

The McMaster Students Union

PRESIDENT'S PAGE



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These past months, the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) has engaged in many conversations surrounding safety, security, and the freedom of expression. The MSU is always working towards creating a safer and more inclusive environment for students. As such, actions, activities, or attitudes that work against that notion should not have a place in our campus discourse. Freedoms of expression and opinion are protected by The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that protection should stand firm at McMaster University. At the same time, the MSU opposes attempts to use the guise of freedom of speech to inhibit lawful, constructive dissent, and or/opposition to ideas, speakers, or groups on university campuses. Freedom of speech does not include hate speech, the promotion of violence towards others, or restricting the right of students to peacefully protest.

Beginning this past summer, conversations surrounding these topics occurred within the SRA, related to the MSU Clubs system and the ratification process of new clubs. Specifically, the SRA choose to de-ratify a group called the McMaster Dominion Society, after startling information became evident following its initial ratification. During the ratification process, the club applicants were explicitly asked if they shared a connection to any third-party group(s). The applicants denied any involvement, but information was later brought forward that indicated a shared connection to a group who espouse and promote xenophobic attitudes. These attitudes have no place in the MSU Clubs system. Thus, the motion to de-ratify McMaster Dominion Society was brought forward and passed at an emergency SRA meeting, called at my behest.

More recently, the SRA has been evaluating the actions of the McMaster Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) and their participation in a February 13, 2019 statement, in which they admitted to having informed the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China in Toronto of an event at McMaster critical of the government of the People's Republic of China. CSSA further declared their intention to monitor McMaster students. Such action poses significant risk to the safety and security of students. As such, the related agenda and supporting documents were posted publicly, including: CSSA SRA Testimony and CSSA Evidence Delegation from the Floor Presentation, which

called for the SRA to de-ratify Mac CSSA. At the September 22 meeting, the SRA found the evidence and arguments compelling and voted in favour of the motion to de-ratify CSSA. CSSA was informed of the decision and offered an option for appeal to ensure due process.

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As neither the Clubs Administrator, nor Clubs Executive Council, has authority to ratify clubs, nor can either appeal SRA motions, it was the decision of the SRA, as facilitated by the Speaker, to allow for an appeal through a delegation to the floor to the SRA. The appeal requested the SRA to reconsider the motion to de-ratify CSSA. The Speaker facilitated the delegation procedure, which allotted a 20-minute delegation and a 10-minute question period. The club requested to be sent questions electronically and were given the deadline to submit answers by Sunday, October 13 to ensure sufficient time for the SRA to review. At the November 4 SRA meeting, yet another delegation and question period was allotted to CSSA and the appeal process was exhausted. The motion to

reconsider the decision failed and the de-ratification was upheld. I encourage folks to reference the statement passed by the SRA at meeting 19K which highlights the reasoning that led to this decision. This can be found on SRA documents at msumcmaster.ca/sra or by viewing the livestream located on the SRA Facebook page.

In a similar vein, a protest in support of the 2019 Hong Kong protests was disrupted on October 22. A delegation entitled Pro-Democracy Demonstration spoke to the SRA on November 4 about the incident, wherein students were peacefully protesting and setting up a Lennon Wall to raise awareness and support. At around 4:30 PM, an individual approached the demonstration and proceeded to rip apart a sign. Doing the same to other signs, the person pushed passed protestors to damage additional material. The individual proceeded to tear three students' masks and threatened protestors. An investigation is in progress, looking into charges of assault, mischief, and uttering threats. The behaviour of this individual is wholly unacceptable and intolerable. The attack of a peaceful protest on campus is deplorable and threatens the right of students' freedoms of expression and opinion.

The SRA stands in solidarity with students peacefully protesting and will continue to be advocates for active discussion and peaceful protest. I encourage students to continue to exercise their rights, reach out when their rights have been infringed upon, and work to enact positive social change.



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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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