



MOTION REGARDING THE SSMU GROCERY PROGRAM FEE 2023-02-09

Submitted for: 2023-02-09

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Moved by:	Risann Wright SSMU President	Current Status:	☐ FOR APPROVAL ☒ APPROVED ☐ POSTPONED ☐ COMMITTED ☐ NOT APPROVED
Seconded by:	Matthew O'Boyle Arts Representative		

Issue

Inflation and cost of living are rising, and many students are facing food insecurity on campus. Across the country, student unions and societies have seen increased demand from students for support, and have implemented programs to help provide students with groceries. The pilot SSMU Grocery program received full registration and requests for permanency. In this context, the SSMU proposes the creation of a grocery program, aiming to reduce food insecurity on campus and promote sustainable access to food for students. In order to achieve a full and sustainable program to help address food insecurity on campus, the SSMU grocery program needs to find a long-term funding solution. This motion is submitted to the legislative council in January 2023. This motion will ask for a new referendum question: *“Do you agree to the creation of the SSMU grocery program and to the creation of an opt-outable SSMU Grocery Program Fee of \$1 per student per semester (excluding summer) payable by all undergraduate students who are members of SSMU, starting in Fall 2023 and ending in Winter 2028 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority “no” vote would result in the non-existence of such a fee and the termination of the program?”*



Background and Rationale

The first pilot program took place in December 2022 and took the form of grocery vouchers given to students. The pilot program reached full capacity: 200 students signed up to receive the benefits of the SSMU grocery program. These vouchers were sourced from different grocery stores around Montreal, promoting sustainable and local items. In the long term, the program will run once a semester and deliver grocery vouchers. The program's aim is to prioritize sustainable partners^[2] with whom we can provide grocery vouchers to students once per semester. The vouchers will be accessible for pick up both online and in-person.

The Grocery Program Policy applies to SSMU members who are in financial need and are facing food insecurity. SSMU members that demonstrate financial need will be eligible to register in the grocery program. SSMU members may demonstrate financial need by providing at least one of the following three criteria:

1. Proof of federal or provincial bursary attributed to the student
2. Proof of enrolment within the McGill work and study program
3. Proof of financial aid, bursary, or grant attributed by McGill University

If students are not able to demonstrate financial need in the previously listed ways, they may still be eligible for the SSMU grocery program.

If students do not fall under one of the three categories outlined above to demonstrate financial need, SSMU members may reach out to the accessibility coordinator to organize access to the program.

The SSMU grocery program will work to help students reduce the current rising food costs in Montreal. In a more global understanding, the SSMU grocery program will tackle food insecurity amongst SSMU members and McGill students.

Alignment with Mission

The SSMU grocery program policy aligns with the SSMU values and missions.

First, The SSMU recognizes the holistic nature of sustainability and the importance of addressing environmental, social, and economic viability. According to the SSMU Sustainability Policy, sustainability does not refer



exclusively to environmental considerations, but also encompasses sustainability in regards to justice and equity. These latter aspects of sustainability are addressed by the SSMU Equity Committee, which is tasked to work and collaborate on sustainability-related issues.

Second, The SSMU commits to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights, social justice and environmental protection and to groups, programs, and activities that are devoted to the well-being of disadvantaged groups. We strive to ensure that all of our endeavors are undertaken with full respect for human dignity and bodily sovereignty and without discrimination on the basis of personal characteristics that include but are not limited to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, language, sexual orientation or social class.

Consultations Completed

Have been consulted regarding the grocery program fee: SSMU President, the SSMU VP University Affairs, the SSMU VP-finance, SSMU Legislative Councillors, the Presidents roundtable, student Faculty Association Presidents, the SSMU sustainability commissioners, the SSMU Accessibility Coordinator, the SSMU Equity Policy Specialist, the SSMU governance manager, the SSMU governance coordinator, and SSMU members.

Risk Factors and Resource Implications

This grocery program fee, if adopted by referendum, will require McGill students to pay \$1 per semester (that they can opt-out of).

Not posing this question will be detrimental for students to receive the benefits of the SSMU grocery program. Should this question fail it will be detrimental to the sustainable funding of the SSMU grocery program.

An associated risk of this motion is the increase in McGill students' tuition of \$1 per student per semester.

Further, the costs of a part-time salary (for the SSMU grocery program coordinator) will be associated with the long-term implementation of the grocery program and shall be paid by the opt-outable SSMU grocery program fee. In the event that more than 50% of the students opt out of the



SSMU grocery program fee, the SSMU grocery program coordinator will not be hired. The SSMU accessibility commissioner and the SSMU sustainability commissioners will support the coordination of the SSMU grocery program, which should increase the available budget to be spent on grocery goods.

Sustainability Considerations

As food and nutrition play a central role in our diets and lives, the grocery program will also promote food sustainability to support students to lead a healthy life, and achieve food and nutrition security.

The voucher model and priority given to stores that offer grocery items that students can prepare, will increase the autonomy and sovereignty of the student recipients and will help them achieve nutrition sustainability in their daily lives, outside of the SSMU grocery program's scope.

Impact of Decision and Next Steps

If the referendum question is accepted, it will have a significant impact on the future of the SSMU grocery program. Indeed, if the fee is accepted, the grocery program will have a long-term funding solution, and will therefore be able to continue from year to year.

At full capacity, the total budget of the grocery program per year would be around \$46,000 per year or \$23,000 per semester. Serving up to 946 students per year (Appendix A). This is an incredible expansion of the program compared to the one-time budget SSMU was able to allocate to the pilot grocery program this year: \$8,000 per semester. Voting in favor of the SSMU grocery program fee would enable the grocery program to exist long-term, and would increase the number of students served. This would make a greater difference for those in need within the community, as more students would have access to the grocery program each semester.

Regarding the next steps, the grocery program fee would be implemented from Fall 2023 onwards. Further, a grocery program coordinator would be hired by the SSMU in order to coordinate and implement the program each semester.

Voting in favor of this motion will increase students' access to food with dignity and tackle food insecurity on campus. The increase in the SSMU



grocery program budget will make a difference in the lives of many members of the community.

Motion or Resolution for Approval

Be it resolved that the Legislative Council approve the following question for the Winter 2023 referendum period:

Implementation of an SSMU grocery program fee:

Do you agree to the creation of the SSMU grocery program and to the creation of an opt-outable SSMU Grocery Program Fee of \$1 per student per semester (excluding summer) payable by all undergraduate students who are members of SSMU, starting in Fall 2023 and ending in Winter 2028 (inclusive), at which point it will be brought back to the Membership for renewal, with the understanding that a majority “no” vote would result in the non-existence of such a fee and the termination of the program?

Results of the Vote

In favour	(15)
Opposed	(2)
Abstain	(0)



Appendix A : Budget details

TABLE A

Budget	Total budget for the program	Worth of each grocery basket	Total number of students benefiting
Temporary funding	\$9,400 per semester (SSMU budget)	\$40 for the basket+ \$7 for the tote bag	200 per semester
SSMU Grocery Program budget with the fee	\$23,000 per semester \$46,000 per year (self-financed)	\$47	473 per semester 946 per year



TABLE B

Total budget per semester: \$23,000	Part of the total budget allocated	Worth of each grocery basket or tote bag	Total number of students benefiting
Grocery budget	\$22,250 per semester	\$47	473 students per semester
Grocery program coordinator budget salary budget	\$750 per semester	x	1 grocery program coordinator
Total:	23,000 per semester	\$47 per student per semester	473 students benefiting per semester

Appendix B : Sustainable and affordable partners ideas

The grocery program policy requires a partnership between SSMU and grocery voucher provider. The grocery program policy wishes to prioritize affordable and sustainable partners in order to increase the positive effect of this policy on both voucher recipients – SSMU members– and the environment. The SSMU will, where ever possible, pursue partnerships and sponsorships to pursue the costs of the program

Such sustainable partners can be (but are not limited to):

1. Les fermes du marché (farm)
2. Lufa farms (farm)
3. Yogi belly
4. Epicerie Basta



5. Tulsi farms
6. Be your own bulk

APPROVED