

**AGENDA**

**MSU General Assembly 2021**

MCMASTER STUDENTS UNION

Monday March 15, 2021 at 4:00pm

Remote Meeting, Zoom

**PROCEDURE**

Announcements from the Chair, Adoption of Agenda, Report Period, Business, Adjournment

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

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| 1. | Welcome/Quorum | Rhea Jangra |
| 2. | Rules and Proceedings | Rhea Jangra |

**REPORT PERIOD**

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| 1. | President’s Report | Giancarlo Da-Ré |

**BUSINESS**

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| 1. | Increased Coverage for Contraceptives | Megan Cheng |
| 2. | Welcome Week Activities for International Students | Xiaoyuan Zhou |
| 3. | Call for Advocacy Policies to be Adopted by Way of a Referendum | Jessie Li |
| 4. | Remove Minimum Quota of General Policies | Jessie Li |
| 5. | Addition of One Vice-Chair International Seat to the First Year Council | Jessie Li |

**MOTIONS**

1. **Moved by** Megan Cheng, **seconded by** Alison Hacker that the Assembly task the MSU to look into increased coverage for contraceptives under the MSU health insurance plan, as well as reimbursement for emergency contraception.

2. **Moved by** Xiaoyuan Zhou, **seconded by** \_\_\_ that the McMaster Students Union take the lead in coordinating with cultural clubs on campus in organizing virtual Welcome Week activities that are friendly to international students living in different countries. This may include, but is not limited to:

* + Understanding international student orientation needs
  + Scheduling and organizing virtual events in the time zone of the target students
  + Translating welcome messages/materials into different languages
  + Distributing Welcome Week paraphernalia, if applicable.

3. **Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** Grace Zhou that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Bylaw 8 - Policy Approval Process** and amend **Bylaw 8 - Policy Approval Process, Section 10.2.1** to have all advocacy policies be adopted by way of a referendum of the general membership of the MSU as laid out in the MSU’s Constitution VII Referenda.

4. **Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** Grace Zhou that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Operating Policy – Education & Advocacy Department** and amend **Operating Policy – Education & Advocacy Department, Section 5.2** to remove a minimum quota of General Policies to be presented to the SRA for approval each academic year.

5. **Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** \_\_\_\_\_ that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Bylaw 12 - First-Year Council** and amend **Bylaw 12 - First-Year Council, Section 3.1 & 3.2** to add one Vice-Chair International seat to the First Year Council, which shall be directly elected by the international MSU members registered in Level 1 of their program of study.

**[](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/)McMaster Students Union**

**General Assembly**

**March 15, 2021 at 4:00pm**

**Remote Meeting, Zoom**

**This meeting was done remotely through Zoom, due to the unusual circumstance laid out by the response to COVID-19.**

**This was a non-quorate meeting of the General Assembly. Any motions made are non-binding on the organization.**

**Chair: Rhea Jangra, MSU Speaker**

**Recording Secretary: D. Stajcer, Corporate Secretary**

**Called to Order at 4:06pm  
Members Present: 41**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIR**

* The Chair welcomed everyone to the General Assembly. They noted that 191 members were registered to attend the event and that approximately 36 were present. They informed that quorum for a General Assembly was 3% of the MSU population, equivalent to just over 800 members. The Chair explained that because the meeting did not meet quorum, any motions passed would not be binding and would be added to the next SRA meeting agenda for further discussion. They reminded everyone to be respectful, to mute their microphones when not speaking, and to turn on their video if comfortable for the sake of the livestream. They explained how the meeting would run procedurally, which included a brief explanation of a motion and how to vote on motions.

**ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

**Moved** by Adeola Egbeyemi, **seconded** by Kyle Fraser that the McMaster Students Union adopt the General Assembly Agenda, as presented.

* Adeola Egbeyemi said there were a good list of things to be passed and should be added to the agenda.

**Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 29 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

**REPORT PERIOD**

1. **President’s Report – Giancarlo Da-Ré presented**

* Da-Ré went over their presentation with the General Assembly.

**BUSINESS**

1. **Increased Coverage for Contraceptives**

**Moved** by Megan Cheng, **seconded** by Alison Hacker that the Assembly task the MSU to look into increased coverage for contraceptives under the MSU health insurance plan, as well as reimbursement for emergency contraception.

* Megan Cheng believed the MSU should look into increased coverage for contraceptives under the student health insurance place, as well as reimbursement for emergency contraception. They stated they designed a survey to assess student opinion on increased health insurance coverage, specifically on contraception available. They informed that the MSU Health and Dental plan costs $236 annually and contraceptive pills are covered at 80% of the cost, to a maximum of $2,500 (which includes all other prescriptions). They informed that students who choose to use contraception spend an average of $328 annually. They stated there was no coverage for copper IUD’s and no reimbursement for other contraception, specifically emergency contraception. They noted several other universities’ plans covered 80-100% of all costs for contraception and full coverage being offered at a maximum of $5,000 annually. They shared that they received 66 responses from their student opinion survey. 83% were menstruating individuals. 77% of respondents indicated they felt McMaster did not adequately explain the terms of their health insurance policy. To this, they felt the student union must do more to explain the policy terms and offer transparency and include student voices in the process of establishing the plan.
* Alison Hacker shared additional survey results. They stated that almost a quarter of respondents had used emergency contraceptives in the past. Almost 94% of respondents wished emergency contraceptives were more accessible. Over 50% of respondents felt that emergency contraceptives were not affordable. Alison stated that not only was there a significant lack of coverage for about a quarter of the students represented in the survey, but there was also a growing crisis of misinformation and lack of education regarding student health benefits. Over 60% of respondents indicated that health insurance coverage influenced their decision on whether or not to use contraception at all. Alison stated looking into increased coverage could involve expanding surveys to reach more students, offering transparency as to how plans were made and how different pricing would benefit students and consultations with other post-secondary institutions. They hoped the MSU recognized this responsibility to educate students on the health benefits and to improve their advocacy efforts, especially for those who are menstruating and face unique burdens when accessing healthcare.

**Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 32 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

1. **Welcome Week Activities for International Students**

**Moved by** Xiaoyuan Zhou, **seconded by** Jessie Li that the McMaster Students Union take the lead in coordinating with cultural clubs on campus in organizing virtual Welcome Week activities that are friendly to international students living in different countries. This may include, but is not limited to:

* + Understanding international student orientation needs
  + Scheduling and organizing virtual events in the time zone of the target students
  + Translating welcome messages/materials into different languages
  + Distributing Welcome Week paraphernalia, if applicable.
* Xiaoyuan Zhou informed that when classes moved online in 2020, McMaster was forced to adopt a different method of Welcome Week. With it being delivered online, often tines the events were inaccessible to international students. As a result, international students may have had difficulties in meeting their peers and creating connections which may have led to an unpleasant experience in their first year of school. Many international students have voiced concerns about have to take online exams/classes in the middle of the night however their concerns have not been taken seriously but the University or the MSU. Xiaoyuan suggested coordinating and organizing virtual events in the time zone of the target international students. They suggested translating welcome messages and materials into different languages and distributing Welcome Week paraphernalia, if applicable in order to create a better Welcome Week experience for all international students, as well as Canadian students in different provinces. They encouraged orientation to be designed with the goal of achieving a much better outcome by making it more equalized for all students of McMaster, irrespective of their cultural background.
* Jessie Li agreed with the statements provided by Xiaoyuan Zhou.
* Graeme Noble informed that they had a primary responsibility with how Welcome Week is structured from the MSU side. They collaborate with the Student Success Centre and Housing and Conference Services along with various other community partners. They thought it was a great idea in general in terms of opportunity for collaborating between the Clubs Department, thought there were many opportunities and would love for this to be pursued.

**Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 32 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

1. **Call for Advocacy Policies to be Adopted by Way of a Referendum**

**Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** Grace Zhou that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Bylaw 8 - Policy Approval Process** and amend **Bylaw 8 - Policy Approval Process, Section 10.2.1** to have all advocacy policies be adopted by way of a referendum of the general membership of the MSU as laid out in the MSU’s Constitution VII Referenda.

* Jessie Li stated that many students were unfamiliar with MSU policies and how they actually affect a student’s life, and it was very rare to receive any update on MSU policy changes. They stated their disappointment because as a student at McMaster University, they had not felt a level of engagement and interaction with the MSU in the past and especially during the pandemic. They clarified the intention of this motion was for students be obligated to know and vote upon MSU policies before they were released in order to maximize the amount of positive support student receive. They felt that when advocacy policies were only decided by the SRA, it went against the MSU Constitution role of seeking to facilitate to communication between the student body, University and other organizations. They brought up the Hong Kong solidarity statements and said it was concerning that before the MSU issued any of the statements, consultations with students who may have held different opinions were never held.
* Grace Zhou reiterated the motion of having all Advocacy Policies voted in form of a referendum. They felt this would effectively allow all students to participate in the decision-making of advocacy policies and let any announcement be released under a peaceful agreement of a majority vote of McMaster students, instead of forcing SRA members to take the blame for their stance that could only represent the interest of 35 members.
* Parnika Godkhindi stated they appreciated where this motion was coming from but that the whole purpose of the SRA was to act as representatives on behalf of the student body. They questioned the practicality/feasibility for students to vote in a referendum on every single policy as it was already difficult to get students to vote in general. They wondered how students could be engaged in a meaningful way to ensure any type of referendum would properly reflect everyone’s opinion.
* Jessie Li understood why it may not be feasible and that not every advocacy policy could be done through referendum. They felt the way to get students engaged was to at least inform them of the possible policies before they were released to the public, especially for the political topics that have students on both sides debating as it was better to be more inclusive of all voices.

**Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 23 Opposed: 9 Abstained: 3  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

1. **Remove Minimum Quota of General Policies**

**Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** Grace Zhou that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Operating Policy – Education & Advocacy Department** and amend **Operating Policy – Education & Advocacy Department, Section 5.2** to remove a minimum quota of General Policies to be presented to the SRA for approval each academic year.

* Jessie Li noted this section stated that the Education and Advocacy Department shall ensure that no more than 6 General Policies and minimum of 2 General Policies were presented to the SRA for approval each academic year. They felt that having a minimum quota exacerbated the toxic environment by forcing the SRA to be complacent in voicing on sensitive issues and to take blame from one group of students with opposing viewpoints. They were proposing to eliminate the minimum quota of Advocacy Department statements to ensure the SRA does not have to take blame from being forced to release General Policies per year but rather to release General Policies only at necessary times where majority of students beliefs are aligned with.
* Grace Zhou noted they agreed with everything that Jessie Li proposed.
* Ryan Tse wanted to ensure everyone understood what the motion was referring to. They informed that General Policies were now referred to as Advocacy Policies and that a library of polices were listed on the Advocacy tab of the web site. They clarified that Advocacy Statements addressed any issue and anyone could bring these forward, while Policies were researched by the entire education team and policy author team and then put forward. They felt it was important that Advocacy Policies were current and regularly updated and that they spoke to current context.
* Alison Hacker asked Jessie Li and Grace Zhou to clarify what they were asking for from the MSU.
* Jessie Li said they felt the need to remove the minimum quota so that the SRA could release whenever they think is necessary, instead of being restricted to releasing 2 General Policies per each academic year.
* Ryan Tse added with respect to Advocacy Policies, the Education team typically brings forward renewals of existing policies, in terms of the minimum quota. They said it was the job of the Education and Advocacy Department to represent students and an important part of doing that is ensuring all stances taken were current and relevant.
* Graeme Noble noted that SRA statements did not have a minimum or maximum quota and they could provide a statement at any time. They asked if the motion was in relation to SRA statements or Advocacy Policies as they are a bit different.
* Jessie Li advised that the reasoning behind the 2 submitted motions was the same. They understood the need for the MSU to stand up for the under-represented students but also understood the MSU had a role to represent as much voice as possible from those students who come from opposing viewpoints. They felt there was a need to amend policies because the 35 SRA members do not necessarily represent all points of views from all students and felt that the SRA needed to take more time to listen to students as opposed to releasing whatever statement they wanted to at any time.
* Parnika Godkhindi stated they were unsure of how the proposed motion addressed the issue of the SRA making political statements that do not represent those shared by the entire student body. They were unsure of what reducing the minimum advocacy statements did to address the concern.

**Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 22 Opposed: 15 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

**5. Addition of One Vice-Chair International Seat to the First Year Council**

**Moved by** Jessie Li, **seconded by** Ruide Bai that the McMaster Students Union direct the SRA Standing Committee of Internal Governance to review **Bylaw 12 – First-Year Council** and amend **Bylaw 12 – First-Year Council, Section 3.1 & 3.2** to add one Vice-Chair International seat to the First Year Council, which shall be directly elected by the international MSU members registered in Level 1 of their program of study.

* Ruide Bai stated that based on statistics, international students take up only 13% of all MSU members and are significantly under-represented, even though the population of international students at McMaster is increasing. The vast majority of international students desire to be involved with the entire McMaster family and love to participate in school events. However, many feel uncomfortable participating as they face a language and cultural barrier. They believed adding a Vice-Chair International could act as liaison between the MSU and the international students where an exchange of resources could be conducted. They believed this would create an immediate and positive impact on the school community.
* Kyle Fraser asked what the difference between being having a Vice-Chair and having a general rep on FYC.
* Megan Cheng said the idea of FYC representation was very important and wondered if this seat would be given support from the international student community if they were to be a first-year student with such a responsibility.
* Graeme Noble stated that with FYC, there weren’t general representatives as expected from other services. They currently only have one residence council member along with the Vice-Chairs in charge of internal, external and then the Chair. They understood this would be an addition to the Chair level.
* Ruide Bai stated there was a big difference between a General Rep and Vice-President. The idea behind the motion was to allow more voices to be heard from the international student group. International students would appreciate if their voices could be consistently heard and for their needs to be supported by the MSU.
* Graeme Noble thought it would be a great opportunity to include this position with regards to collaborating with the Equity and Inclusion Office to have representation from not only international students, but other marginalized groups on campus.

**In Favour: 29 Opposed: 2 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved** by Kyle Fraser, **seconded** by Jack Holmes that the MSU General Assembly adjourn.   
 **Vote on Motion**

**In Favour: 29 Opposed: 0 Abstained: 0  
Motion Passes by General Consent**

**Adjourned at 5:39pm**

/ds