



# REPORT

*From the office of the...*  
**MSU President**

---

TO: Members of the Student Representative Assembly  
FROM: Jovan Popovic, President  
SUBJECT: Saved By The BUNT.  
DATE: September 3, 2024

---

## **Progress on Year Plan**

### Welcome Week

As is the case every year, Welcome Week was an extremely busy time for myself and the rest of the BoD. As far as engagement goes, it is one of the best opportunities we have all year to meet students and make impressions early, so they know who we are and what the MSU does. I can say with confidence that the board presence was huge this year, and I really commend the time and effort that Adam, Declan and Maya put into it. The Maroons had a very strong year (shoutout to Yaseen & team), and Campus Events put on fantastic programming for the first-year students. Air bands might've had the biggest turnout we've ever seen, which was incredible.

The most important part of the week, at least for me, came in the last day or two. Many first-years approached me asking about the MSU either wanting to learn about our presence on campus, or wanting to get involved. Usually I'm able to communicate this during faculty fusion (where the President has an opportunity to address all first year students), but given that the event was cancelled this year due to health concerns (heat), I was afraid that opportunity wouldn't come, and that we would lose awareness and engagement with an entire year of students. It was incredible to see that wouldn't be the case – I think an announcement we made at air bands went a long way with that (see below).

## Homecoming

More than a year in the making! The return of homecoming was finally announced at air bands, with a social media announcement coming the following morning. Honestly, it was one of the greatest moments of my career seeing the reaction of the crowd. Students were so excited to see something back on campus, it was exactly the reaction that we were hoping for. Ticket sales have been going well, social media announcements are going well, and media is going well. I've already had interviews with CHCH, The Hamilton Spectator, CBC News, and The Silhouette. The reaction of the students has been great, the reaction from the community has been positive, and the reaction from many of the stakeholders has been smooth sailing as well.

Obviously, there's plenty still to go as we approach October 5<sup>th</sup>, but the stressful part is out of the way. Continue keeping your eye out for more announcements in the coming weeks – the performances by DJ Migz, Lil Tecca, and Loud Luxury, as well as bringing in The Monster (the world's largest inflatable) might be the biggest announcements, but there will be a lot more programming to come.

## MSU Conference

Last year in August, the VPs and I attended SUDS (Student Union Development Summit) in Vancouver. There were some value adds – some of the relationships we made with other student unions were critical in the organizational restructuring we're currently undergoing, and this was where we learned about Bounce for the first time. However, I ultimately left that conference thinking I could have done better. So, I did.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> the MSU hosted its first ever student union skills development conference. The conference was attended by the student unions from Brock, Guelph, Queens, Trent, Ontario Tech, Conestoga, Mohawk, Fanshaw and Seneca. Carleton and UofT Mississauga also signed up but

were unable to attend. There were approximately 30 execs present, the keynote speaker was a Federal Minister, and the conference was profitable for the MSU.

Our team walked away from the conference with significantly improved relationships, and discussion points that we'd learned from others – it was highly beneficial. The early feedback we received from our attendees (approx. 30 total attended) has been overwhelmingly positive.

The core values of the conference were founded by two main principles; (1) making the conference discussion based, providing constant opportunities to learn from one another, and (2) getting as many SU execs in one place as possible. To execute the first goal, we made the conference largely based on roundtables – there were countless opportunities to learn from each other. For the second goal, I realized we needed to bring down the barrier to entry given how expensive the Vancouver conference was. So, our conference was free. Halfway through we held a vendor fair with trusted MSU partners, each of whom would become a conference sponsor. It was through this that the conference became profitable.

I hope to see this become an annual conference for the MSU, and to see it expand from Ontario SUs to Canada wide in the coming years. I've invested a lot of time in creating a paper trail so that future execs will easily be able to follow my model to host the conference once I move on.

### Bounce Onboarding

Campus Events, MSU services, and clubs are all actively using/being onboarded onto Bounce. Services have already undergone training, and Bounce has been invited to clubs training to show execs how to best utilize their software. Our first major test with Bounce has been homecoming, and while there have been a couple minor hiccups, the Bounce team continues to maintain our

full confidence. Much of the first-year population is already on Bounce now thanks to successful promotion by our Campus Events department.

### New Staff Hiring

The restructuring is underway. Formerly the Marketing & Comms Director, the redesigned Comms & Advertising Director has been filled. We're proud to bring in Shemar Hackett, a former MSU VP Education with years of communications & marketing experience in consulting. Shemar has already kicked off his time at the MSU strong, and we look forward to seeing his continued success going forward.

A new role coming to the MSU is the Student Life Director position, reporting directly to the GM, and overseeing all student life-oriented departments, Clubs, Campus Events, & The Hub. Hiring has concluded and an offer has been extended. We had multiple extremely impressive candidates in what was ultimately an extremely competitive hiring process.

### Municipal Advocacy Group

Spearheaded by Maya, we had the opportunity to meet with execs from Mohawk and Redeemer to discuss the prospect of a unified voice in municipal advocacy. Maya did a fantastic job in proving the substantial overlap between all of our priorities, creating a strong appetite to form an advocacy partnership. Redeemer was hesitant due to their limited resources, but the MSU and MSA (Mohawk) could have a really strong presence on the municipal front going forward.

I've long believed that municipal advocacy is the strongest avenue of advocacy, as it is where the most change is possible. It's incredible to see Maya taking charge in significantly advancing our municipal portfolio.

### Hub Year Planning

Last year The Hub was open 10:00-10:00 Monday to Friday. We knew the building still had some deficiencies and wasn't ready to open at full capacity, but recognizing the need for more space on campus, decided to open the building anyway.

The vision for the Hub has always been to provide students with another 24/7 building.

Unfortunately, we aren't there yet, but we're inching closer. The plan for the fall term is to extend into the weekends while maintaining the already set hours. We've held discussions with security services and facility services to ensure this is feasible, and we expect to see the transition very soon.

The goal is to be ready for 24/7 come the winter term, but my confidence wavers. We're largely reliant on some upgrades from facility services, and it's been difficult working with them of late. There are some minor security concerns, as well as general deficiencies (improper installations, little things not working, etc.) that we need addressed before we're ready to make the leap, and our agreement with the university makes facility services responsible to makes these fixes.

We were hoping to have the student market (convenience store on the second floor) open for the start of the school year, but due to improper equipment installations and various other deficiencies, we're not expecting it to open until November at earliest. It's far from ideal, but it's out of our hands.

### Legal RFP

As I've mentioned in previous meetings, the MSU has been searching for a new general counsel. The RFP process has concluded, and we're in discussions on pricing. We hope to have a general counsel confirmed in the next couple weeks.

## **Upcoming Priorities**

### Continued Restructure & Hiring

While we've had one role redesigned and one role created, there's plenty more left to go if we want to get the most productivity out of this organization. The plan is not only to evaluate jobs, but also to review our various services/business units, and our own internal policies. Like it or not, the student union landscape is going to change drastically over the next few years with the federally mandated international student cap and the impact it will have on the student population. It's our job to prepare ourselves as best as possible for the strain the organization might see in those years.

### Homecoming

As of the day of this SRA meeting, homecoming is less than a month away. Execution of both the event itself, as well as promo is absolutely critical to ensure we see success. The biggest priority in the moment is locking down the rest of our programming (mostly done, not fully complete), which will shortly shift to programming announcements, then sponsorship & promo. To be clear when I say sponsorship and promo, this is not a profitable event, we are planning to take a significant hit – that was planned in the budget months ago and has been the plan the whole time. It's just a matter of how big of the loss will be.

### AI Policy

Last year the MSU had some big wiffs with the generative AI guidelines that were introduced by the university. While it was clearly impactful, the problem was that they were just guidelines, not policy. I call them impactful because they determine how the university communicates AI use to faculty and professors, and it largely dictates how it's going to be used in the classroom. While

that was a huge help and undoubtedly swayed many professors to align themselves with the guideline, it was not a policy and therefore not mandatory.

Over the last few weeks, I've had multiple students reach out to me discussing concerns they've had surrounding AI use in the classroom. I've pivoted my attention with AI to pushing the university to adopt set policy now, instead of just continuing with guidelines. It's extremely early stages, mostly just discussions with the expert AI panel and the Vice Provost Teaching & Learning, but I hope to have a more clear indication of the possible paths forward by my next SRA report.

Best,

Jovan Popovic

President & CEO

McMaster Students Union

[president@msu.mcmaster.ca](mailto:president@msu.mcmaster.ca)