January is always an exciting time on campus. The MSU presidential race kicks off on Monday, January 21, and during the campaign period the MSU will be using the tradition of presenting our annual State of the Union address. The State of the Union will take place inside TwelvEighty at 2:30pm on Wednesday, January 23. Complimentary food and soft drinks will be available.

The State of the Union was adopted during the 2010-2011 academic year as a way for the current MSU executives to reflect on and present some of the significant changes that have happened during their term. The document and subsequent presentation are primarily methods of communicating to you, the undergraduate student body, what your student union has been working on this year to improve the student experience at McMaster. It includes information on services’ accomplishments, where and how your money is being spent, what projects have begun and have been completed, and how the post-secondary landscape has changed over the last eight months.

The State of the Union is also a historical document. It is a snapshot of the MSU at a particular point in time and gives future students and student leaders a brief look into the issues that were faced by their predecessors. It is our belief that the State of the Union is an important reference document for anyone hoping to take up a student union position to read, in order to gain a better understanding of how specific priorities of the McMaster Students Union are bound to change with time. As such, the State of the Union is a presentation, chaired by MSU President Deane. Additionally, the MSU has worked on creating a Fall Break, established plans for a green roof on the Student Centre, digitized the archives of The Silhouette, ramped up our efforts to communicate via social media, and initiated forum discussions with President Deane. These topics only scratch the surface of the projects that have been taken on during their term planning, the State of the Union is of particular importance as it is a presentation, chaired by MSU President Deane. Additionally, the MSU has worked on creating a Fall Break, established plans for a green roof on the Student Centre, digitized the archives of The Silhouette, ramped up our efforts to communicate via social media, and initiated forum discussions with President Deane. These topics only scratch the surface of the projects that have been taken on during this year and the events that have shaped our educational experience. You can expect much more in the official version of the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) to reduce the CPMF 91.3% fee from the current $17.29 per MSU member to $4.95 per MSU member. Additionally, the McMaster Marching Band is requesting a $4,500 per student key to help support their events and operations.

Why is the State of the Union important?
Given the transient nature of the organization and its membership, specific priorities of the McMaster Students Union are bound to change with time. As such, the State of the Union is a presentation, chaired by MSU President Deane. Additionally, the MSU has worked on creating a Fall Break, established plans for a green roof on the Student Centre, digitized the archives of The Silhouette, ramped up our efforts to communicate via social media, and initiated forum discussions with President Deane. These topics only scratch the surface of the projects that have been taken on during this year and the events that have shaped our educational experience. You can expect much more in the official State of the Union document that will be released next week as the Board of Directors take the stage to present our annual document outlining organizational decisions, achievements and goals of 2012/2013. It is a space used to communicate with the student body about the projects, goals and agenda of the MSU Board of Directors.

At this time of year, the MSU presidential election tends to get most of the press, but it is also important to draw attention to referenda that will run concurrently with the election in late January. First, there is a proposal coming from the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) to reduce the CPMF 91.3% fee from the current $17.29 per MSU member to $4.95 per MSU member. Additionally, the McMaster Marching Band is requesting a $4,500 per student key to help support their events and operations.

Both of these referenda will appear on the online ballot which will be emailed to each MSU member, in conjunction with the presidential ballot. Voting occurs on January 29, 30 and 31, so before then be sure to get informed! Information on all the candidates and the referendum questions will be available on the MSU Elections website www.msumcmaster.ca/elections. Also, you can always speak to your elected representatives on the SRA to get a better perspective on these issues.

Don’t forget to vote!