



Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Madeline Wilson and Bryan Buraga

RESPONSE FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Senate Steering Committee Documents

MEETING DATE: February 20, 2019

PREAMBLE: WHEREAS, documents submitted to the Senate Steering Committee for consideration are only available to members of the Steering Committee and are otherwise confidential, unless they are approved as-is to be brought to a Senate meeting and become publicly available at that time;

WHEREAS, Questions, Motions, and Reports that are deemed unfit to bring to a Senate meeting as-is are not made available to the public or to Senators that are not members of the Steering Committee;

WHEREAS, full transparency on behalf of any governing body fosters trust, facilitates mutual accountability, and promotes good governance;

WHEREAS, such confidentiality is inconsistent with the aforementioned principles of transparency, accountability, and good governance;

WHEREAS, in pursuit of these values, the Senate Steering Committee ought to make accessible to the McGill Community the contents of all materials being submitted to the Senate Steering Committee, with the exception of matters that are confidential even when presented to Senate (eg. Honorary Degree Nominations);

QUESTION: Why are the full set of documents submitted to every Senate Steering Committee meeting not made publicly available?

RESPONSE: Thank you for your question.

The responsibility of the Senate Steering Committee is to assist Senate in carrying out its governance functions and activities. Notably, the Committee has been mandated by Senate to make recommendations to Senate on the development of Senate agendas and meetings in general.

Documents that are distributed to the Steering Committee are not publicly available as they are subject to change and are finalized only following the Committee's meeting, once the agenda is reviewed by the Committee. Once finalized, they are distributed to Senate and posted online, as official Senate documents. In other words, the reason for not making documents

available publicly is not because they are confidential, per se, but because they are draft or working documents that are subject to review by the Committee and/or modification by the responsible unit, all in the context of the Committee's work in preparing the Senate agenda.

Written questions and motions may be submitted by Senators for review by the Steering Committee. They are not made publicly available because the question of their suitability for Senate needs to be determined by the Committee first.

Based on the Committee's review, questions or motions may be accepted as submitted, accepted with modification or referred to another university officer in the event that the matters they raise relate to issues that are largely non-academic in nature.

Questions or motions that are accepted as submitted or with modification are distributed to Senate and posted online, along with the agenda and all Senate documents. Questions or motions that are not accepted by the Committee are not distributed to Senate as they do not form part of Senate meeting agenda. However, a brief summary of all matters considered by the Steering Committee is included in the Committee's report to Senate.

Lastly, it may happen that questions or motions, which are initially submitted by a Senator to the Secretariat for submission to the Senate Steering Committee are subsequently withdrawn by a Senator and, as such, not submitted to the Committee. While this happens infrequently, it does occur when, for example, a Senator finds a response to the issue raised, or a satisfactory course of action for addressing the issue raised, through other university channels.
