

University of Saskatchewan Students' Union

Special General Meeting

March 3, 2011

6:00 pm

Arts 143

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:14 pm.

2. Call for Quorum

Quorum was reached.

3. Adoption of the Agenda

Move to adopt the agenda.

SGMMotion01: Councilor Nagy/Councilor Brown

Carried

4. Amendment to Articles of Incorporation

VP Shumlich noted that this motion would require a two-thirds majority to pass. He expressed his appreciation for everyone attending. He added that he is not going to try to win people over, but will rather be here to provide the full truth. We are operating from a limited pool and can only raise so much money as it is a tax on students. The USSU, much like other governments, has a responsibility to use this money in the most efficient and effective way possible and make sure that it is not wasteful, as we are taking money from people that do not have a lot. We can all relate to the need to budget and prioritize wisely. What is the best way to spend the money? We need to not think of this as getting rid of a position or getting rid of something the USSU does, because we will continue to lobby and will do everything contained in this position. We are freeing up \$30,000 to spend on something that is more efficient and more effective. The fact is that the position does not have enough to do. There is not enough work included in the job description. It sounds like there is a lot of work to do, but the work really isn't there and you have to do work to make it relevant and that is frustrating. If we can sponsor more events and provide honorariums to high profile speakers, we can do a lot to enhance the student experience. This \$30,000 can fund new initiatives, but can also fund old initiatives, like the Centres. Our last raise in fees was 5%, which works out to approximately \$30,000. This change would have the same effect as a fee increase. The work that the VP External does is very important, but we do not need a dedicated person to do it.

VP Shumlich stated that his job is to do lobbying and work with transit. In his experience with the position, he has been led to believe that this position could be easily absorbed by the rest of the organization and students would

lose nothing. When he first started, he wore a shirt and tie to work every day and then there was a slow progression away from that. He was constantly looking for work and there was little to be found. He asked if he was missing something or doing something wrong and was told that the position tends to have a slower pace. The position was removed in 1999 for the same reason. There was not enough work, it was not relevant and there were better ways for them to spend the money. It was then brought back in 2005 by then President Gavin Gardiner. The goal was to increase the amount of lobbying, but there were other motives to this, including a balance of voting in reference to CFS, which cost the organization greatly – more than \$30,000. The 2008-9 Executive started the year with a VP External, who part of the way through the year resigned, and the remaining Executive found that they could absorb the duties of this job and many frictions and tensions were removed. Things ran smoothly. They attempted to get rid of the position and this motion was defeated. It has been two years since, and the same will be attempted tonight. He stated that he is able to add credibility to this argument because he has been in the position for over ten months.

Since July he has felt that there is not enough to justify this position, but was cautioned by many to wait it out and see if there is enough to do. He added that he feels the same as he did in July. There are a number of reasons that this could make the Executive run more smoothly. There will be a movement of many things to the President role and transit will go to the VP Operations and Finance. The President is in a far better role to lobby than the VP External. The President is more engaged in day-to-day operations but also meets with senior university administration and university officials, in addition to political figures in informal settings. Most of the lobbying we do involves asking for money. The President is not allowed to talk about what goes on at the Board of Governors, but can use the information acquired in their time to better inform their decisions when making requests of government and allows a better understanding of the university finance system. Much like the 2008-9 Executive, he expressed his belief that this position should be removed. There is not enough to do.

Some people have come forward with their concerns. He stated that one concern is that he does not care and is not trying. He had been assured that this is an ongoing issue and it is not the person in the position, but the position itself. If he did not care, he would not be here arguing to get rid of this position. Another concern was surrounding election years and upcoming elections. A question that needs to be asked is what does an election actually entail for the VP External? You can make it sound like it is a lot of work, but it boils down to emailing candidates to invite them to a forum and then asking the staff to book a location and set up chairs and microphones. He stated that he set up a transit forum. It was not well attended, but there were a lot of questions. It took two to three hours to set up and moderate the entire event. He has also been asked if this will place an undue strain on other Executive

members. He replied to this concern by saying that most of the meetings he currently attends can be done by telephone and most take 30 minutes. Sometimes they require travel to Regina. If one considers all of the meetings that the VP External attends, it would work out to roughly two calendar weeks in a 52-week year. This can be fit into other portfolios without causing undue stress. Another concern was the fact that if he thought the position was useless, then why didn't he work to get rid of it sooner. He replied that he wanted to do this, but was told to give it a full year. If he were to resign, he would have been unable to remove this position. In terms of assigning more duties to this position, he disagreed by saying that we should be putting the money towards things that are more worthwhile and give them more things to do. The other Executive members would then lose items from their portfolios and the work would not cohesively align. Students will not suffer. A four student Executive brought in our student health and dental plan. We know we can do it with less and we can do it better. In terms of consensus issues, many that were on four person Executives have stated that this was not an issue and it facilitated more compromise and better listening. In the event that there is an issue so contentious that an Executive cannot compromise, then maybe it should be taken to a larger body, such as USC. This would also engage USC further.

This is about prioritization and effective use of money. If things can be done while spending less, and as trustees of public money, we have an obligation to do so. He urged everyone to vote and get rid of this position. Currently we need five members for our Board of Directors and we will need to change that to read four to six. There is a requirement of a 2/3 majority for this to pass. If there is a need to add a position in the future, then they do not need to go through this stage.

Member Miller asked if the debate will happen now or when we will move to the removal from the bylaw.

Chair Leisle stated that although VP Shumlich provided context for the meeting, all debate should be saved for the specific motion.

Councilor Nagy noted that in the amendments provided, there was a spelling error in the wording of minimum.

Move to amend the Articles of Incorporation to read that there is to be a minimum of four and a maximum of six directors, rather than five as previously listed.

SGMMotion02: VP Shumlich/VP Thompson

Carried

5. Proposed Bylaw Amendments

5.1 Vice President External Affairs

VP Shumlich noted that he would like to amend the motion to keep the External Affairs Board. He had thought that it could also be removed as it is not incredibly useful, but some were concerned with this. As it does not cause any harm, VP Shumlich stated that it could be kept. There would need to be a change to have the President as Chair and the VP Student Affairs as Vice-Chair.

Move to remove the Vice President External position and re-distribute duties as outlined in the attached document. SGM Motion: VP Shumlich/Councilor Schmidt

Move to keep the External Affairs Board (Section 47), with the President as Chair and the VP Student Affairs as Vice-Chair. SGM Motion03: VP Shumlich/Councilor Paton

Councilor Waldbillig referred to the requirement in the Bylaw of giving students notice of all amendments.

Chair Leisle provided clarification that this amendment would be in the scope of the amendment to the Bylaw proposed and deemed it to be allowable. This issue has already been communicated to students.

Move to keep the External Affairs Board (Section 47), with the President as Chair and the VP Student Affairs as Vice-Chair.

SGM Motion03: VP Shumlich/Councilor Paton

Carried

Member Miller stated that he would like to speak against this motion in the strongest possible terms. A lot of things can be done and previous people in these positions have worked very hard in the past. There is a need for preparation, talking to students and mobilizing them, and supporting student issues, in addition to applying political pressure. The President position and the VP External positions are both inherently political. The President is an internal position and they must do what is best for student issues, research, staffing, university construction and many other things. It is good to have someone working on just student issues. There is a need for this position. The University is pushing very hard for what they want and the USSU needs to push really hard for what they want as well. It would be hard for the President to be both the internal and external person. As a side note, it is good protection to have both as they act as a check and balance. A VP External can push student issues forward. If we get rid of the position, all of the future direction and advocacy will be done by the U of R. We are going to playing second fiddle to the U of R.

Member Mattern noted that there were other ways of allocating the money, according to VP Shumlich's speech. Will we be able to choose how that money is spent, and when those decisions will be made.

VP Shumlich replied that it would be freed up for next year's budget and that would be for next year's VP Operations and Finance and Executive to decide. It is up to the people that are in place next year.

Member Flysak expressed his opposition as the Executive cannot speak against the issue and VP Shumlich is not acting on behalf of the Executive.

VP Shumlich replied that the Executive had the opportunity to speak in the Executive Minutes when the motion was presented to remove the position. To say that he is speaking disingenuously on behalf of the Executive is incorrect. Their opportunity existed.

Member Flysak added that President Stoicheff is now at a Board of Governors meeting. He noted that a prior commitment prevented the President from coming out to a meeting like this. In reference to unbearable fee increases as a result of this position, the University's Operating Forecast states that tuition increases will be between 0 and 11.9%, depending on the program. This will be consecutive for the next three years. The government has yet to implement a new Saskatchewan Scholarship Fund to offset the millennium scholarship. He asked VP Hitchings to state what President Stoicheff did last year when he was in the VP External position.

VP Hitchings stated that he is not entirely comfortable speaking on behalf of President Stoicheff, but noted that he took on a lot more initiatives, but we should not compare the two. We need to look at the position.

VP Shumlich stated that he and President Stoicheff have philosophical differences on what the Student Union is. In terms of the limitations on speaking, the President is at the Board of Governors and cannot make it. We have had four person Executives that have done lobbying successfully. What he is doing right now is not related to the portfolio. In terms of an unbearable fee increase, that was not his point. He has stated that we cannot raise fees indefinitely. We need to spend our money as efficiently and effectively as possible. As far as the Saskatchewan Scholarship Fund, these types of announcements are made at the budget. They would not have announced it now. When the budget comes out later this month, we will know more. In terms of other concerns that were raised, he stated that from the outside looking in, the position seems to have a lot to do. He noted the comment about the U of R. Our organizations are set up quite differently. They have half of the number of the staff that we do. They book all of their own rooms and times. Comparing our organization to another one that does things differently is not the best. Different student unions do things very

differently. URSU is busy all of the time and they have four members. We could get rid of one position and still do well. The research does not take very long to do. The lobbying document was researched, written, edited, and sent within a week. For the reports, it does not take long. As far as coalitions, we have worked with URSU and SIAST and have worked with the government and others. In terms of the inherent political implications of the President and VP External positions, it would definitely work to have a four person Executive and those who have done so have done well. The President can do these things. In terms of checks and balances, the entire Executive acts as a check and balance upon itself. Acting as a specific check and balance creates friction among Executives. In terms of losing clout to URSU, our President will be in strong positions to speak about things that are going on at the University. The ministers will not change their focus based on a change in this position.

Move to give VP Shumlich unlimited speaking rights.

SGMMotion04: Councilor Nagy/Councilor Brown

Carried

Councilor Brown stated that when he was looking at the portfolio, it is centred around federal, provincial, and municipal lobbying. His interpretation is that it is the person can make the position into what suits them and take on specific political issues. Last year, he lobbied with the SSC and took that on. It seems that that particular person lobbied on specific things, such as helping the ISC come together. When you say that it is a philosophical difference, it is more of a personal difference. A lot of things were taken on last year. Perhaps more things could have been taken on. There are still things to do.

Member Moccasin introduced himself as the VP of Finance and Operations for the Indigenous Students' Council. He expressed his concern with the funding issues for the Gordon Oakes-Redbear Centre and that part of VP Shumlich's campaign was to foster Aboriginal inclusion on campus. He asked what steps have been done to achieve these initiatives.

VP Shumlich stated that we did lobby for the Gordon Oakes-Redbear Centre in talks with Minister Norris and we have tried to get in contact with FSIN. He met and spoke with several First Nations leaders and added that there will be an upcoming rally in support of the Gordon Oakes-Redbear Centre. We lobbied on those things and we went through exit polling for self-identified students. The University is looking at a way of pulling students aside to identify risk factors. VP Shumlich stated that he has kept a low profile, but has done things in this area. In terms of personal interpretation, he expressed his agreement and asked why we would have a position where it would be easy to do so little. Aren't there smarter ways to spend the money?

Member Waldner

5.2 Bylaw – Section 7

Move to add the following to Section 7: “Prior to publishing proposed amendments to the bylaw, the General Manager or designate shall consult with the USSU’s lawyer to ensure that the proposed amendments adhere to the spirit and intent of the Bylaw. Those which do not will not be published.”

SGMMotion:

5.3 Bylaw – Section 14

Move to add the following to the beginning of Section 14: “For the purposes of this Bylaw the Executive is understood to be the Board of Directors as specified in the Article of Incorporation under the Non-Profit Corporation Act or any successor legislation.”

SGMMotion:

5.4 Bylaw – Section 23

Move to change Section 23 to read: “Any member of the Executive may be removed from office following the steps outlined in the Executive Protocol Policy *or* if a quorum of two thirds of members of Council is present at a Council meeting, and a special resolution of non- confidence is passed.”

SGMMotion:

5.5 Bylaw – Section 30

Move to change Section 30 to read: 30(1) Student societies shall hold free, fair, and open elections for councilors annually in *March or* April.

6. **Questions and Comments for the Executive (30 minutes)**
7. **Any Other Business**
8. **Adjournment**