



Hello Council,

### **Tuition Freeze Update**

As expected, and to the relief of many students, the tuition freeze from the Ontario government will continue for the 2023/2024 school year. That being said, the Ontario government is allowing domestic out-of-province tuition to increase by up to 5%. The university has been allowed to increase out-of-province and international tuition during the freeze previously, so this is not new news but important to note. The government has not increased grant funding for universities (base funding universities get from the government) in many years which is why the university relies on so much on revenues from tuition and sought to end the freeze. The government has stated that the current university funding situation is not sustainable. The Ontario Colleges and Universities Minister also stated that they are creating an expert panel to provide advice on post-secondary financial sustainability. An article with this information and more can be found [here](#).

### **University Senate and Board of Trustees**

I continue to advocate and share concerns surrounding the rising cost of living for SGPS students, especially for those relying on inadequate funding packages. I discussed the housing crisis, funding packages, tuition concerns, and overall cost-of-living concerns at the last university senate meeting as well as the last board of trustees meeting. The senate-board retreat also occurred Saturday March 4 where senate and board members discussed what successful research at Queen's looks like and how to get there. Research is one of the pillars of the University's [strategic plan](#). After a detailed exercise where we came up with ideas and prioritized them, everyone was in consensus that Graduate funding and research funding were the top concerns.

Due to advocacy from the SGPS and other student leaders, the University Council at Queen's (the other governing body at Queen's) decided to make a large donation to the AMS food bank at the end of 2022. Although this is not a solution to all our concerns, I wanted to share the good news.

### **Other brief updates:**

- The VP Community, Equity and Diversity Commissioner, and I are working on a gender affirming care financial assistance program trial which should be up and running soon. I may have a better update by the time of council.
- The SGPS Executive is looking at solidifying our health and dental plan for the 2023/2024 school year (starting Sept 2023). **If you have any feedback on whether or not we should continue Conversation, please let me know.** We will have circulated a survey to the wider SGPS body by the time of council as well. We are aware of the concerns raised in the fall in and outside of council, and we also aware that student usage as of January 2023 was considerably high for Conversation. Exec needs to decide between taking away a program many students seem to have used or keeping a program we have heard a number of students had issues with.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have a question or concern about any of my updates or something I have not covered in this report. My email is [president@sgps.ca](mailto:president@sgps.ca).

Sincerely,  
Beth Langdon  
SGPS President



Hey everyone,

I hope you are all doing well as we head into the final stretch of the term. This can be a busy time for many of us, and I hope you are taking the time to take care of yourself in whatever ways you can.

First, I have a bit of exciting news to share. Throughout this year I had been working on improving graduate student representation with the daycare, so that we can help to encourage good policies that benefit graduate students. After much back and forth I am pleased to report that in a meeting with the Queen's daycare Board of Directors President Dr. Lisa Pasolli I made some progress on this goal. Dr. Pasolli has agreed to continue having a discussion about graduate students having a seat on the Board of Directors, in accordance with their bylaws, which will be up for discussion ahead of the fall Board elections.

More importantly, however, she has agreed to discuss another option with her Board of Directors colleagues: Graduate student representation on the daycare's advocacy committee. This committee would allow graduate students to have a voice on the important issues of advocating for the daycare within and outside of the university. I see this as a very meaningful step forward in making sure that graduate students are having their voices heard in the decision-making processes that impact the daycare.

Second, I just have a few more general updates. I have been working with the SGSPA, Student Affairs, and Community Housing to put together a survey that will be distributed to graduate students about the current state of topics like housing, funding, and so on. My aim is to have the questions dig deeper into the discussions that we had at our town halls, but I would love to hear your feedback if you have specific thoughts on what you would like to share. This past weekend I was able to attend the Senate/Board retreat with our current President, Beth. This gave me a lot of great ideas on areas that will be worthwhile in advocating this coming year as I continue to transition roles. On the transition note, I have been really enjoying getting to know and work with Steacy, our incoming VP Graduate, and have been working closely with my other Executive members to make sure that the transition is as smooth as possible.

Finally, I just want to touch on the fact that we are now well into discussions about our health and dental plan and are having a serious look at the offerings that we have provided over the past year. If you have any feedback about any of the health and dental plan, including but not exclusive to Conversation, we would love to hear from you. We want to make the best decisions possible to make sure that the plan is benefiting all students and we can only do that if we have the data to hear about your experiences.

As always if you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to me at [vp.graduate@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.graduate@sgps.ca)

Take care,

Devin Fowlie  
Vice-President Graduate



Hello Council,

Happy March. I hope everyone has had a good start to their semester and are looking forward to Spring. I know I am.

During February I have worked closely with several of my colleagues on different projects. First, together with Beth, our President, I have worked on on-boarding our new Black Student Research Assistant, Adekunle, which will help us better determine the needs of Black students at Queen's and how the SGPS can best support them. We are very excited for this project so please keep a look out for more information on it coming in our newsletter and social media. If you have ideas or feedback about this topic either reach out to me ([vp.community@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.community@sgps.ca)), Beth ([president@sgps.ca](mailto:president@sgps.ca)), or Adekunle ([bsra@sgps.ca](mailto:bsra@sgps.ca)).

I have also worked with Beth, Jane (our Equity & Diversity Commissioner) on a new Gender Affirming Care Financial Assistance program which will soon be going live. The program will be on trial for a few months to allow for the evaluation of the program and the application process. Our hope is that this bursary will be able to provide assistance for gender affirming care beyond what can be provided by other units on campus as well as through our insurance provider. Providing separate financial assistance for gender affirming care, also allows us to keep to provide financial assistance to our members while keeping our insurance policy as cost effective as possible.

I have also worked with the SGPS executive, the Indigenous Initiatives Office and Four Directions to plan programming for Indigenous students and around indigeneity. While there are some more programs which are yet to be finalized, we do have one event which is coming up and that is set:

- **SGPS goes to Treaty: Reconciliation Revelry at Kingston Grand on March 29<sup>th</sup>.** This is a concert focused on Indigeneity and the history of the land we now call Canada. This is how Kingston Grand Theatre describes the event "Through this engaging concert, TREATY: A Reconciliation Revelry seeks to focus public attention on Indigenous contributions to Canada writ large and their struggle to have appropriate acknowledgement embedded within the conscience of the country". More information about the event and how to sign up for it will become available through our social media and newsletter.

Lastly, I have been doing a lot of work around how to improve our organizational structure, especially around the relationship between commissioners and executives. We will now be trialing a model where the commissioners/liaison will have more autonomy over their roles while being guided and supervised by the entire executive, instead of the VPC

alone. We hope that this will allow for more collaboration between different units of the organization and for an improved structure for all.

In March and April I will be wrapping up my time at the SGPS and start transitioning in Tony, our incoming VPC. I am very excited to work with Tony on this and get them situated in the role. I am sure they will do amazing things.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns, or are interested in getting involved with the SGPS, please don't hesitate to reach me at [vp.community@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.community@sgps.ca).

Sincerely,

Emilia Ganslandt  
Vice President Community, SGPS



Dear SGPS Council,

I am pleased to report that several graduate students attended the latest Board of Trustees meeting in March. The presence of graduate students was welcomed by members of the Board, and concerns about the cost of living and student housing were clearly communicated. I sit on Senate as an observer, and it now seems that both bicameral governance bodies at the University are aware of these pressing issues.

As I send my regrets to the March Council meeting, I must also report that I will begin my role as Vice-President Campaigns and Community Affairs on May 15, 2023. Historically, the SGPS Executive-elects begin their term on May 1. The chief reason for deferring my start date by two weeks is to allow me to attend the May Board of Trustee meetings as the Graduate Student Trustee. Per the Board of Trustee By-laws §4.4, the SGPS Trustee shall be considered to have resigned from office after taking a position on the Executive of the SGPS. This workaround allows members of the SGPS to have a voice (and a vote) at the board table in May with no interruption before a new Graduate Student Trustee can be elected via by-election in September.

Yours in service,

Tony Hu  
Graduate Student Trustee



Happy March!

This month we have SGPS Triple Threat at the Athletics and Recreation Centre. This is a free full body class for any fitness level! The class will take place on March 15th from 4:30-5:30 pm in the athletics and recreation center. This event is exclusive for grad students and the sign-up link is on the sgps.ca events page ([sgps.ca/events](https://sgps.ca/events)).

Another yoga class is in the works for April so look out for that announcement on our social media and newsletter. Have a great month! If anyone has any questions or suggestions, again, feel free to reach out [athletics@sgps.ca](mailto:athletics@sgps.ca).

Best,

Clare Gaherty  
Athletics and Wellness commissioner  
[Athletics@sgps.ca](mailto:Athletics@sgps.ca)



Hello Council,

Hope this report finds everybody well!

### **Public Consultation of Global Engagement Strategic Plan**

In February, I have been working closely with Heather Kincaide in the Vice-Provost (VP) International Office ([heather.kincaide@queensu.ca](mailto:heather.kincaide@queensu.ca)) to prepare for the release of the Global Engagement Strategic Plan. The document outlines a series of priorities that will guide the VP International Office in advancing Queen's as a global and inclusive campus in the next five years. The public consultation has commenced beginning March 1<sup>st</sup> and will end on March 17<sup>th</sup>. I encourage the council to read and provide feedback to the strategic plan. The document can be found [here](#).

It would be great if the department graduate council representatives can help spread the word in your respective departments. Oftentimes international students are less familiar with the working mechanisms of the university governing bodies, which can create a barrier to them engaging with university-wide initiatives. I hope this can become an opportunity to make their voice heard on a systemic scale.

### **Restructuring of the International Student Affairs Standing Committee (ISASC)**

Currently, the ISASC consists of self-nominated SGPS members and we have had many great discussions. However, consistent engagement with the standing committee has been challenging as students graduate or become more involved otherwise. I am working to re-structure the ISASC to include the department student council international representatives, which hopefully will facilitate the collaboration between the SGPS and the School of Graduate Studies (SGS). It should also be noted that not all department student councils have international representatives. It is, however, highly encouraged for department council to have this position as we see a significant proportion of international students in various departments. More information on this will be released as my work continues.

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions or concerns about any of my updates or if you think something has been missed in this report. My email is [international@sgps.ca](mailto:international@sgps.ca).

Sincerely,

Vina Li

SGPS International Student Affairs Commissioner



Hello Everyone,

This month I am focussing on heading the awards committee for the SGPS awards!

The nomination period for the 6 awards is currently open and will close on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Award descriptions and the nomination page can be found on the SGPS website.

We will also be **recruiting** 5 awards committee members. If you are interested in being a committee member, please fill out this form linked below:

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=aPKMM2T7HUI15ZMx4X6StV0WMyGEVZFESltP\\_is0hShUMTY3TVRZnkJSWk9TWVILUE0wMDVJNVhBVy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=aPKMM2T7HUI15ZMx4X6StV0WMyGEVZFESltP_is0hShUMTY3TVRZnkJSWk9TWVILUE0wMDVJNVhBVy4u)

Committee members will receive an honoraria for 6-12 hours of committee work ranging from March 15<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>. Please let me know if you have any questions about this position!

On another note, I am working with the Grad Club again to coordinate another Trivia event for grad students at the end of March.

That's all for now, please don't hesitate to reach out to [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca) with any questions or concerns!

Gabby Torretto (she/her)  
SGPS Social Commissioner  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
[social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca)