything will change now that there is potentially more money in the budget.

SG responded that the booking fees for all the spaces at Thomson House have been put on the website so it is transparent and clear. How will this reflect on reduced costs, he is not sure yet but will work on it.

L. Murphey (SWAGS) asked if there would be any initiative to help support other student unions that want to improve their advocacy efforts and leave the CFS and avoid bankruptcy.
The Speaker said it is not discussion period, talk about at another time.

HC asked if it would be possible to hide the Thomson House fee schedule behind a log-in page, so that only PGSS members have access. Important to have transparency for our members and understand where the fees are going, but not necessarily easy for us to negotiate better prices with external groups.

SG asked HC to bring this idea to the caucus meeting.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) talked about his experience at the Senate meeting, where it seemed that response from the Principal is that McGill itself doesn’t want to get involved in advocacy, or put out a statement against what is happening. How does PGSS want to proceed with that in terms of how McGill navigates that issue?

SG responded that first and foremost, we need to take care of our own members and own business in prioritizing and expanding mental health. How we can also push McGill to do better on this requires a broader discussion about PGSS’ role within the student societies and the ecosystem.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) asked if this is something that is going to be organized soon.

SG said he is willing to take any suggestions on how to format this broader discussion, can talk after meeting or come to the next caucus meeting.

J. Hirsch (AGSA) asked the SG to expand a little bit on the fund for graduate students for travel.

SG responded it is very new, the university only recently figured out how much to put in and what it’s for. This came as response of 400 people submitting to Provost Office written statements on how they are affected on various levels. Not only for graduate students.

AAO added that there is no formal application, but there’s an email to get in touch with the Provost office. Application process will be formalized in the near future.

J. Hirsch (AGSA) asked what the money is for.

SG explained that you were going to a conference in the US you can no longer attend but already booked your tickets, then you can get the money back.

The SG was thanked.

4.2 Peer Support Centre recruitment and updates

Join the 2017-2018 Peer Support Centre Executive Team!

Want to be a part of McGill’s Peer Support Centre for the 2017-2018 school year? Our student-run group is recruiting for our Executive Team! Both undergraduate and graduate students across all faculties at McGill are welcome to apply! Applications are open from February 2nd until February 16th at 5 p.m. You can learn more about the open positions and how to apply in our application guide: http://bit.ly/2kXBmzS.

The MSC announced that applications for the PSC Executive Team are closing tomorrow night, and that volunteer applications to become a Peer Supporter or Promotion & Outreach Team member will be opening tomorrow. He also reminded members of the operating hours (Monday to Friday, 11 AM - 7 PM) and that appointments can be made online at ssmu.mcgill.ca/psc. He also talked about expansion to isolated campus and institutes (e.g. the Douglas, Glen) next year, and invited anyone who is interested in offering peer support in those spaces to contact himself or the HC.

Seeing no questions, the MSC was thanked.
4.3 **Associate Vice Principal (Research and Innovation) Angelique Manella**

Announcement to council regarding development of Graduate Innovation Fund

A. Manella introduced herself as the Associate VP (Research and Innovation). She spoke about initiatives of the Office of Innovation and Partnerships, including innovation fellowships, the Graduate Innovation Fund, and a mentoring service specifically for innovation projects. She then discussed the Innovation Fund in more detail - application process, where the money is coming from, and long-term goals. She stood for questions.

Questions:

Z. Dare (AHCS-GSA) asked about whether projects from the humanities would be considered.

A. Manella responded that innovation isn’t just about technology, and it is up for discussion what projects are funded. The most important thing is that some work has been done on the project ahead of time without funding, and milestones can be clearly defined.

A. Nosrat (DDSS) asked what model these wards will be given out (grants, loans, equity). How can it be ensured that profit from start-ups comes back to the membership or the university into the community?

A. Manella responded that the vision for this is grants-based. Regarding returns, she said that investment in an ecosystem has long-term benefits, in form of mentorship or philanthropic donation from successful individuals.

A. Nosrat (DDSS) asked whether there has been an evaluation of a share-based model.

A. Manella said it is an option to explore.

SG talked about how PGSS can use facilities at Thomson House to bring people together. He asked if other universities have been able to mobilize graduate and post-doc students in community-based innovation?

A. Manella responded that she hasn’t looked specifically at graduate students for ecosystem development, but yes, students in a more broad sense. Lots of examples and evidence at other institutions.

E. Larson (GSAN) talked about lack of access to university space for start-ups affiliated with the university. He asked if it will be part of her mandate to find space on campus for start-ups.

A. Manella said it is something she is looking at a lot at the moment, high priority.

CRO asked if the department would be interested in collaborating with the Graduate Law Student Association.

A. Manella responded yes, and that they currently work with a lot of undergraduate law students.

A. Manella was thanked.

4.4 **Creating a new type of membership (Post-Graduate Campus Organisation)**

MAC campus student life has dropped this past year since the budget cuts removed our normal $16 return per MCGSS member from PGSS. In the fall semester, we approved a motion to allow us to access up to 30% of the PGSLF from the student associations under MCGSS. This allowed us to host one event a month but it takes away from the departmental activities. It also doesn’t allow us to provide the breadth of services we use to and fill in the gaps on campus. We’ve had student groups and individual students
come to us with fundable ideas or requests for support we were unable to meet. We can help students in non-financial ways as we were able to improve student services support on campus, we are working with the Peer Helper Program to improve their offerings, we direct students to where they can find help and inform the admin of where students need help. We have been very busy volunteering our time to help build and promote services.

Yet, we currently pay PGSS to do what we do. We pay PGSS for full representation by PGSS and full access to their services. Being geographically separate makes it more difficult to access these services. Being physically separated has also resulted in weaker connection between MAC and PGSS. This separation makes it very difficult for PGSS to represent MAC and has been an issue since the 1980’s when MCGSS joined PGSS. The current system does not work. The current system has Mac grads paying for full service while receiving partial service and leaving a financially depleted MCGSS to do the work PGSS is unable to do being distant from campus.

MCGSS does all the mac grad representation at a campus level. MCGSS has its own council consisting of student associations just like how PGSS is designed. MCGSS has grown in becoming a real student union to protect and support its members.

Our solution is to create a new membership that reflects this 30 year old reality. A membership that has a Post-Graduate Campus Organisation pay some fees to PGSS and also establish its own fees. A membership that has rules such as mandatory meetings between the PGCO and the PGSS Executive and requiring the PGCO do a certain minimum of representation and activity to maintain its membership.

This Post-Graduate Campus Organisation is what we, MCGSS, are working on in other to stay within the PGSS umbrella which we feel we don’t currently fit. This is announcement of what we are currently doing.

J. Singh (MCGSS) talked about difficulties faced in promoting student life at Mac campus due to funding changes. He also talked about the relationship between PGSS and MCGSS. He proposed creating a new type of membership and changing fee structure.

Questions:

The HC asked J. Singh (MCGSS) to speak on the idea why it is important to be close to the problems at Mac campus rather than doing the job from here.

J. Singh (MCGSS) responded that by being physically on campus, they are familiar with unique issues faced by Mac students, such as accessing health services on main campus.

Seeing no further questions, J. Singh (MCGSS) was thanked.

4.5 Election Timeline

Election Timeline

The CRO talked about the slight change in nomination deadline to Mar 15 by noon. He said no nominations have been received for FAO, and they are considering extending the deadline just for this position by one week. He encouraged members to attend upcoming debates.

He announced that only 18 PGSAs have responded to his Google form, and emphasized the importance of filling out the form to ensure that members receive information about council.
5 Business Arising

5.1 Applications sent from the Appointments Board Committee for Approval

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Applicant</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td>Council of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies</td>
<td>Saba Roozbahani</td>
<td>Approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee on Monetary Affairs</td>
<td>Saba Roozbahani</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Structure Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Saba Roozbahani</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee on Physical Development</td>
<td>Conrad Hall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy and Structure Advisory Committee</td>
<td>Forough Noohi</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<td>McGill Writing Centre - Program Committee</td>
<td>Ravinder Kumar</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee for Member Support</td>
<td>Ayo Olanrewaju</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee for Member Support</td>
<td>Cameron Bauer</td>
<td>Approved</td>
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Motion passed.

5.2 Appointments Board - Round 2

Appointments Board - Round 2

Motion passed.

6 Question Period

6.1 Question to council

How should PGSS respond to crises? What can we do better to provide PGSS students the support that they need in troubled times?

6.2 Question to council

Question for Council: Guidance on forming policy governing honorary memberships to PGSS. Request that Council provides input on the type of people that should get honorary lifetime memberships and yearly memberships.

J. Singh (MCGSS) asked who comprises the current honorary memberships and why they were given.

SG answered that there is currently nobody on the honorary memberships, everyone was removed. In the past, they have been given to Deans, Dean’s assistants, graduate program coordinators, etc.

T. Colbourne (PPSMUA) asked who is in charge of nominations right now.

SG responded that he is, as right now they have a blank slate, except for presenters at the new innovation symposium.

T. Colbourne (PPSMUA) asked if a committee could be created for this.
SG answered yes, email ideas to him.

J. Singh (MCGSS) suggested treating honorary memberships as an award, given to anyone who has significantly impacted graduate student life, as a status item.

SG responded that gratitude was the original goal of honorary memberships. However, the problem was there was a huge pool of names that nobody knew where they came from.

7:07 PM 6.3 Question from council

E. Larson (GSAN) asked how some post-docs no longer being members of PGSS will impact the budget.

SG answered that in mid-December, they were informed by the university that depending on where their funding is coming from, post-docs are now considered employees of the university. This affects their tax bracket status, student status, and reflects on their ability to get student services. They are trying to plan for the worst and hope for the best, by making next year’s budget assuming there won’t be any post docs as members.

E. Larson (GSAN) asked if there are any contingencies for the missing $1200 (400 post-docs) this semester.

SG responded that there are not.

SG asked FAO if financial hit will be taken this semester or fees have already been collected.

FAO said that the fee will be collected by end of February, supposed to receive at least $1800 from 600 post-docs. Next year we will lose that money.

MSO asked if post-docs can enrol themselves as associate membership.

SG answered that he was given a legal order to cease all activities with post-docs regarding their student status and union status, so he stepped back. Can’t comment on what post-docs want to do in terms of their unionization, but no reason why they cannot pay in as affiliate members if they want to.

7 New Business

7.1 2nd reading. Motion to approve the creation of the Innovation Commissioner position and innovation committee

7:07 PM

Whereas McGill University is currently creating an innovation strategy, and several programs, activities and resources related to innovation and entrepreneurship;

Whereas the PGSS does not have a mechanism through which concerted representation on committees related to innovation and entrepreneurship can be ensured over the long-term;

Whereas the PGSS does not have policies and/or positions related to the future of innovation and entrepreneurship at McGill University

Whereas the PGSS has received requests for endorsement from start-ups initiated by students

Whereas the PGSS does not have policies and positions related to the protocol for endorsing start-ups

Whereas the PGSS membership has expressed interest in improving the process of identifying the
appropriate resources on campus related to innovation and entrepreneurship

BIRT that the PGSS Council approve the creation of the Innovation Commissioner position and Innovation Committee, as described in the attached document.

2nd reading. Motion to approve the creation of the Innovation Commissioner position and innovation committee

Questions:

M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) asked if changes were made from the first reading.

SG answered no.

The Speaker called the motion to a vote.

Motion passed.

7.2 First Reading of Health and Dental Insurance Plan Cost Renewal

HEALTH

Do you agree that the PGSS Health and Dental fee be renewed for 5 years beginning September 2017 and ending August 2022, at an annually adjusted rate not exceeding the cap amount of $265.00 for the health insurance component of the plan considering there are increases to the benefits and not exceeding the cap amount of $210.00 for the dental insurance component of the plan? **

**Whereas clauses form part of the question:

1. WHEREAS in order to provide the lowest price for PGSS members, the PGSS Health and Dental Insurance Plan (HDIP) is compulsory for ALL Canadian residents who are full-time and additional session PGSS members, and the dental insurance of the plan is compulsory for all full-time PGSS members. Any PGSS member may withdraw (opt-out) and be refunded the applicable fee with proof of equivalent coverage.

2. WHEREAS the following increases in benefits would apply: (a) Increase physiotherapy coverage from $30.00 to $50.00 per visit up to a maximum of $400.00 per policy year. (b) Increase psychology coverage to include Registered Clinical Counsellors and Masters of Social Work.

3. WHEREAS the PGSS Health and Dental Plan premiums will be negotiated on a yearly basis, without exceeding the cap amount approved in this question.

YES or NO

______________________________

DENTAL

If you are in support of the the HDIP renewal for 2017-2018, do you agree to an additional charge of $8.66 included into the existing PGSS Dental cap amount in order to provide an increase in Dental Preventative Services to 70% resulting in a 100% coverage when a dental clinic is chosen from the Dental Network list?**

**The maximum cap that cannot be exceeded will change from $210.00 to $219.00 for the annual adjusted rate of the dental insurance component.
YES or NO
First Reading of Health and Dental Insurance Plan Cost Renewal ()
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The MSO clarified that StudentCare is our insurance broker, and speak on our behalf to the insurance company. She acknowledged the McGill staff that have worked on the renewal. The HC presented data from surveys to justify the proposed changes. The MSO talked about the process of the renewal, and pointed out that over the past 3 years, the total rate has stayed the same ($419.20) despite passing a cap of $459.80 in 2014. She said that while enrolment trends for the health plan have decreased, claims have increased; for dental, there was a slight decrease in enrolment, with a significant increase in claims. She also talked about the increase in physiotherapy and psychology coverage. She explained changes in the cap amounts.

HEALTH
Questions:
Y. Bresler (MGAPS) thanked the MSO and HC for their work. He asked why the cost of the PGSS plan is higher than SSMU and other universities.

MSO responded that we are a smaller body of students and our usage is different. In 2012, the decision was made that PGSS wanted to be autonomous from the SSMU plan. If we were to decide to join them, their plan would increase and there would be a lot of logistical issues.

M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) asked how they anticipate the diminished membership of post-docs negotiating with us will impact our ability negotiate the health & dental plan in the future.

HC responded that it could go one of two ways. Post-docs tend to be from an older demographic, so losing them off the plan might have a benefit. However, 800 people is a substantial number and there is no way of really knowing what will happen until it is in front of us. Benefits to doing all of this now. When post-docs are officially gone, will have to re-negotiate.

J. Amos (EGSS) asked what happens if enrolment numbers increase.

MSO responded that it allows us to better negotiate for future rates to be lower, benefits us in long-run.

J. Singh (MCGSS) motioned to give another member of MCGSS speaking rights.
Motion passed.

He asked if it would be possible to make enrolment to the plan optional for students who already have provincial health coverage, without providing proof of alternative private plan.

HC explained that the reason for having this rule is two-fold. Provincial health insurance covers physician visits and hospital, whereas complementary insurance covers physiotherapy, pharmacare, etc. so it is not opt-outable without equivalent proof of coverage. The other reason is the question was brought to membership in 2012 and the motion passed, so we have held that decision. Due diligence was done to talk to external brokers to get a better deal. Finding a private plan that offers what we have is up to $1000.

T. Colbourne (PPSMUA) asked if we have to negotiate as a McGill institution, or are we able to go in with other universities and negotiate en masse with them?

MSO replied it is something that can be considered in the future.

A. Magzdinski (NGSA) asked if math has been done to see how much students have saved versus how much we pay into it?

HC responded for the first 5 months of usage, it is 103% for health claims.

MSO added that they lose money for their benefits because our usage has exponentially gone up.

The Speaker moved the discussion into debate.

Seeing none, the Speaker called the motion to a vote.

Motion passed by 2/3 majority (46/49 in favour, 2 opposed, 1 abstained).

DENTAL

The Speaker opened discussion for debate.

Seeing none, the motion was called to a vote.

Motion passed (46/48 in favour, 1 opposed, 1 abstained).

The MSO encouraged members to inform their PGSAs about the referendum questions.

7.3 Referendum Question: Thomson House Upkeep Fee (PGSP) Description Change

7:08 PM

Proposer - Amir Hossein Nosrat

Question -

Given that the current description of the PGSS Thompson House Upkeep Fee prevents the PGSS from accessing the funds for maintaining Thompson House building, furniture, and grounds do you agree to modify the description of the PGSS Thompson House Upkeep Fee (PGSP), without changing the fee amount to the following:

“This fee is for the purpose of financing the maintenance by the PGSS of the David Thomson House Graduate Student Centre which is the home of the PGSS. This fee is to be used for physical maintenance and improvements of Thomson House building, furniture, and grounds that enhance member’s experience. This fee is levied equally from every PGSS regular member on a per semester (fall & winter) basis. The fee has no end date and is not opt-out-able. Any changes to the fee can only be made following a referendum of PGSS members conducted by the Post-Graduate Students’ Society.”
The EC explained the rationale behind the upkeep fee description change. $10,000 was received from the Sustainability Projects Fund to set up new gardens (see his report for lay-out). One of the conditions is to ensure we are able to access funds to maintain the gardens. After asking around, this fee was deemed to be most appropriate but has been frozen for almost a decade. Changing the fee description will allow us to access these funds.

Questions:

E. Larson (GSAN) asked how this is fundamentally different from the old fee description. He also asked how this will impact the lease PGSS has with the university.

SG said that it will not impact our lease. When discussed with the administration that we'd like to green Thomson House, they were supportive.

A. Nosrat read out the old fee description on the website and explained how it is different.

M. Timmermans (MGSS) asked what we have been spending the fee on.

The Speaker replied nothing.

The Speaker moved the discussion into debate.

E. Larson (GSAN) motioned to put the old language somewhere in the question.

Motion seconded.

The EC motivated against the amendment, saying to keep the language in the question simple.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) suggested adding only one sentence about the main difference. His suggestion was considered a friendly amendment by E. Larson.

J. Singh (MCGSS) also spoke in favour of the amendment.

Motion to amend the referendum question as follows:

Whereas, previously the PGSS Thomson House Upkeep Fee was “not for the purpose of capital investments or leasehold improvements.”

Whereas, the current description of the PGSS Thomson House Upkeep Fee prevents the PGSS from accessing the funds for maintaining Thomson House building, furniture, and grounds do you agree to modify the description of the PGSS Thomson House Upkeep Fee (PGSP), without changing the fee amount to the following:

“This fee is for the purpose of financing the maintenance by the PGSS of the David Thomson House Graduate Student Centre which is the home of the PGSS. This fee is to be used for physical maintenance and improvements of Thomson House building, furniture, and grounds that enhance members’ experience. This fee is levied equally from every PGSS regular member on a per semester (fall & winter) basis. The fee has no end date and is not opt-outable. Any changes to the fee can only be made following a referendum of PGSS members conducted by the Post-Graduate Students’ Society.”

Motion to amend referendum question passed.

The Speaker opened debate on the new referendum question.

Seeing no debate, the motion was called to a vote.

Motion passed (37/37 in favour).
7.4 McGill Athletics and Recreation Advisory Board - Athletics Ancillary Fee Increase Referendum

7:08 PM

Proposed Referendum Question for PGSS

Given that student labor, maintenance and facility repair costs have increased significantly and that Athletics & Recreation wishes to continue offering quality and affordable programs and services to McGill University students, including several innovative facility and program improvements, do you agree to a 3% increase to the Athletics Ancillary Fee, which translates to an additional $3.63 per term for full-time graduate students and $2.20 per term for part-time graduate students?

McGill Athletics and Recreation Advisory Board - Athletics Ancillary Fee Increase Referendum ()

J. Blakeburn (RSGS) introduced himself as the PGSS rep on the McGill Athletics and Recreation Advisory Board. He motion to extend speaking rights to Marc Gélinas (Executive Director of Athletics & Recreation) and Philip Quintal (Associate Director, Athletics & Recreation). Motion passed.

M. Gélinas presented briefly on areas of increased costs. He said they were able to negotiate for increased funding from central, which allowed them to decrease their ask to students by half.

Questions:

MSO asked about data regarding usage for graduate students.

P. Quintal responded that an analysis was done using their spectrum system. From Sept 1-Dec 31, 2016, they had 2458 different graduate students use their facilities, which accounted for almost 32 000 visits.

HC asked if there are any programs in the pipeline for athletics & recreation for students in remote areas away from the central hub of campus.

P. Quintal responded that it is something Jason can bring forward to their group for discussion to figure out effective programs for this group.

J. Blakeburn added that something discussed at the last meeting was improvements in the recreation facilities at the Mac campus. Updating building and possibly getting more aquatic activities.

A. Tam (GSAN) asked why the fee is so expensive, compared to other universities, and why we need to pay extra for the fitness centre.

M. Gélinas responded that we have to be careful when comparing universities to make sure we are comparing the same context. He said they are responsible for heating, upkeeping, cleaning, renovations, and repairs, and offer a wide range of services. In comparison to universities that can be used on a comparison basis, they are in the same range. Base fee with users fees for specific programs.

M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) asked for the budget to be put up on the screen. He asked if they are doing anything to increase other revenues rather than asking students for more?

P. Quintal responded they are pressing their staff in the different revenue-generating areas to work as hard as they can so they don’t have to come to the students with large asks. However, important to understand that we want to do this with minimal impact to student programs. For example, if facilities are rented out more, student programs would need to be cut. He said they have hired a marketing firm to evaluate their services and statistics.
M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) described his experience as an athletics employee, seeing hours wasted by staff and many people being paid to do the job of few. He asked to what extent they have looked into current structure of employees, and where costs can potentially be cut.

P. Quintal responded that they try to work as lean as they possibly can, but not so lean that they can't deliver quality service. He said he was not aware of this and asked M. Satterthwaite to bring his concerns forward.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) asked if fees from the deputy student life & learning and student services fee/grant is under the student fees budget line.

P. Quintal responded that the student fees are the fees directly related to the athletics & recreation and ancillary fee. The other fees he is referring to are the grants.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) asked if the overhead is going back to central.

P. Quintal responded that inter-fund transfers come to them, from central and from revenue-generating portions of their athletics & recreation operation, that show a surplus. Transfers move back into budget to help offset costs.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) asked what percentage of the operating budget is varsity versus athletics.

P. Quintal replied they never divide their budget that way, not something he can answer right now.

MSO asked to students to bear in mind that athletics & recreation did not receive support from students in 2014.

T. Colbourne (PPSMUA) asked if fees are also being increased for undergraduate students.

P. Quintal responded yes.

He asked if the increase is proportionate to use.

P. Quintal responded that the proposed increase is same percentage. Undergraduates pay slightly higher per term fee. Asked them for 3% increase, same as graduate students.

T. Colbourne (PPSMUA) asked if there is variance in use between undergraduate and graduate students on average

P. Quintal responded they have not collected data for undergraduate students, had specific request to tabulate data for graduate students.

T. Colbourne (PPSAMUA) asked if their other fees (e.g. equipment rental) at the sports centre also going to increase?

P. Quintal replied that there will probably be some of the other operational fees that will increase slightly to allow them to continue to run quality programs. If the two sides (undergrad & grad) pass, they will be able to present a balanced budget for 2017-18.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) asked if non students be members.

P. Quintal responded yes.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) asked how much they pay.

P. Quintal replied does not have number off top of his head, but significantly higher than what students pay.

The Speaker opened the discussion for debate.
J. Blakeburn (RSGS) spoke in favour.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) commented that it would have been better if they had come with a list of things they’ve done and venues they’ve explored to make up for the short fall. Need to cover all bases to make sure it is a sustainable organization.

The Speaker called the motion to a vote.

Motion failed (19/42 in favour, 22 opposed, 1 abstained).

7:08 PM 7.5 Tabled - Question for referendum: Graduate Innovation Fund

Given that McGill University has launched a new program, Innovation@McGill that aims to 1) catalyze a community of innovators and entrepreneurs within the graduate and post-doctoral student population at McGill and 2) provide capital for high impact/high risk projects/startups, do you agree to pay $3.75 per student per term, to support a Graduate Innovation Fund that 1) provides capital for high impact student projects and 2) supports initiatives that foster innovation and entrepreneurship through intensive interdisciplinary collaboration (ie hackthons / startup weekends) at McGill, with contributions by PGSS members matched 3:1 by McGill University?

Question for referendum: Graduate Innovation Fund

The SG stood for questions.

M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) said he is very much in favour. He asked what the role of the Innovation Commissioner will be in this fund.

The SG responded that the Innovation Commissioner will work to bring a lot of these initiatives to light and to Thomson House.

The EC asked what will be the consequences if we don’t run this referendum now.

The SG replied we would have less budget for the innovation fund, and much limited funds for having these things at Thomson House.

The EC said he has not had time to really think about this proposal, would like more time to evaluate with due diligence.

The Speaker said that is part of debate, hold.

Seeing no further questions, the Speaker moved the discussion into debate.

The EC continued that he would still vote in favour, but if the fund is going to succeed, if he as a council member doesn’t know what this fund is about, he doesn’t know how members are going to vote for this. Need more outreach.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) asked about strict wording of questions with fees according to bylaws.

The CRO responded.

The SG said all these questions will go to the Board of Directors for approval, then to the university.

The Speaker motioned to extend Council for half an hour.

Motion did not pass.
7:08 PM 7.6  **Tabled - All questions for referendum**

All questions for ballot (compiled)

*All questions for referendum*

7:08 PM 7.7 **Tabled - Motion for Referendum on Student Housing**

Whereas PGSS wishes to document its members’ needs related to housing and explore the feasibility of affordable, not-for-profit solutions to meet these needs;

Whereas this implies, participation in the province-wide student-run PHARE survey on students’ living conditions, already being submitted to 12 campuses throughout Quebec (including to McGill undergraduates);

Whereas such a survey would provide unique and historic information on PGSS members’ housing conditions and needs;

Whereas, in partnership with the nonprofit organizing the survey, UTILE, the second step would be to carry out a feasibility study to document different housing solutions to the identified needs.

Whereas the solutions explored would include both building transformation, such as the Royal Victoria hospital, and new construction.

Do you agree to the levee of a fee of 0.70$ per PGSS member to cover the costs of a survey on McGill graduate students’ housing needs and a feasibility study of potential ways to address those needs?

7:09 PM **Adjourned**