



MEMO

From the office of the...
President

TO: Members of the SRA
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President
SUBJECT: Food Affordability Initiative
DATE: February 2nd, 2024

Dear members of the SRA,

Over the last 8 months, I've heard too many students tell me that they are regularly skipping meals in order to cut the cost of living. Seeing that, I promised students in my re-election campaign I would run a referendum in an attempt to address the rise of food insecurity and unaffordability, and that is what I am coming to you with today.

In the below motion, I am asking the SRA to send the Food Affordability Initiative to referendum. This referendum will be asking students if they would be willing to increase their MSU organizational fee by a modest \$5 (with CPI increases) to begin addressing this prominent issue. The current operating budget is stretched thin, and I am unable to work towards this goal without said increase.

Should this operating budget increase pass, my plan is to use the new increase in fees to serve free soup and bread two hours a day, four days a week, every week, for the entire school year (September to November, January to March). Having reviewed the feasibility of this vision, I've written below the cost details sent to be by Wesley Chaplin, our kitchen manager, of this project:

Soup Options Example

Chicken noodle (Dairy Free, Halal) (Contains Gluten)

Ingredients: Chicken, Carrots, Onion, Celery, Garlic, Oregano, Basil, Bowtie Pasta, Pepper, and Salt.

Vegetable Lentil (Dairy Free, Vegetarian, Vegan, Gluten Free)

Ingredients: Carrots, Celery, Onion, Garlic, Red Lentils, Cumin, Pepper, and Salt

Each soup served will be 8 fl. oz and will come with a piece of white bread.

Cost Summary:

Chicken Noodle Soup - \$0.49 per 8 fl. oz
Vegetable Lentil Soup - \$0.45 per 8 fl. oz
White Bread - \$0.18 per slice
Soup Container with Lid - \$0.76 each
Soup Spoon - \$0.02 each
Napkin - under \$0.01 each

Additional Notes

These are with current food and product costs from our current suppliers - actual costs will always fluctuate.

- To offset this, the \$5 cost will increase with CPI.

The soup program may require an additional part-time staff member in the kitchen.

- We have already been evaluating the addition of a new full-time staff member, and even if this doesn't happen, one part-time staff member is a reasonable, low-cost addition.

With the above costs, we could provide more than 700 servings a day, 4 days a week for the entire school year, for a total of approximately 75k to 90k portions served.

- "This is something I feel confident we can 100 percent provide." – Wesley Chaplin, Kitchen Manager.

This program is inspired by an already successful program out of Dalhousie called the Loaded Ladle and has been largely modelled around it.

Originally, I was planning to ask the SRA for this referendum next year but realized that there was a window of opportunity to run this concurrent with the SRA Generals, meaning that should it be successful, this program can begin as soon as September.

Should this program be unsuccessful, I would consider pivoting the use of these funds either to the Food Collective Centre, or other resources like TwelvEighty to continue making food accessible for students.

Best,
Jovan Popovic
President
McMaster Students Union
president@msu.mcmaster.ca

Moved by Popovic, seconded by _____, that the Assembly call a referendum, coinciding with the 2024 SRA General Election, for the Food Accessibility Initiative, to increase the MSU organizational fee by \$5 per student, as outlined in the memo circulated.