



MEMO

From the office of the...

AVP Finance

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Maheera Choudhury, AVP Finance
SUBJECT: Bylaw 9; Non-MSU Groups – OPIRG McMaster
DATE: October 24th, 2023

Dear SRA,

After carefully reviewing and engaging in insightful discussions regarding OPIRG's budget and responses to our inquiries, the Finance Committee is delighted to express our support for the approval of OPIRG's budget for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year.

Considering our comprehensive evaluation, we wish to put forth the following thoughtful recommendations:

1. Addressing High Office Expenses:

A total cost of \$ 13499 towards office expenses is quite high. The student organization's current allocation of \$8,000 for website expenses and \$1,000 for office upkeep appears to be disproportionately high for their budget, especially considering that they are a student-run entity, when compared to other Bylaw 9 groups.

- a. To optimize their costs and channel resources more effectively, they should consider exploring alternative solutions. For the website project, they could explore partnerships with students skilled in web development or leverage student-run projects to reduce costs.
- b. Additionally, they may want to reassess their office maintenance budget to identify potential areas for cost reduction. By doing so, they can reallocate funds to initiatives that directly benefit the McMaster University student community, thus enhancing their focus on student needs.

2. Leveraging Surplus for Impactful Projects:

With a surplus exceeding \$100,000, OPIRG possesses a valuable resource that can be harnessed for the betterment of the student community. Rather than letting these funds

remain idle, they should proactively identify and invest in high-impact projects that align with their mission. This surplus can be used to support student-centric initiatives, such as scholarships, events, or programs that enhance the overall student experience.

3. The budget allocation of \$11,000 for the campus community garden is a considerable investment. While supporting the development of green spaces on campus is undoubtedly commendable, we recommend exploring strategies to optimize the utilization of resources.

To reduce costs, it would be beneficial to:

- a. **Engage in Cost-effective Resource Sourcing:** Investigate potential cost savings by sourcing materials, seeds, and tools for the community garden through sustainable and cost-effective channels. This might involve collaborating with local suppliers or seeking donations from community partners to offset expenses.
 - b. **Grant Opportunities:** Explore potential grant opportunities and partnerships with organizations or institutions that support community and environmental initiatives. Such collaborations can provide additional funding or resources that alleviate the financial burden on the organization.
 - c. **Volunteer and Student Participation:** Encourage active involvement from volunteers and students within the organization. Currently, \$6615 is allocated solely for the garden coordinator. Since the garden is mostly inaccessible during winter, how will the costs justify,
4. In continuation of concerns raised in the previous fiscal year, we emphasize the importance of providing more comprehensive context regarding the allocation of financial resources. Specifically, we would appreciate a clearer understanding of the criteria and guidelines governing the distribution of both "internal" and "external" donations. An allocation of \$2,400 represents a substantial financial commitment, and therefore. This information should ideally be openly disclosed in financial documents and not be left to be inquired about.
 5. Building on the recommendations from the previous year, we propose that OPIRG enhances its promotion of the opt-out option. To achieve this, we suggest creating printed posters and public announcements to increase awareness and accessibility to the opt-out process.

In closing, the Finance Committee reiterates its support of the OPIRG's budget for the forthcoming 2023-2024 academic year, under the stipulation that the suggestions provided are duly considered and, where appropriate, incorporated. It is imperative, however, that the organization remain vigilant in its financial controls to ensure the greatest impact of their budget. We urge OPIRG to demonstrate prudence in their

allocation of resources and to implement enhanced transparency, enabling all stakeholders to confidently endorse their financial decisions.

The Finance Committee looks forward to witnessing the positive evolution of the OPIRG's financial management and its unwavering commitment to the McMaster University community.

Thank you,
Maheera Choudhury

Associate Vice-President Finance avpfinance@msu.mcmaster.ca