

*The McMaster Students Union*

# PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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It is municipal election season once again, noticeable via the coloured lawn signs popping up across the city. Candidates are walking up and down the streets, knocking on doors, and handing out flyers. Debates have been planned, websites have been shared, and the McMaster Students Union is running a #MacVotes campaign to encourage students to exercise their right to vote on October 22.

One of my favourite descriptions of the importance of municipal government goes along the lines of this: if the federal government shut down, the average person would not notice for a few months; if the provincial government shut down, the average person would not notice for a couple weeks; but if the municipal government shut down, people would notice within the day. That is not to discredit the importance of the work done by the other levels of government, but rather highlights how much interaction people have with the municipal government on a regular basis. Transit services, waste manage-

ment, public health, road maintenance, and city planning are only a few of the vital services within their mandate. By electing strong leaders within our municipality, we can ensure that our city is moving in the right direction.

Despite the common misconception, most students can vote in the city of Hamilton. If you live in Hamilton, whether that be a residence room, a student house, or the home you live in all year long, you are eligible to vote. As a student, if you present a lease or rental agreement, document showing campus residence, transcript or report card from a post-secondary school with a Hamilton address on it, you can cast a ballot.

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What is even more exciting is that if you call another city home and have that address on identification, you are eligible to vote in that election as well. While both elections are happening on the same day, you can vote in one of the elections in the advance polls during fall break, and then vote in the other on October 22.

It is critical that students vote in this election. Last year, City Council passed a targeted by-law enforcement program in the neighbourhoods surrounding McMaster, which used co-op students from Mohawk College to patrol communities with a high volume of student houses to hand-out fines related to property standards. This program was a direct response to long-term home owners complaining to city coun-

cil about students leaving their garbage bins out too long or not cutting their grass. While the MSU fought the implementation of this program via delegations and letters to City Council, it still passed. If more students vote, elected representatives will actively seek our input and keep the interests of students in mind while making decisions.

I do not believe the lack of turnout from students is because of voter apathy. Students are clearly passionate about issues discussed on a municipal level, such as transit, housing, employment, community safety, and sustainability. Instead, I believe the root cause is lack of information and engagement. For many students, this will be the first time voting in a municipal election. To make the process easier to navigate, the MSU has summarized all the informa-

tion on how, when, and where to vote in the Hamilton municipal election at [msumcmaster.ca/macvotes](http://msumcmaster.ca/macvotes). The website has a summary of Ward 1 and mayoral candidates' platforms to help students make an informed decision. The MSU is also hosting a Ward 1 candidates debate on October 16 from 2 PM to 4 PM in MUSC, to provide students with an opportunity to engage with the candidates. On the day of the election, volunteers will be available to walk students to polling locations.

Everyone has a role to play in encouraging youth to get out to vote. It is the small actions of reminding people about the election, talking about the importance of voting, and debating which candidate is best to represent this city that will help increase overall turnout. I hope to see you at the polls!

[msumcmaster.ca/macvotes](http://msumcmaster.ca/macvotes)

The President's Page is a space sponsored and used by the McMaster Students Union (MSU) Board of Directors (BoD) to communicate with the student body. It functions to highlight the Board's projects, goals, and agenda for the year, as well as the general happenings of the MSU.



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