



Agenda
February 27th, 2018 - 7:30pm
Wallace Hall, JDUC

The Society of Graduate and Professional Students recognizes the traditional and ancestral territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Nations on whose lands we gather on today.



Adoption of the Agenda

A. Adoption of the Agenda

MOTION 27/02/18:1

BIRT SGPS Council adopt the Agenda for the February 27th, 2018 Special Council Meeting.

Please note that the following motions were tabled from the last meeting on February 13th, due to time constraints.

Motion carries.



Main Motions & Discussion

A. Ratification of the Walkhome Student Fee Results

MOTION 27/02/18:2

BIRT SGPS Council approve the following Walkhome Student Fee results:

“Do you agree to the establishment of a mandatory student fee of \$20.16 for the Walkhome program?”

Fee did not pass 2/3 majority vote in referendum (Yes: 43.3%)

Russel: Just wanted to restate what I said last time. The issue is that did we see a fundamental problem with this fee, as the other two. If we want to decide in the same way we did in the other two decisions, it would be contradictory if we put this up again.

Jared: I would agree on the point of Russel. On the democratic vote from our membership, it fell below even the new policy threshold.

Adam Grotzky: Not going to take a stance on this. Going to provide some information. We've heard a lot about are they going to be offering jobs, what are we going to be getting from this? This is a policy question, not what are we going to get. Did the Walkhome fee unfairly fail because of the policy. Or do you believe the new policies would have created the same result? Despite the fact the fee failed the 2nd time, the 1st time it failed by 64%. We also have Chelsea here, if you have questions for her.

Stephan: I think the results of the most recent referendum that the majority of our student body don't believe in support of the fee. Potentially we could ratify the results this year, but give the cool off period exemption for Walkhome for next year. We would encourage greater marketing to graduate students for the fee, for next year.



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Dan: Sorry if this was mentioned – other questions will be reworded. Is it possible that the Walkhome fee will be reworded.

Chelsea (AMS): One conversation that's been had is the discussion on % of students that were able to apply for positions, but that didn't quite come through in our question, as it had not been a part of our discussion. We would be interested in adding that into the question. We would be happy you do that.

Rusell: OPIRG was worded the same as the Walkhome fee; it was more like BusIt that was the problem. The wording was never an issue, and I don't think a wording change this.

Adam: I would encourage us to show caution with changing the fee wording; the marketing and wording of the question was very complicated for the BusIt fee – by voting no, they would get normal service, rather than an increase for new services. Typically, fees are worded with standard language. I would suggest that with fairness we maintain typical wording.

Adam Ali: A few things. Committing ourselves to a % of jobs with Walkhome; I think the most important point is the service itself. I think that's been lost in our discussions at Council. We need to consider who uses these services. The second piece I'm attuned to is the risk of setting a precedent. My response is that the Judicial Committee has identified a number of gaps that govern our election processes. There is a good chance that by our March Council, there will be a number of changes. Setting a precedent will not be as great an impact. Given the history here; passed at 64% - with a broken system. We have to acknowledge the lower % last year. If we have a broken system, giving them another shot. I understand Adam's concern about wording – that may be the next step, if we bring this to re-referendum. I don't see why we can't do that for Walkhome:

Brittany: If we vote no, I'm not sure if the fee didn't pass?

Adam: That's more of a loaded question. We currently don't pay into the service, however, because it is anonymous, our members still use it. However, we can't be sure that we will maintain that in the future. Without the money from the SGPS, I would expect they may have to start checking AMS or SGPS students, which could mean that students may not have access to the services in future. We currently use the service, but don't pay for it.

Brittany: I'd like to encourage that Bus-It is unclear; but Walkhome isn't very clear about what the no vote means.

Jared: There's been talk about the wording of the question. The way I view the blank space is an invitation to revisit the question of the fee – the optional, mandatory, fee amount.



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Stefy: I want to address what Brittany said – there are contextualized reasons for why people say no. In the context of what the voting ends up being. Also, the fact that we had voter turnout high, that all implicates what's happening.

Adam: Again, I see both sides here and I think there's great points on both sides. If we don't ratify this, we are overturning a ratified vote. With the Bus fee, there was a clear message received. We haven't heard that once about Walkhome. But there was a specific reason we initiated the town hall and process around the Bus fee. Do you agree to the establishment of a fee is fairly straightforward. Students who voted no may have not realized the consequences of voting no. I don't want to get into hypotheticals; that would be the one argument to be made for that side – and we don't even know if we will lose service.

Rochelle: I was going to echo the earlier sentiments; we need to keep in mind our larger membership. It may not be a service we keep in mind individuals; but keep in mind marginalized students on campus. Since some of our members do use our service. I would encourage us to not ratify the results.

Lauren: I'd like to echo those sentiments; it may not be a service we all use, but in fact Kingston was the highest rate of sexual assault in Canada – gender based violence. There's a lot of stuff on campus which is very scary, and gendered. It comes down to whether or not you can take a taxi home, if you're drunk – whether you are a vulnerable person or not.

Adam Ali: I'm going to go on the other side now; this is a partisan issue. I do echo Adam's concern about setting a precedent – particular groups have a say and other groups may not. In concern about precedent setting; I'm not the expert – so Jenny and others in Bylaw and Policy. My second piece is that the revisions the Bylaw and Policy committee is whether or not this would set precedent.

Jared: What is the issue of precedence on the motion?

David: I don't want to open up a can of worms, the thought that comes to my mind is that a lot of people are heading towards saying Walkhome is a key service. The whole issue of overturning democratic results. My question is that if this is a safety providing safety for services, why is this funded and supported by students? For safety services, is there any process that would put this in the hands of Queen's. Essential services would not end up in situations like this.

Adam: A few points, and a good comment. The tradition of student run services at Queen's. We have here what many deem to be an essential safety service. An essential fee that all



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students have to pay, rather than one for referendum. Maybe we need to bring this back to the University too about funding. There has been some funding in the past – Queen’s has provided a grant, though it was put towards an app, as it was not permitted to be put towards wages, but we need secure funding.

Chelsea (AMS): Student Affairs is the branch we typically speak to – the struggle the University has in assisting with these programs is that there is a significant portion supposed to be given to SafeWalk programs, but is not meant to go towards wages. There are safe walk programs at other Universities, with inconsistent accessibility, as they are just volunteers. With Walkhome, we have financial support and therefore reliability. Walkhome is not a seemingly important experience, which falls under the University, similar to the Bus-It fee, which is negotiated through the AMS. Grant Hall, was created by and for students – because of student will. It’s why we have the model we do.

Paulina: I just wanted to mention other Universities Safe Walk program – my undergrad, never had a Walkhome program. Reading suggestions about how to walk home safety – they provide a shuttle service. Supported by undergraduate, graduate societies, and University.

Brittany: I guess the question, is that if this is not ratified – I’m not sure people voting no understood that if they don’t vote yes that they would jeopardize the service. We’re not deciding for people – I think that we should be putting all fees up.

Matt: With respect to precedent, if we’re looking back that we don’t know about doing this in the past. I think the idea that we are overturning a decision that seems to be dissimilar to the Bus-It fee. We can rejudge the question after the fact. Maybe this means that we need to spend more time on referendum questions moving forward. We’re doing this with the other fees, but we may look back at past years in the future, and if we don’t have good grounds to make this decision, people may look back on the decision.

Paulina: I think that there is just a fundamental problem with how we’re posing the question. If the entire population of minority votes yes, then the vote would not pass the 50+1 majority. The people who vote in favour, their voices would not be supported. Maybe it should be an optional fee – if you paid for the fee, and you can use it. Just because 50+1 don’t need it, doesn’t mean we should be unfairly penalized. If 99% of people didn’t need it, but 1% doesn’t, then again you’re taking away that minority voice. In regards to the question, the only fair way to do this would be to not ratify results and hopefully get it to pass again.



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Russel: I have two points, agreeing with most things about what Paulina said. Walkhome format that it's posed. But I think that those points are beyond the scope of the issue at hand. Are we voting yes or no for the referendum question. There's a lot of talk about precedence; it doesn't have as much impact as a legal body. It's more about the principal of do we uphold the democratic rights of the voices of the students who voted.

Lauren: I just wanted to quickly point out the weight of overturning the decision. We have to look at if that vote was equitable; that vote is not equitable – you would have to get it voted on yes – for something that we have come to the conclusion of an essential services on campus.

Chelsea (AMS): I've tried to not talk too much, but as a small comment – I think a component of the discussion is the perception of what this vote means. Ultimately, you're thinking of your democratic system. In terms of Walkhome as an essential service, we are currently not checking student cards and we don't want to ask questions about this. If we feel a significant part of the community is not using the service, this may change our model. While we can look at this in future years, there may be pending changes – we would not be able to accommodate acting on good faith.

Adam Ali: In the AMS, is it simply a mandatory fee that's voted on?

Chelsea (AMS): It's a triannual voted on fee.

Shane: Assuming it's ratified, does Walkhome accept contributions/donations, or is it only through student fees

Chelsea (AMS): We have accepted donations through Alumni, students, companies. In terms of student fees – and I'm not sure we will get to that point – that may be a way we use the service in future. If you have a department to donate, those are the sorts of things we will have challenges to manage – including opt-out fees.

Stephan: Regardless of how this vote turns out, it would be good for Walkhome to consider doing a bit more to market themselves to Graduate students, especially if we put them on the next ballot. I voted for it, I would love to see it pass. There needs to be work done to make the majority of students vote in favour.

Dan: If we refuse to ratify, we may want to relook at the way that we look at referendum questions. For all types of questions, we would want to have more information about what yes vs no means from people who are pro vs against; we would benefit from more information on the next ballot.



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Adam: First, I want to clarify Jared's question about precedent. It's the idea of a slippery slope – if we don't like an outcome, we can just vote against ratifying, change the policy, and then overturn results from a previous year. That's the slippery slope we may create. Anytime there's an outcome this group doesn't like, we may just change the outcome, change the policy, and vote again. There's two discussions going on here... one discussion is about Walkhome as an essential service – perhaps looking at other ways to set-up a fee. But that's not the discussion we're having. We've received a vote and outcome based on a question posed and campaign run; we can't say after the fact that we can't ratify based on not liking the results. And perhaps in the next Council meeting we can talk about essential services that don't go up to referendum in the same walk, like Bus-It and Walkhome. We need a practical solution separate from this.

Brittany: I'd like to suggest that the system is broken. It's not broken for some questions and not others; on that basis, everything on the ballot should go back up for referendum.

Adam: The reason why I think it's different – the other two fees, if you apply the new system, would not have passed in both referendums. No matter which set of rules you go by, the Walkhome fee would not have passed. But if there is a risk separate for that, but that's why I don't believe that.

Motion carries for Call to Question.

Secret ballot motion: 11 No, 16 Yes, 1 abstain.

B. Walkhome Referendum Alternative Recommendation **MOTION 27/02/18:3**

Note that the following motion only comes forward if the motion in B is not approved by Council.

BIRT SGPS Council approve a re-referendum of the Walkhome student fee, to be held on March 12th & 13th, with a campaign period from March 5th – 11th.

The question would read: “ _____ ”, as provided from the AMS Walkhome.



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C. Updated Budget Approval (Appendix B)

MOTION 27/02/18:4

Whereas the SGPS required a revision to the previously approved budget due to the unexpected loss of \$120,000 the SGPS receives each year from PSAC 901. Please see 'Revised Budget 2017-2018 – Supporting Documents'.

Be it resolved that SGPS council approve the revised 2017-2018 budget.

Questions from Alexandru (Graduate Student Senator) to Adam Grotsky (President) – Tabled from Last Meeting

1. What is the Health Fund and how can it or cannot be used?
2. How does the executive decide on what the health plan covers and costs? How does it consult with council? Are these formal processes with a set procedure or does it change year to year with the executive

Lauren: If anybody has questions – bottom line, we were able to make up most of the difference with changing our fiscal year, we've gotten all of our revenues; it allows us to shift some of our loss betting from the get-go.

Adam Ali: For the sake of time, I'll ask one – I see that there's quite a bit of grant money that's been cut. More specific of which grants were cut, and by how much.

Lauren: We cut a bit everywhere, rather than cutting specifically. We haven't done a ton of advertising, so we were afraid we may get bombarded. After the PSAC loss, we didn't want to get applications after the loss. We did have less applications than expected. None were cut completely.

Adam Grotsky: As you know, these are brand new grants – we didn't know how much to allocate for each. We were overprepared for these grants, so not we don't have to sacrifice service for these grants.

David: I'm struggling to understand the whole deficit thing, but I just don't get the retroactive nature of it. We already paid for our health plan, so I really don't understand.

Lauren: So the deficit is more on the books – we already paid for health and dental. There's an expense accounted for. We get revenues at the beginning, pay off health and dental, and then pay off other expenses. We still have revenues to dip into for expenses. Various expenses we could cut, we did.



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Adam Grotsky: I'll add that because we paid for the Health and Dental plan up front, this loss will come from near the end of our fiscal year, where there's not enough to pay for other things. We have to make some cuts to the general budget so that when it gets to that point.

David: What is PSAC using that \$120,000 for?

Adam Grotsky: They just didn't get it.

Alex: Does it make more sense to pull the deficit from the balance in the Health and Dental plan, rather than general funds. Right now we're using student fees meant for the SGPS to pay off the Health and Dental plan deficit.

Lauren: Are you talking about the Health Plan Fund?

Adam Grotsky: This is a bit confusing... I didn't get it at first either? We say in last year's Audit that we have \$100,000 in our Health Fund. Turns out its not that simple. The easiest way to explain this is that our cash flow is based off of since we were first formed 50 years ago, we balanced surplus and deficits over the year. An audit tells us a snapshot in time. For the purpose of accounting, that money is divided into funds. The idea was that we should be using funds and cashflow for those purposes at that time. However, our student fees come in in October. That's supposed to last us the whole year. The audit doesn't always reflect our need for money. It's not necessarily a Health Fund; we should merge all the funds together into one fund for clarity.

Alex: Should we create a separate fund, creating it as an internal loan to the Health plan? As opposed to a one time transfer from General Revenue into a self-sufficient fund. In terms of funds, cashflow, is to perhaps look at investments with findings that could cover this. But we reflected on this and said that this would cripple our investments. We can make some reasonable cuts without jeopardizing our core services. It made much more sense than to detriment future Executives from pulling from investments.

Motion carries.



Adjournment

A. **Adjournment**

BIRT this Special meeting of SGPS Council be adjourned.

Motion carries.

MOTION 27/02/18:5