

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Madeline Wilson and Bryan Buraga (Senators, 2019-2020)

RESPONSE FROM: Senator Christopher Manfredi, Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic)

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Athletics Facility Improvement

MEETING DATE: September 22, 2020 (deferred from March 2020)

PREAMBLE: Athletics and Recreation are one of a handful of largely self-funded units at McGill. Although these units do receive some direct financial support from the University, a majority of their operating expenses must be generated through profits from the sale of goods and services as well as student fees.

As such, since Fall 2004¹, improvements to facilities in Athletics and Recreation have been funded by the Athletics Facility Improvement Fund. This fund is generated by a \$10.00 ancillary fee charged to all undergraduate students at McGill University. This fee is then fully matched by the University, and the sum total is sent to Athletics and Recreation. Previous projects funded by this fee include, but are not limited to: the resurfacing of Molson Stadium and Forbes Field, the creation of a gender neutral washroom, the expansion of the Fitness Centre, the renovation of Memorial Pool, and the collaboration with the City of Montreal on the creation of a lighted playing field in Rutherford Park on the McTavish Reservoir. Necessary future improvements to facilities in Athletics and Recreation include: renovations to the men's and women's locker room facilities, retiling of the Memorial Pool basin and deck, air conditioning in the gymnasias and fieldhouse, relocation of the Sport Medicine Clinic, and construction of the Wellness Kitchen².

The existence of the Athletics Facility Improvement Fee must be reapproved by the student body once every 5 years. When the renewal of the fee was voted on by the student body during the Winter 2019 Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) Referendum period, it was rejected because the University had not yet committed to the renaming of the men's Varsity teams. In Fall 2019, the SSMU Legislative Council approved a moratorium³ on all Ancillary Fees until McGill University "divests from its investments in companies whose

¹ <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/tuition-fees/fee-descriptions>

² Information directly provided by Athletics and Recreation

³ <https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Motion-Regarding-Policy-on-Moratorium-on-McGill-Fees-Until-Fossil-Fuel-Divestment-2019-09-26-APPROVED.pdf?x21981>

primary business is the extraction, distribution, and/or sale of fossil fuels and pledges to refrain from investing in 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 in the future.” As such, the SSMU Legislative Council rejected to send the renewal of the Athletics Facility Improvement Fee to referendum in the fall.

However, it remains unclear whether the University had still budgeted for matched funds for FY20, even though the Athletics Facility Improvement Fee was not collected from students in Fall 2019⁴, and if so, where these funds are now.

QUESTION:

- 1) Did McGill University specifically budget to match the student contribution of the Athletics Facility Improvement Fund for FY20?
- 2) If so, will McGill University commit to immediately sending the matched funds from the Athletics Facility Improvement Fee to Athletics and Recreation?
- 3) If not, what is the University planning on doing with the budgeted funds?
- 4) Overall, to what degree can the University commit to ensuring that facilities in Athletics and Recreation remain safe, useable, and welcoming for all?

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your question, Senators Madeline Wilson and Bryan Buraga.

Question 1: Yes, McGill did.

Question 2: McGill committed to fully match the ancillary fee charged to undergraduate students. As no fee were collected in Fall 2020, McGill did not send the matched funds to Athletics and Recreation.

Question 3: The University is faced with many competing requests for funding; funds that are unused because of a change of commitment are directed to other priorities, especially those in which matching funding demonstrates joint commitment.

Question 4: As its operation is not part of the activities that are covered by the base grant from the Ministry of Higher Education, Athletics and

⁴ <https://ssmu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Minutes-Legislative-Council-2019-10-10-APPROVED.pdf?x21981> (pages 5 and 6)

Recreation is funded through different sources, an important one being contributions from students. The level of operation and activity of the unit is determined by the level of revenues from these different sources, and the unit constantly adapts to this to ensure a safe and welcoming operation.
