



REPORT

From the office of the...

Vice President (Education)

TO: Student Representative Assembly
FROM: Stephanie Bertolo, Vice-President (Education)
SUBJECT: OUSA Fall 2018 General Assembly Report
DATE: November 21, 2018

Dear members of the Assembly,

This report is to update you on the recent Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance General Assembly, hosted at McMaster University from November 2nd to 4th.

The McMaster Students Union was represented by ten delegates:

- Stephanie Bertolo (Vice-President Education) - Author, Tuition
- Ikram Farah (President)
- Urszula Sitarz (AVP Provincial & Federal Affairs) - Author, Tuition
- Linda Cabral
- Shemar Hackett (AVP Municipal Affairs, SRA Social Science) - Non-voting
- Aleigha Kampman - Non-voting
- Josh Marando
- Leela Raj
- Joshua Yachouh
- Tasneem Warwani (AVP University Affairs, SRA Arts & Science)

The main purpose of the conference was to pass three policy papers: Tuition, Technology-Enabled Learning, and Teaching & Assessment. Additionally, the General Assembly passed a stance on Freedom of Speech and Expression. Delegates from each of the eight member schools came to discuss these policies over three days. The first two days they provided their feedback on the policy in breakout sessions, which are in smaller group setting and not governed by Robert's Rules, allowing students to more easily express their opinions.

On the third day we had plenary, which is similar to our SRA meetings. This is where we formally debated and passed all of the policies. Each year, we invite an alumni of the host Student Union to be the speaker and I was happy Ryan Deshpande, last year's VP Education, agreed to take on the task. As you have likely already heard, plenary, which last year was a maximum of 4 hours, was over 12 hours this General Assembly. It was a long and tiresome process, with a lot of frustration expressed. A good portion of those 12 hours was not spent debating the actual policies or stances of the organization, but rather procedural matters according to Robert's Rules. There was also abuse of Robert's Rules during plenary, where individuals, with extensive knowledge of Robert's Rules, would advance their own political agenda by using Robert's Rules to speak over others

or silence other delegates. The process was disheartening to say the least. It highlighted some major gaps in OUSA that need to be addressed before the next General Assembly. I am working closely with OUSA's Executive Director Sophie Helpard, and President Danny Chang to ensure that Robert's Rules is used as a method to facilitate meaningful discussion, rather than to silence it. They are both in agreement with me that there were major issues presented at that General Assembly and are committed to addressing them. I will be raising these points with the Steering Committee at our next meeting.

The upside of the twelve hour meeting is that the MSU delegation remained incredibly composed throughout it all and were able to effectively advocate on behalf of students. This certainly paid off as we were able to ensure the stances that we thought best reflected and addressed student needs were in all of the policy papers and the Freedom of Speech and Expression stance, which was certainly the most hotly debated item on the agenda.

The policy papers and stances will be available soon at the following link:
<https://www.ousa.ca/policies>

We also decided which policies we would write next term. The final decision was:

- LGTBQ+ Students
- Financial Aid
- Student Employment

The authorship for these papers will be decided later in the term. If you are interested in being an author, let me know ASAP.

At the conference, Andrea Horwath, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the NDP, also came to give a speech and answer questions from the General Assembly. This was an incredible opportunity for not only delegates, who were able to interact with the Leader of the Opposition, but also for the MSU and OUSA to continue to build a strong relationship with the NDP. This will be critical over the next four years and having Andrea Horwath only one riding over is a fantastic asset for us.

Planning General Assembly certainly was tiring and I am thankful that a Vice-President will not have to plan one for another four years. However, it was incredibly rewarding to see it all come together and to show of McMaster and Hamilton to delegates across the province. I am also so thankful for such an incredible MSU delegation, making me and McMaster proud to be represented by them.

Best,

Stephanie Bertolo
Vice President (Education)
vped@msu.mcmaster.ca