



Hello Council Members,

Though this semester continues to be challenging for both students and staff at Queen's, I hope your studies are going well. This is the current executives finally 2 months and we are now onboarding and transitioning the new team. Here are my updates from the last month:

### **SGSPA**

We have gained an amazing ally and advocate for graduate student housing through SGSPA, specifically Fahim (Dean). He plans to push for building new graduate student housing as priority 1 this year. Though this would be a lengthy process, having the Dean of the School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs on our side is a big win!

We have also been made aware of graduate students struggling with their research group, supervisor(s) and/or committee. If you are facing these challenges, we first recommend you reach out to our Student Advisor program. Our advisors are an amazing resource that can help you through these difficult situations. The next step would be to speak with your Graduate Chair within your department/unit. They have the information and power to assist you find and transfer supervisors. If you are receiving feedback from the Graduate Chair(s), the next step would be escalation to SGSPA, specifically Tara MacDonald or Chris DeLuca. Both Tara and Chris want the best outcome for graduate students and will help you sort this out with your department/unit.

### **Expanding Thesis Research Working Group**

There are many forms of research, and sometimes, a traditional written thesis is not the best way to present the material. This group will be reviewing the definition and form requirements for research-creation based theses, collaborative research (particularly in relation to student and collaborations), and presentation of research in different languages and orally. If anyone has ideas they would like me to share to this group, I would be happy to pass them along!

### **FIAC**

We are seeing an increased need for low-cost food options for our students. There are hours long wait times at the AMS Food Bank and the Peach Market sells out everyday. We are seeing that graduate students, specifically international graduate students, are heavily impacted. We are determining the budget and interest for providing graduate and professional students with either Fresh Food Boxes or Mason Jar Meals starting in May.

I am managing a disability and will be working mainly remotely, but I'm happy to meet with you online should the need arise ([vp.graduate@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.graduate@sgps.ca))!

Steady Coombs  
Vice-President Graduate, SGPS



Good Evening Council,

Thank you for attending our March Council meeting. We always love seeing all our valued members and hearing your opinions. We are very excited about some of the elements we are talking about tonight. In my report, I have highlighted some of the main areas of focus for this month. It has been a very busy month as the execution of the Med Law Games took place.

### **Med Law Games**

The Med Law Games took place on March 1<sup>st</sup>. We had a great turnout of both participants and spectators and it ended up being a tie for the 2024-2025 Med Law tournament. I wanted to give a huge shout-out to my right hand, Andria Burke, our Executive Director who helped me make this event happen and both the Law and Med Co-Chairs; Simran Grewal, Mahla Jahanmehr, Grace Ayoo, and Shangi Vijenthira. Everyone put so much time and effort into this event and I am immensely grateful for their dedication and commitment.

I am very excited to be running this event for another year. Over the summer my goal is to put together an MOU and a comprehensive document for my successor so that this event can be planned more seamlessly. Having all the stakeholders aware of expectations, rough numbers, and timelines will make this a lot more cohesive on a year-to-year basis so that each Vice President Professional does not have to figure out how to run this event from scratch. I am hoping to collaborate closely with the ARC, Law Students' Society, and Aesculapian Society, so that can achieve this to ensure that the Med Law Games will always be effective and manageable as it is a cherished legacy event at Queen's.

### **H&A Sustainability Meeting**

A few of our members will be attending the National Fair-Trade Conference this month. This conference will cover the baseline requirements for product availability, which Queen's is currently meeting as well as what is required to attain the Silver and Gold levels.

Queen's is actively trying to meet the Silver level which consists of the following requirements.

- All tea served on campus at required locations must be Fairtrade-certified
- At least three Fairtrade-certified chocolate bars must be available at every location selling chocolate bars including bookstores
- Fairtrade-certified sugar must be available at required locations where coffee or tea is served
- At least 1 Fairtrade-certified fruit or vegetable option must be available at required locations
- At least 1 independent business or franchise operating on campus must offer at least 1 Fairtrade certified product
- Queen's must also reach two out of four of the following optional requirements to meet the Silver level:
  - Meetings: coffee, tea and sugar
  - Events: coffee, tea and sugar
  - Offices and lunchrooms: coffee, tea and sugar
  - Bookstores: 3 products

Queen's said that their main struggle in attaining this is that we have an all you can eat meal plan where having Fairtrade bananas and sugar are the main source of concern. This is because, there is now only one supplier for Fairtrade bananas which has gone up in price as they are also now organic. Sugar is also a source of contention as all of the baked goods are made on campus which requires an abundance of sugar.

The Cold Beverage Agreement will also undergo an audit. The details are being finalized. This audit will be conducted to try and streamline waste and make sure that it is being disposed of accordingly in retail operations, dining halls, residences, and catering operations. I think that this is an excellent idea because our goal is to reduce the amount of food waste that we have at Queen's, and having this information will make this goal much more attainable.

### **Grad Club Meeting**

Some of the most salient information regarding the Grad Club is that Queen's is going to raise their rent by 400%. They are going to try and rebrand to see if this can drive more business to the Grad Club. Unfortunately, if some of their monetary constraints are not remedied soon, they will only have approximately one year left of being in business. If you ever are looking for a place to go for brunch, lunch, dinner or just a snack, check out the Grad Club! We really want to ensure the success of the Club as it is a treasured place for all of our members. The Board of Directors is looking to make some drastic changes and try to lower the rent increase. I will update you all once I have more information. There have been many ongoing discussions to try and come up with potential solutions so hopefully, we will have something tangible that could help the Grad Club stay in business.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to me at [vp.professional@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.professional@sgps.ca).

Best regards,

Maya Kawale  
Vice President Professional, SGPS



Dear Council,

March marks my second-to-last month as Vice President Community. My successor, Simran Sharma, has been elected by the SGPS membership, and I will be spending this month and the next preparing her to start her term in May. I send my regrets to this meeting as I am away on vacation from March 11 to March 15.

### **City of Kingston Postsecondary Working Group**

The City of Kingston Postsecondary Working Group met on February 8, 2024 with a vision to improve relationships between the municipality and its postsecondary institutions. I am the representative from the SGPS on this working group. Committee members identified three themes for the group: 1) housing, 2) food insecurity, and 3) student relationships with the City. Committee members rapidly reviewed specific challenges and resources. For example, funding student-run food banks with monies from by-law fees. Other examples include Communauto car sharing, adding a postsecondary lens to reports from city staff, and intentionally revising touchpoints with students.

### **Canadian Federation of Students National Graduate Caucus Annual General Meeting**

I travelled to Halifax from March 1 to March 3 to attend the Canadian Federation of Students National Graduate Caucus Annual General Meeting. I was joined by student leaders from graduate student unions across the country. At the meeting, I received a report on the budget of the National Graduate Caucus. Unfortunately, the budget is not publicly available online. This is not best practice for a national student union and must be changed moving forward to ensure accountability and transparency.

The Caucus receives roughly \$150,000 in revenue from student fees. The 2024-2025 budget replicates the 2023-2024 budget, with minor adjustments to account for inflation. The budget is not yet integrated with the strategic plan for the Caucus, as the strategic plan has yet to be created. The budget was passed, with me voting to abstain.

At the meeting, a motion was received to direct the National Graduate Caucus to advocate for greater guaranteed minimum funding for graduate students. The motion was based on a report prepared by the Ottawa Science Policy Network; the report is available online at <https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/10.1139/bcb-2023-0021>. The proposed calculation for the minimum stipend is the cost of tuition (and incidental fees) plus the average cost of rent (one-bedroom) plus \$550 a month for living expenses plus \$500 per month for PhD students. In the linked article, Table 3 shows the recommended stipends for U15 universities. At Queen's University, this is \$36,110 for a master's student and \$42,110 for a PhD student. The motion was passed.

### **Hiring**

The SGPS is hiring a Social Commissioner position and a Student Advisor. Job descriptions are available online at <https://sgps.ca/jobs/>. Applications are due on March 20, 2024 at 11:59 PM. The SGPS

encourages applications from members of equity-seeking groups including, but not limited to international students, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, members of minoritized groups, women, parents, and LGBTQ+ people.

### **Committees and Meetings**

- Radio Queen's University
  - Antenna updates: Rogers owns the tower the CFRC FM antenna is on and is decommissioning that tower. Rogers is putting up a new tower in the same area. There are substantial costs associated with moving the antenna from the old tower to the new tower, which must be borne by CFRC. The board agreed to move the antenna. However, contrary to expectations, the old antenna is no longer in serviceable condition. Instead, a new antenna will be sourced. The costs of this project are still tracking within the limits initially approved by the board.
- Queen's University Anti-Hate Advisory Group
  - There were 46 incidents of hate reported in 2022-2023.
  - The group reviewed an upcoming anti-hate campaign hosted by the Human Rights and Equity Office.
- Meeting with Vice-Principal Finance and Administration and Provost
  - The Provost understands the University needs to increase graduate stipends, and pointed to supervisors as being the major roadblock to properly funding graduate students.
    - This is a major win, as the SGPS has been advocating for better funding for graduate students for as long as I have been at Queen's University.
  - Requested we provide more data from graduate students to support the case he will make to supervisors to properly fund their students.
    - Cynically, I think the request for more data is a scheme to delay the critical need to improve graduate student stipends. In other words, this is an unnecessary administrative hurdle. The reality is that there is plenty of data available about appropriate budgets for living in Kingston. I will point councilors to the article mentioned in the Canadian Federation of Students National Graduate Caucus Annual General Meeting (<https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/10.1139/bcb-2023-0021>) and a report published by Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Public Health, available online at <https://www.kflaph.ca/en/health-topics/the-cost-of-eating-healthy.aspx>.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact me at [vp.community@sgps.ca](mailto:vp.community@sgps.ca).

Yours in service,

Tony Hu (he/him or they/them)  
Vice President Community, SGPS



Dear Council,

I hope everyone is having a good March so far! Please see below my brief update for this month's council meeting.

**1. Pilates Class at the ARC, Wednesday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 16:30**

- Strengthen your core, improve flexibility, and reset your mind in this rejuvenating workout.

**2. SGPS Fitness Programming Survey**

- A survey to determine preferred class types, days, and times for SGPS-only fitness opportunities at the ARC has been distributed to SGPS members. We have had over 100 responses – thank you very much to everyone who encouraged participation in this survey! The results will be shared with the ARC team in the coming weeks which will move discussions on the SGPS Fitness Programming proposal forward.

I am also happy to share that I will be staying on in this role for another academic year. I plan to take this opportunity to continue to advocate for the enhancement of SGPS members' access to fitness and wellness opportunities at the ARC and beyond.

As always, please don't hesitate to contact [athletics@sgps.ca](mailto:athletics@sgps.ca) if you have any questions, feedback, or ideas for fitness and wellness related events.

Sincerely,

Meghan Mendelin (she/her)  
SGPS Athletics & Wellness Commissioner  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
[athletics@sgps.ca](mailto:athletics@sgps.ca)



Hello Council Members,

Here is what I have done in February:

1. Organizing Collaboration with Career Services and the International Commissioner for International Grad Students
  - **Job Search Strategies:** Monday, March 18, 3-4 pm (virtual)
  - **Resume/CV and Cover Letter:** Tuesday, March 26, 3:30 – 4:30 pm (virtual)
2. Continuing to find reps interested in the Soft Infrastructure Network
  - \* If you, or someone you know is interested, please contact me at [equity@sgps.ca](mailto:equity@sgps.ca)
3. Reviewing Gender Affirming Care applications

I am always open to collaboration efforts – and happy to work with anyone to develop new initiatives, or to chat about anything! Feel free to reach out!

Best,  
Sangeetha Saravanan | BEd Candidate  
BSch, BA, DIPA Certificate  
[equity@sgps.ca](mailto:equity@sgps.ca)  
Equity and Diversity Commissioner  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students



Hello Council!

This past month I worked to finalize the timeline and structure for the annual SGPS awards. The nomination period for the 6 available awards begins on **March 11<sup>th</sup> and closes April 1<sup>st</sup>**. Descriptions of the awards and the application process have been made available on the SGPS website.

I will also be **hiring a ~4-person judging panel for the SGPS awards**. Eligible judging panel candidates must be a current Queen's graduate or professional student, no previous judging experience required. Each judge will be responsible for reviewing all nomination packages prior to the judging panel meeting the week of April 1st (Date and time will be finalized once judging panel selected).

Aileen will be sending out a Jotform link application for anyone interested in being a judge! The time commitment is 6-8 hours in the first week of April, with honorariums provided. The (very short) application is currently open and will be closing on **March 25<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm**.

Here is the link to the Jotform application:

<https://form.jotform.com/240664184053252>

Please email me if you have any questions about the SGPS awards or joining the judge panel!

Lastly, as I will be finishing my MSc this term, I will not be continuing as the SGPS Social Commissioner for the 2024-2025 year. I'm sad to be leaving SGPS this May, but am so grateful to have been a part of such an incredible team of dedicated students these past 2 years! I look forward to planning some end-of-year social events before the end of my term, and helping transition the incoming Social Commissioner!

That's all from me for this report! If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out at [social@sgps.ca](mailto:social@sgps.ca)

Gabby Torretto (she/her)  
SGPS Social Commissioner  
Society of Graduate and Professional Students  
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