

(February 11, 2020 meeting\*, in preparation for Senate meeting of February 19, 2020)

## **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SENATE**

The minutes of the Senate meeting of January 15, 2020 were circulated to the Steering Committee, and the Steering Committee provided feedback, which was incorporated in the minutes. It is recommended that they now be considered by Senate for approval.

## **2. SPEAKING RIGHTS**

The Steering Committee requests speaking rights for:

- Professors Johanna Neslehova (Mathematics and Statistics), Fabian Lange (Economics) and Erica Moodie (Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Occupational Health) for item IIB1 (Report of the Provost's Working Group on Salary Equity); and
- Professor Dimitrios Berk, Ombudsperson for Students, for item IIB5.3 (Annual Report of the Ombudsperson for Students).

## **3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The Steering Committee has reviewed the Agenda for the present meeting and recommends it for approval.

## **4. REVIEW OF QUESTIONS AND MOTIONS**

The Senate Steering Committee received two questions for its review.

The first question (submitted by Senator Elbourne) asked about the cancellation of the Graduate Option in Gender and Women's Studies and in Development Studies, and was not approved by the Steering Committee for submission to Senate.

It was noted that no action on the Graduate Option has been taken by the Faculty of Arts and that the Faculty would begin consultations on this topic at the end of February. It was also noted that any changes to academic programs are subject to approval by the Academic Policy Committee on behalf of Senate. As such, the Committee agreed that it was premature to discuss this matter at Senate at this time.

The second question (submitted by Senator Mecabô) concerned the University Student Assessment Policy and was approved for submission to Senate.

In addition, the Committee received a motion from Senators Bonneau, Buraga, Dworek, Laywine, Nystrom, Shor and Wilson for review. The motion called for the creation of a conference committee, consisting of five members elected by Senate after an open nomination process, five Board representatives, and the Principal, based on the view that there was disagreement between Senate and the Board regarding divestment of the endowment from fossil fuel companies.

After a comprehensive discussion and thorough review of the applicable sections of the Statutes of McGill University, the Steering Committee did not approve the motion for submission to Senate. In reaching the decision, members of the Steering Committee made several points, notably:

- Pursuant to the Statutes, a conference committee is convened in the case of a disagreement between Senate and the Board of Governors over matters that fall within the jurisdiction of both governance bodies.
- Senate, having no purview over financial and investment matters, which fall within the exclusive jurisdiction of the Board, cannot make recommendations to the Board on such matters, and therefore there can be no disagreement under section 6.3.9 of the Statutes.
- Based on a resolution adopted in September 2018, in October 2018, Senate “*informed* the Board, through the Principal, that it *favoured, in principle*, a move to divest the endowment from all companies whose primary business is the extraction, distribution, and/or sale of fossil fuels; and from all mutual funds that invest in such companies.
- The resolution adopted by Senate in September 2018 did not include a recommendation from Senate to the Board. Furthermore, the resolution did not express Senate’s disagreement with decisions of the Board.
- Consequently, the essential conditions of article 6.3.9 of the Statutes to establish a conference committee have not been met and the motion to create a conference committee was deemed to be out of order.

Certain members of the Committee suggested that there should be a forum where political aspects of issues could be discussed. It was noted that there are venues within the University that could be used for such purposes, such as town halls.

## 5. OPEN DISCUSSION TOPIC

Following a review of topics, the Steering Committee selected the following topic for the winter open discussion: review of the format and structure of open discussions. A working group will be struck to develop the program for the session.

**Present:** Suzanne Fortier (*Chair*); Angela Campbell, Jim Engle-Warnick (*by phone*), Kenneth Hastings, Christopher Manfredi, Jim Nicell, Marc Richard, Edyta Rogowska (*Secretary*), Rob Sladek, Madeline Wilson.

**Regrets:** Erik Larson.

*\*The documents submitted to the Senate Steering Committee for this meeting are available to Senators for perusal in the Secretariat (James Administration Building, Room 313). Senators who would like to view the documents should contact Ms. Georgia Ntentis, Governance Officer (Senate), by phone at 514-398-6827 or email at [georgia.ntentis@mcgill.ca](mailto:georgia.ntentis@mcgill.ca).*