Agenda

1 Approval of the agenda  
   1.1 Add Item: Motion to block LICM  

2 Floor Items  
   2.1 February 15th Council Meeting  

3 Speaker’s report  

4 Business Arising  
   4.1 Referendum question: Innovation@McGill - Graduate Innovation Culture Fund  

5 New Business  
   5.1 Appointments Board lottery  
   5.2 Motion to block LICM referendum until financial disclosures are made and referendum procedures are amended
Attending

Academic Affairs Officer (Nicholas Dunn), Adrien Habermacher, Aiden Hallihan, Alex Magdzinski, Amir Nosrat, Andr?anne Morin, Angela Tam, Angelia Wagner, Ariela Lenetsky, Billy Liu, Callan Ross-Sheppard, Charles Brunette, Danni Cai, Dana Pearl, Corina DeKraker, Elena Penkarski-Rodon, David O’Connor, Emily Moore, Emilie Michalovic, Equity Commissioner (Angela Yu), Environment Commissioner (Amir Nosrat ), Erin Sheedy, Erik Larson, External Affairs Officer (Jacob Lavigne), Faegheh Ghanbari Divshali, Felicia Gabriele, Financial Affairs Officer (Mina Moradi), Flavie Arseneau, Hsien-Wei Chen, Health Commissioner (J. Andrew Dixon), Internal Affairs Officer (Mina Anadolu), Jenna Giubilaro, John Morris, Kirsten Gerrie, Kiesha Dhaliwal, Laurence Benoit Dube, Mansha Imtiyaz, Margaret Cormier, Matthew Satterthwaite, Mark Kaji, Matthew Timmermans, Melissa Manganaro, Member Services Officer (Jenny Ann Pura), Member Support Commissioner (Billy Liu), Mohammad Saleem Saleem, Nanqing Zhu, Paul Gomes, PGSS Council Speaker (Logan Smith), Qiushi Cui, Recording Secretary (Connie Luu), Roxanne Vandenbeek, Secretary-General (Victor Frankel), Sarah Ives, Sierra Clark, Stephanie Mok, Stephen Kutcher, Thomas Colbourne, Tim Mack, Vatsal Sachan, Vertika Vertika, Yony Bresler

Guests

Gabriela Perez (GASA), Manon Paquet (GASA), Carole Spake (EGSS), Siyana Kurteva (EBOSS), Shufeng Zhou (EGSS), Colby Briggs (LICM), Marie-Pier Gauthier (LICM), Sunny Yang (LICM), Sean Pierce (LICM), Anne Gabrielle (MGAPSS), Yan Zeng (MMGES)

5:31 PM Call to order

5:31 PM Approval of the agenda

Motion by E. Larson (GSAN) to table reports to GM.
Motion was seconded.
Motion passed.
Motion to approve agenda passed unanimously.

5:45 PM 1.1 Add Item: Motion to block LICM
2 Floor Items

5:33 PM 2.1 February 15th Council Meeting

Minutes are not up yet, will approve at next meeting.

3 Speaker’s report

5:33 PM

4 Business Arising

4.1 Referendum question: Innovation@McGill - Graduate Innovation Culture Fund

5:33 PM

Given that McGill University has launched a new program, Innovation@McGill (funded by the Office of the Provost, Office of Research and Innovation, Faculty of Science, Graduate and Post-Doctoral Studies, Student Life and Learning) that aims to 1) catalyze a community of innovators and entrepreneurs within the graduate and postgraduate 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 Culture Fund that supports initiatives that foster innovation and entrepreneurship specifically for graduate and postgraduate students through intensive interdisciplinary collaboration (ie hackathons / startup weekends) at McGill?

Referendum question: Innovation@McGill - Graduate Innovation Culture Fund

The SG explained that since this referendum question was not passed at the last Council due to time constraints, it is now being put to Council as a special referendum question. He stood for questions.

Questions:

E. Larson (GSAN) asked a question about the procedure regarding approving dates, timelines, and campaign materials at this point as there is no referendum period right now.

The SG answered that it has to go through a special referendum process. What is important right now is to put the question to council for approval. Referendum timeline can be established at next council (Apr 4th).

The Speaker added that the timeline can be set after.

E. Larson (GSAN) asked if there is a limit to when we can have referendum, and if there are any restrictions on the academic calendar.

The MSO replied that any changes to the fee structure have to be in to student accounts by April 1.

E. Larson (GSAN) asked for clarification that this wouldn’t be going ahead this year.

The SG confirmed that it is not, just wanted to put question to council.
The Speaker further clarified that this would be happening next fall.

The Speaker moved the discussion into debate.

Motion called to a vote.

Motion passed by 2/3 majority (37/40 in favour, 3 against).

5 New Business

5.1 Appointments Board lottery

5:38 PM

Per the regulations in chapter 12 of the Society Activities Manual. Nominations may be submitted to the Council Speaker prior to the meeting or at the meeting.

See chapter 11 for the description of the Appointments Board's function and responsibilities.

Those selected will begin serving April 1, for a one year term.

The Speaker explained the role of the Appointments Board. The AAO announced that they are looking for three members to start immediately, and three more to start on June 1. The IAO added that the commitment is 1 meeting per month, and that members can cast their vote online as an e-vote if they can’t make it to the meeting.

The following members were selected to begin serving on April 1: Emilie Michalovic, Stephanie Mok, Jenna Giubilaro.

The following members were selected to begin serving on June 1 - Mansha Imtiyaz, Adrien Habernacher, Emily Moore.

M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) raised a point of information that one of the individuals selected is a candidate for IAO and suggested drawing an alternate.

The 1st alternate drawn was Shufeng Zhou. As she is also a candidate in the PGSS elections, a 2nd alternate was drawn, Haji Mohammad Saleem.

5.2 Motion to block LICM referendum until financial disclosures are made and referendum procedures are amended

5:45 PM

WHEREAS LICM is conducting a non-PGSS run referendum to change the non-opt-out-able fee levied on all graduate students from $2 to $4.50 per semester. The voting starts March 20.

WHEREAS LICM presented the referendum question before the PGSS Council in its January 2017 meeting, which was passed by the council. However, the next day certain discrepancies were found in the information provided by the LICM representatives at the Council, based on which the referendum question was asked to be placed again before the council in the subsequent meeting. Subsequently, LICM decided to run the referendum independently.

WHEREAS upon the lack of financial disclosures and other data, along with the skewed procedures adopted in running the referendum, until LICM discloses its financial records, and data pertaining to the number of graduate students served, the referendum should be blocked.
WHEREAS a letter (annexed) dated March 14, 2017 was sent by Manmeet S. Rai in his capacity as a PGSS Member by email to the Executive Director, LICM highlighting these irregularities and requesting for disclosure of information. A response to that letter was received on March 17, 2017 (annexed) wherein the LICM Executive Director emphasized the referendum procedure is in compliance with PGSS and McGill rules. Reference to some links were provided, which did not work.

WHEREAS the PGSS referendum rules in SAM do not provide either an option for Preambles to be added before voting, nomination for only ‘No’ committee, or making CRO/CEO the final authority in deciding an electoral violation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, PGSS through a formal letter block the LICM referendum until LICM discloses its financial statements and makes the referendum procedures neutral in consultation with PGSS.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, before the LICM is allowed to move with the referendum, LICM will provide for a PGSS rep on its board, who will report to PGSS about LICMs working and help LICM to function more effectively for graduate students.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, before the LICM is allowed to move with the referendum, LICM in consultation with PGSS discuss the overlap in the services being offered by PGSS through the levy of Legal Support Fee and then decide the amount of fee increase.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, the email sent for the call to vote by the LICM contained an attachment from the “yes” committee.

The Speaker explained that the LICM referendum cannot be blocked, so this is a motion to send a letter to McGill requesting for the referendum to be blocked. He read the motion aloud.

Questions:

A. Habermacher (GLSA) asked if a motion could be made to give speaking rights to representatives of LICM to weigh in on debate in order to have an informed discussion.

Speaker answered that they cannot weigh in on the debate, however if there are specific fact-based questions asked by council, it can be directed at them.

C. Briggs (LICM) said he is their CRO and can also address questions.

Motion to extend speaking rights to representatives of LICM and their CRO.

Motion was seconded.

Motion passed by 2/3 majority (44/45 in favour, 1 abstained).

The SG reiterated that PGSS cannot block this referendum question. All that this motion would do is provide council endorsement to the letter that has been provided to LICM and to McGill bringing up issues of procedure.

M. Saleem (CSGS) asked what discrepancies that were found in the information are.

The CRO explained the discrepancies in terms of procedure. The first discrepancy he brought up was the provision of a preamble right before the question goes to voting and lack of a ‘No’ committee. The second point he brought up is how the formation of the yes/no committees take place. He said that to be on the ‘No’ committee, you have to go through a nomination process, whereas for the ‘Yes’ committee, anyone can join. His third point was that their CRO, who drafted the rules of the referendum last year, is also the person executing and deciding those rules. Fourth, the link provided on the ballot goes to the
LICM website, which he claimed is a violation of justice and transparency. He said there are also financial aspects, which other members who have raised this issue are better able to address.

A. Magdzinski (NGSA) spoke on the financial aspect and questioned whether it necessitates a raise of $2. He provided the following information that he got from their books, and asked for confirmation/correction:

- Revenue from 2015-16 was $221 000, of which $120 000 (55%) was reserved to pay for 7 directors during summer
- 75% of their clients are non-McGill students

He also asked why they don’t go for non-profit funding instead since they are providing an essential community service. He also asked how many grad students were served last year.

M. Gauthier (LICM) responded:

- Revenue received from Sept 2015 - Aug 2016 was $221 319, $110 000 of which does go towards salaries for the 7 directors. She said it is a full-time job and they need to stay competitive with other law firms.
- True that 75% of clients in 2016 were community members. Saw 2345 cases, 25% of that was McGill students.
- In 2016, 32% of student cases were graduate students. She clarified that this is only for the legal information side, while the student advocacy side only services McGill students and a lot of their fees goes towards that service.
- Have looked into funding for non-profits, multiple reasons for not going that avenue (team changes every year, time necessary to apply for grants, would need another director which would mean another salary). She said someone mentioned asking for funding from McGill itself, but this is not an option because student advocacy represents students often in front of/against the university, so it would be a conflict of interest.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) said that in the email sent today with the call to vote, the PDF of the ‘Yes’ committee is included with the email, which isn’t normally how it is done.

He motioned to add:  “BIFRT the email sent in the call to vote by the LICM contained an attachment from the Yes committee.

Motion was seconded.

Motion to approve amendment passed.

P. Gomes (EGSS) asked what extra services would PGSS members receive, as their services seem to be largely for undergraduate students. He said that members already pay $1 for legal services with PGSS, so if the increase from $2 to $4.50 is passed, members would be paying $5.50 per semester.

M. Gauthier (LICM) replied that Member Legal Support Fund is from PGSS, which is completely separate from LICM. From her understanding from the PGSS SAM, this fee is for counsel if ever a student is in dire need. There is a lot of eligibility criteria, and a committee needs to approves use of this fund. One of the conditions is there must be written report provided by LICM, student advocacy, or an external organization saying a student can/should seek external help, thus students often have to go through LICM first. She said they offer the same services for both undergrad and grad students, but grad student cases often have higher stakes and are more complex. Further, she said that LICM provides legal information on any area except criminal or tax law, provides in-person or phone service, and has much more extensive hours.
M. Satterthwaite (GSAN) requested to stop discussing financials and talk about the issues addressed by the CRO. He asked a question to the SG or CRO about PGSS overseeing other group's elections. He also asked the LICM CRO to address the concerns brought up by the PGSS CRO.

SG answered first question, saying he spoke with McGill administration and PGSS cannot be policing their referendum.

C. Briggs (LICM) replied that there is no preamble on the ballot. He said the link to the website is the Omnivox version of a candidate statement. LICM elections page separate from their actual website. If there was a ‘No’ committee, there would be a link in the same spot. In response to the BIRT clause that was added earlier, the ‘Yes’ statement went out with call to vote, similar to what PGSS does. A 750-word candidate statement can go out to all members so people are more informed, very similar for LICM. However, no graduate student wished to run the ‘No’ committee.

CRO brought up concern about the procedure and read out point number 7 and 8.

C. Briggs (LICM) replied that in practice, it doesn't really matter if there is a nomination process or not. The LICM does not have a huge electoral process like the PGSS, the rules are much more simple. The rules for the nomination process is that the CRO will come up with fair rules. The ‘Yes’ committee is automatically the LICM by basic logic.

In response to the CRO stating that there was no invitation for a ‘No’ committee to be assembled, the IAO brought up that in the email sent out on Feb 27, 2017, it calls for the formation of ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ committees. Opportunity for ‘No’ committee was given to entire membership.

A. Habermacher (GLSA) asked if anyone approached LICM to raise these issues before today?

Speaker replied that this letter to raise the issues was sent on Mar 14, response received Mar 17.

C. Briggs (LICM) added that nobody has filed contestation, no formal complaint.

A. Habermacher (GLSA) asked why this was not done.

CRO responded that he wrote the letter in his capacity as a PGSS member, not as CRO, and that there are reasons why he hasn’t raised this.

Y. Bresler (MGAPS) brought up point of information of whether there is a time limit on debate and question period.

The Speaker replied that one can always motion to adjourn, put to vote, or table the motion to end it, but there is no set limit.

E. Larson (GSAN) asked if there is a way for members to be able to read the content of the letter before voting on it.

The Speaker replied that we can read through it now, or if members are concerned, he can motion to table to next Council meeting two weeks from now.

Motion by E. Larson (GSAN) to table to next Council.

Motion was seconded.

Motion passed by majority.

Information will be sent out and added to agenda for next meeting.
6:24 PM  Adjourned