

Special General Meeting
February 12, 2009

1. Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 6:14 p.m.

2. Call for Quorum

Quorum was present

3. Adoption of the Agenda

SGMMotion01: David/Steeves Carried

4. Proposed Constitutional Amendments

4.1 Article 7 Part 1, A

VP Dyck moved to divide the question so they first move to change the name of the VP Student Issues to VP Student Affairs.

SGMMotion02: Dyck/Steeves Carried

VP Dyck stated the reason for the name change is the word issues has a negative connotation that has come up a few times from people she's worked with and from students. Changing it to Student Affairs does not change the heart of the job.

SGMMotion003: Dyck/Steeves

Council went to vote.

Motion is carried.

President Steeves moved that VP External Affairs be removed from the section of the Constitution.

SGMMotion004: Steeves/Tomcala

President Steeves explained that this motion arose was from an Executive Committee meeting and that the issues of portfolios came up. She stated the Executive felt that the current portfolios weren't working as efficiently as possible for the organization. They looked at shifting things around, and came to a clear understanding that one VP is essentially providing support to the remaining Executives. After many discussions, it was determined by them that eliminating the VP External's portfolio, it would allow the Executive to function more efficiently for the benefits of its' members. She stated careful thought and time was devoted to the Executives decision to bring this forward as we consulted with ex USSU Presidents and colleagues from other student unions and associations as

well as peers. She opened it up for questions and comments from the other members of Council.

Councilor Kirkland stated he'd like to caution the other students on this vote. With the CFS vote coming up, the CFS being a lobbying group meant having an effective voice for students throughout Canada. If the USSU and its students decided to not join the CFS, the USSU would have no one dedicated to lobbying for issues for the students of the University. He wanted to issue caution.

Councilor David stated he'd like to echo Councilor Kirkland's thoughts. In the event that the CFS does not go through, they will need a position to lobby on behalf of the students. Also, if the CFS was to go through, and they were to stay members of the CFS, they still need that link between the CFS and the USSU. He thinks the VP of External Affairs is a great position for doing that sort of stuff. He doesn't think by removing this position, they're going to be doing a service for students; they're going to be doing a disservice. That's saying 4 Executive can do the job of 5, when clearly 5 people are able to do a lot more than 4.

VP Dyck stated she wanted to clear up some information; External Affairs portfolio does drift in to everyone's portfolio and lobbying isn't just one person's job. There have been other Executives who are more prepared to discuss matters with media and the government.

Member Stoicheff stated he's concerned that if they were to get rid of the position of VP External Affairs this would be the message that we'd be sending to the rest, all levels of government that we lobby. The message is that the students of the USSU are effectively closed for business. Does the Prime Minister of Canada get rid of his Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Councilor Kirkland stated he agrees with VP Dyck that there is overlap in the portfolios, but he thinks that's barring a larger campaign that the USSU decides to take on. He believes having a person dedicated to lobbying certain campaigns is a better way to go.

President Steeves stated she had a conversation with a VP External with another organization and their opinion was actually VP External, was a detriment to the organization, because they felt politicians didn't understand the organizational structure, didn't want to talk to the VP of External. The politicians wanted to talk to the person who was actually in charge of the matters. She believes 4 Executives could handle the workload.

Councilor David stated in terms to that comment, he's sure other countries don't want to deal with the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, but at the same time they have to because the Prime Minister isn't always available. Something USC has heard a lot from the USSU this year, is that they are always busy. He believes

taking away another position would make them busier. Maybe we need to add another person, rather than taking away one from the Executive.

Member Rutland stated he served as Chair of External Affairs for another student union, and he speaks in favor of this role. Yes, this person may not have individual little portfolios but the advantage of having in this case a VP External Affairs, is that they can spend their time building relationships with all the various levels of government that the other VP's can tap in to.

Councilor Kirkland stated President Steeves mentioned other Universities, and while he respects what other student unions do, he doesn't really care; he cares about this students union, what they do and what's best for them.

Councilor Tomcala asked if they've always had a VP External?

President Steeves stated no it was reinstated in 2004-2005.

Councilor Tomcala asked reasons for reinstatement?

President Steeves stated the reason for taking it off last time was that there wasn't enough to do. The person simply didn't have enough to do and it didn't warrant a full time position. She wasn't present at the last meeting when it was reinstated and there are no verbatim minutes recorded to go back to review, so she's not comfortable commenting on something she wasn't present for.

Chair Leisle stated he was present at the meeting the position was reinstated, and it was made mentioned there needed to be more government lobbying, it was felt at the time, the position was needed.

Councilor Adeyemi stated she'd like to speak against this motion. She thinks the position of VP External is very important and it's not something that could just be dispersed among other executives. She thinks the same as Councilors Kirkland and David, the more the merrier.

Councilor Hitchings stated he'd like to say this is not an attack on them, three months ago when the past external affairs wasn't doing their job, one of the complaints was the burden of that job was falling on other Executive members and it was making your jobs harder. Now you're saying the complete opposite, and that you could just handle it. He asked for the reason for the about face?

Councilor Kirkland called point of order.

Councilor Hitchings stated before we were saying it wasn't needed, before you were saying it was too much of a burden, and now you're saying it's not needed.

President Steeves stated the issue wasn't that the job itself was a burden; it was dealing with the other aspects.

VP Dyck commented on the issue of the additional workload thing. For background information, when the position became vacant they talked about how to shuffle the workload in to another portfolio. Once they started to do that, they realized that some of the duties that were in this position were kind of random and a lot of that was more administrative tasks that were being done by the Executive and would be better done by a staff position. They decided it might be more useful to have an undergraduate executive support, versus an external affairs position. They are reviewing a draft proposal to have an SAL sit on a variety of committees.

Councilor David called the question.

SGMMotion04: David/Kuspira Carried

Councilor went to vote.

Motion is defeated.

4.2 Article 8, Part 5

Councilor Kirkland moved to remove from the Constitution and add to Bylaw #4 Section 21, all Executive positions are to be elected by single member plurality.

SGMMotion05: Kirkland/Ring

Councilor Kirkland stated there are a number of people here that were invited by members of the USC, and asked that they keep an open mind. He reviewed the current Bylaw, and then stated he would then explain why he thinks that it is a bad way of doing things. In the policy when the elections come up on PAWS, rather than just choosing the individual that you identify with the most or you would desire to be your President, you would rank them. So if 5 people are running for President, you would rank from most preferred to least preferred. Everyone except the top two people in the round of voting are then eliminated. The votes are re-tallied until someone gets more than 50% of the votes. Think about whether you knew what that was, and if the average student out there would know what that was.

Councilor Kirkland moved to bring it back to single vote plurality, which is you chose the girl or guy that you like the most. He listed four basic points on why he thinks this is a better system:

1. Voter turnout is already low, student empathy on campus will increase with the proposed new system
2. Need perfect information and how it relates to instant run off voting

3. Simplicity and advantages to single member plurality – everyone knows how it works
4. Not sure ranked systems applies to the USSU?

He stated we could all agree there is always a low voter turn out on student issues. By making voting procedures difficult will not assist in increasing voter turn out. It is better to have more voices, than move to a system that no one knows how to use and will only decrease voter turn out.

President Steeves called for a point of order.

Chair Leisle stated it's all in interpretation of the Bylaw. It doesn't specifically say in this Bylaw that voters will be able to only rank one. He would say it's up for interpretation and wouldn't say that Councilor Kirkland is not correct.

Councilor Kirkland stated this system is about electing on the average, it's not about choosing your first choice to govern, and it's not about who you want to have versus who you don't want to have. As discussed, students aren't always most informed about the elections, but they still have the right to vote and they should have that right to vote. He looks for the candidate that he relates to most. His real question is how does this apply to the USSU? The idea for instant run off voting is when there are more than two members to start eliminating members. He questioned how that applies. Councilor Kirkland stated how do you deal with it when so few people run – we'd be spending \$10,000.00 to re-organize the system.

President Steeves stated she agrees that Part 5 of the election bylaw is not really well written, and if they look at the next one they're dealing with it, has a better written version. She thinks that just because something is not good, doesn't mean you just get rid of it, you change it to make it better. In terms of the debate in instant run off voting, it doesn't specifically say that you can't abstain. The system we voted for at Council a few weeks ago enabled people to abstain from voting for certain people if they wanted to. You don't have to rank four people; it's your choice. In terms of low voter turn out, keep it in perspective. It's higher than any other voter turn out in any other University I've talked to. She agrees it's not well written, but it's not appropriate to just get rid of it. It can be made better.

Councilor David asked if any money has been allocated to better educate students on the process?

VP Ring stated not as of yet.

Member Salmers stated if you think our students won't figure out how to rate their candidates 1 to 5, how are they making it through first year. Her second

point is she thinks it's a good system because it will prevent Presidents or other members of the Executive getting in with only 20% of the vote.

Councilor Nystuen stated in the event of this motion if it does pass what will happen to the \$10,000.00 that was allocated or approved to go towards the new system for PAWS.

VP Ring stated we'd have to cancel the order.

Councilor stated there are a number of new students on campus each year, none of who have dealt with instant run off voting. He stated you couldn't expect voter increase through this system.

Member Salmers stated this has been voted on in two AGMs. She believes the students have voted on what they want. She thinks it shouldn't be voted on a third time. The students have spoken.

Member Olynyk stated the point is it was stated that we don't want elected representatives that are being elected on a very slim majority of the vote. We don't have somebody as our President who that was elected with 15% of the students vote.

Councilor Kirkland stated you're talking about getting elected by a slim majority, voter turn out isn't 50%, it's 18.4%. The overall student body hasn't said they want this President. Everyone can agree that its difficult to get to the student body, how can we expect to inform the student body with this, when we can't do it any other time.

Member Cambell stated how he sees it, is there is nothing that can really be done about voter turn out. If there were a cure, he'd like to hear it. He sees this as being more representative result vs. voter turn out.

Councilor Tomcala stated last AGM when this was voted in, yes it was voted in, but they were under 2-3 hour time constraints and they were pushing the limit on every vote we made. She's glad to see every one is taking the time to look at both arguments. Take the time to review this.

President Steeves stated this is something that's been voted on twice. People had a chance to voice their concerns at the last AGM in November. This is something that shouldn't be an issue anymore. Because something is hard, doesn't mean you don't do it. This applies to any position that is going to be running. The point of this isn't just to increase voter turn out. It allows the students to vote for someone they are in favor of, and it is more representative.

Member Rutland spoke in favor of this. He would rather have an Executive member that is going to come out and work to get his vote rather than have someone who is elected that is the least offensive to the largest number of people.

Councilor David stated he'd like to look back at the last AGM when this matter was discussed. Some people would question the legitimacy of the last AGM considering they brought people up from the gym to make quorum and when those people left before we even voted on this issue. We had less than 50 people in the room when we voted on it last time. He suggests voting on it this time.

Councilor Kirkland asked how we can say it's more representative when fewer people are showing up? This system doesn't allow for a 3 party race, how is that democratic at all. What does the rest of the Executive think?

VP Ring stated he's always been against this. The fact is, we need more students coming out to vote and this system isn't going to solve that. We voted on the middle of the road out of three options, meaning we voted middle of the road, we're getting a middle of the road election.

VP Lowenberger stated she's speaking in favor of this motion.

VP Dyck stated she's always flip-flopped to be honest. On a bigger scale, she's in favor of the instant run off voting. She doesn't like first past the post. But students will have to pay \$10,000.00 for 18% of our students to vote and she believes that the money can better go towards other services. She will be voting in favor of this motion.

Councilor Crosbie stated she's thinking this maybe could actually increase voter turn out. She doesn't feel it will decrease voter turn out all out; it's not hard at all ranking. She has a lot of faith in first year students.

Member Farthing moved to call to question.

SGMMotion06: Farthing/Tomcala Carried

Councilors went to vote.

Motion is carried.

Chair Leisle stated for clarification, there were two motions to be debated. As it works, when an amendment to the Constitution or Bylaws occurs at a general meeting such as this, it takes effect immediately. So, the Constitution does not contain Part 5 anymore and Part 21 reads all members of the Executive will be elected by single member plurality. The motion that is about to come will be to change Section 21 of Bylaw 24 to what you read on the screen.

4.3 Article 8, Part 5

President Steeves moved to remove it from the Constitution and add to Bylaw 4, Section 21.

SGMMotion07: Steeves/Crosbie

President Steeves stated Part 5 in the Constitution as being reviewed had some huge problems with it, some loop holes, etc., such as things as ? First it moves it to Bylaw, this is where

Councilor Kirkland stated it's already in there.

President Steeves stated it's in the Bylaw, where it needs to be. This allows people to vote for whomever they want. If they want to vote for one person, they only have to vote for one person. It's better written and much better for the list system.

Councilor Kirkland stated again he doesn't care what other Countries do he cares what we do. He feels it's been discussed already; he called it to question and wants to go direct to vote.

SGMMotion08: Kirkland/Member #35 (can't read his writing)
Council went to vote. Motion is carried.

Motion is defeated.

5. Proposed Bylaw Amendments

5.1 Proposed Amendment to Bylaw 1, Article 6, 6.01 f

President Steeves requested advice.

Chair Leisle stated you want to make a motion to change what cannot be changed because of earlier changes to the Constitution. It is best not to have the motion seconded.

President Steeves stated they were all pertinent on in terms of what we just discussed.

President Steeves moved that we need to change article 6, 6.01 f to the following.

SGMMotion09: Steeves/

No one seconded the motion. Motion is dead.

VP Dyck stated she'd like to divide it into section 1 and 2. She moves the first section, but asked that no one second it.

SGMMotion10: Dyck/

President Steeves moved to divide the question by removing number 2, VP of Student Affairs.

SGMMotion11: Steeves/Tomcala

Chair Leisle stated to be clear; the motion is to change Issues to Affairs and to change bullets to numbers.

Council went to vote.

Motion is carried.

President Steeves moved to make the rest of the changes in this section, but no one to second it.

SGMMotion12: Steeves/

Motion dies. Continue on.

5.3 Proposed Amendment to Bylaw #4

President Steeves moved that section 8 E, be moved to the new text. This was to be done for the other method.

SGMMotion13: Steeves

Motion dies. Continue on.

6. Questions & Comments for Executive (30 minutes)

President Steeves thanked everyone for attending.

7. Any Other Business

8. Adjournment

SGMMotion14: Member Farthing/David Carried