



# MEMO

*From the office of the...*

## President

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TO: Student Representative Assembly

FROM: Jovan Popovic, President

SUBJECT: Request to Suspend Restriction and Rerun Referendum for the Food Affordability Initiative

DATE: Sep 2, 2024

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Dear Members of the Assembly,

This memo seeks the approval of the SRA to suspend the restriction outlined in Bylaw 7, Section 3.5.1, and to proceed with rerunning a referendum to initiate the **Soup and Bread Initiative**. The objective is to provide students with the opportunity to engage in the referendum process and to ensure that the democratic will of the student body is accurately represented.

### **Background Information:**

As per Bylaw 7, Section 3.5, a call for a referendum can be triggered by an SRA resolution, a General Assembly quorate resolution, or the validation of a petition. Section 3.5.1 restricts holding a referendum on the same or a similar question within the current or previous academic year unless this restriction is suspended by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the SRA (Section 3.5.1.1).

In the previous referendum, we achieved a voter turnout of 9.4%, just shy of the quorum requirement by half a percent. This demonstrates a significant level of student interest, which suggests that with additional effort, the quorum can be met. What changed from then to now is that recently a group of students have approached me asking to rerun the referendum, expressing their desire to actively campaign. This in turn indicates potential for increased voter engagement, suggesting we are likely to hit quorum should we provide students one more opportunity.

### **Justification for Suspending the Restriction:**

1. **Close to Quorum:** In the last referendum, voter turnout reached 9.4%, only slightly below the quorum threshold. This indicates substantial student interest and suggests that reaching quorum is feasible with renewed effort.

2. **Increased Engagement Opportunity:** A group of students has shown initiative by approaching me to express their desire to form a campaign team for this referendum. This proactive engagement suggests that voter turnout could be significantly higher; last year we ran the bike share referendum at the same time, and the voter turnout was approximately 7% higher than the food accessibility initiative, sparking the question of why would students vote for one and not the other? Likely because they were only aware of one, as a student led campaign team was openly informing students of the referendum.
3. **Commitment to Platform:** Running this referendum aligns with the commitments made during my election campaign. As an elected representative, it is my responsibility to follow through on promises made to the student body. Continuing to offer the referendum until it reaches quorum ensures that students can make their voices heard on this important issue (food insecurity).
4. **Commitment to Democratic Process:** Until quorum is reached, it is important to continue offering students the chance to vote on this issue. If the referendum hits quorum and fails, I will reevaluate the approach. However, as a representative body, we have a duty to persist in our efforts to engage students in the decision-making process.

### **Proposed Actions**

1. **Motion to Suspend the Restriction:** I propose a motion to suspend the restriction outlined in Bylaw 7, Section 3.5.1. This motion requires a two-thirds affirmative vote from the SRA members present.
2. **Motion to Call for Referendum:** Upon approval of the restriction suspension, a second motion will be submitted to call for the rerun of the referendum to initiate the **Food Affordability Initiative**. This motion will allow us to set a timeline and provide the necessary support for a successful campaign and voting process.

The request to suspend the restriction and rerun the referendum is rooted in a commitment to the democratic process and student engagement. The close voter turnout in the previous referendum, combined with renewed student interest and the promise made during my election, all point to the necessity of providing another opportunity for the student body to express its views. I urge the SRA to approve the motions to ensure that we accurately represent the will of our students.

Thank you for considering this request. Please feel free to contact myself or my assistant for further clarification.

Kind regards,

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