



**To all members of the McMaster community,**

In March of 2019, the MSU committed itself to hiring an independent consultant to review all policies, practices, and structures related to the Maroons, as well as the organization as a whole, in regards to sexual violence response and prevention. That process was led by Karen Bridgman-Acker (BA), (BSW), (MSW) – an expert in workplace harassment and human rights investigations and workplace violence risk assessments. Karen was in control of all aspects of the investigation and was given as much time as necessary to complete the review.

The review invited any and all members of the McMaster community to participate and special outreach was directed to current and former Maroons members. Logistically, Karen conducted numerous phone interviews, in-person interviews, and collected anonymous survey data. The review is now complete and was received by the Board of Directors in October of 2019. Over the last several weeks, the Board has laid the groundwork to implement each and every recommendation made within the review and prepared an implementation plan to share with the campus community.

What we learned is that we need to do better. The report highlights that there were people who volunteered or participated in the Maroons, who felt uncomfortable reporting incidents of harassment. The Board of Directors takes responsibility for overcoming the structural shortcomings as outlined in the recommendations. Further, on behalf of the organization, I would like to apologise to the students, volunteers, and staff members who were letdown or left unsupported by the workplace policies of the MSU.

Beginning immediately, the Board of Directors commits to instituting all recommendations made within the report, including:

- *Continuing the probation already in place within the Maroons on an ongoing basis, and extending specific event planning / approval systems to all services.*
- *Conducting the necessary consultations and research to update the current Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Assault Prevention Policy.*



- *Creating a neutral, third-party intake process for disclosures, reports, and concerns relating to harassment, sexual harassment, and workplace violence, in conjunction with the Senior Human Rights Officers and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response resources located in the Equity and Inclusion Office.*
- *Committing to new systems of ensuring all full- and part-time staff, as well as volunteers receive mandatory training at their time of hire and throughout regular intervals during their employment relating to MSU workplace policies, and health and safety policies, while ensuring inclusive practises, accessibility, and sexual violence response and prevention are prioritized.*

I would like to thank everyone who took the time and energy to share information with Karen. I applaud your bravery. In doing so you have helped guide the findings and recommendations that will be instituted by this organization. On a final note, I would like to again reiterate the MSU's condemnation of sexual violence, as well as our commitment to fully implement the recommendations provided by the external review. I would like to reaffirm the Board of Director's commitment to eliminating any barriers to reporting and/or supporting disclosures of harassment or sexual violence inside any aspect of the MSU. I welcome any and all feedback, questions, and discussion regarding the recommendations and action plans contained herein. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

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The MSU's Board of Directors is committed to implementing the recommendations stemming from Karen Bridgman-Acker's investigation and report: "Environmental Audit Report Recommendations McMaster Students Union & the Maroons". The following outlines the specific details as to how the MSU will implement those recommendations.

## 1. Continuation of Probationary Terms

### Commitment to Action:

- A. The Board of Directors will commit to the continuation of the Student Representative Assembly's approved probationary terms placed on the Maroons passed by the Student Representative Assembly on April 7, 2019 on an ongoing basis. In addition, the Board will ensure that all MSU services will operate under parameter that include:
  - i. No service will be permitted to hold a non-approved event
  - ii. Any individual who is accused on sexual harassment or assault will be dealt with in accordance to the MSU's *Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment Policy*
- B. Through Executive Board, the Board of Directors will continue to monitor the Maroons, as well as all MSU services, to ensure they are properly fulfilling their respective mandate.
  - i. The Services Committee will review services on a scheduled basis, to ensure they are operating in accordance to their respective operating policies.

## 2. Policies on Workplace Violence, Harassment and Sexual Harassment

### Commitment to Action:

- A. The Board of Directors commits to establishing new processes for intaking cases of harassment, sexual harassment, and workplace violence. In conjunction with the McMaster's Equity and Inclusion Office, including Human Rights Officers and Sexual Violence and Response Coordinators, the MSU will conduct consultations and research on best practices in order to update the current Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Assault Prevention Policy.
- B. The Board of Directors has engaged in the University's scheduled review of its Sexual Violence Policy and will look to partner on campus education, training, and investigation practices. The MSU's goal will be to generate a clear policy that encompasses definitions, processes surrounding reporting, the support offered to students and staff, and the disciplinary procedures following reports will created. This policy will explicitly indicate one neutral, objective third party with who to report concerns, thus ensuring confidentiality and continuity for the process. The Board of Director's will look to EIO's Sexual Violence Prevention and Response resources to serve as the aforementioned third party.



### 3. Appointment of a Respectful Workplace Advisor or Ombudsperson

#### Commitment to Action:

- A. The Board of Directors recognize the need for a neutral, third-party representative for whom disclosures, reports, and concerns can be brought. Beginning immediately, the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office inside the Equity and Inclusion Office, along with the Student Support and Case Management Office will be highlighted as points of disclosure for all staff and volunteers. These offices are neutral third parties, external to the MSU, who have the ability to conduct investigations and execute enforcement of University policy. These resources will be explicitly stated in the *Workplace Anti-Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment Policy*.
- B. The Ombuds Office will be highlighted as a resource for anyone who feels that the stated offices, or the MSU, are not acting in accordance with policy and procedure.
- C. In the medium term, the Board of Directors will conduct an organizational-wide review, in which it will be a priority to establish a suitable role within the MSU to better support staff and volunteers who make a disclosure.

### 4. Harassment Training

#### Commitment to Action:

- A. Currently all paid staff are expected to complete 8 training modules (AODA, Due Diligence, Ergonomics, Fire Safety, Health & Safety Orientation, WHMIS, Slips, Trips and Falls, Violence and Harassment Prevention in the Workplace) within Mosaic. Furthermore, some specific part-time staff receive Anti-Oppression Practices training, Peer Support training, and Bystander Intervention Training. Moving forward the MSU will ensure all volunteers and part-staff will complete the Mosaic training modules, while conducting yearly in-person training sessions for full-time staff.
- B. The Board of Directors will investigate new ways to conduct training for all volunteers and staff, whether that be through an external system or through avenue to learn ([avenue.mcmaster.ca](http://avenue.mcmaster.ca)) to ensure that training on inclusive practises, accessibility, and sexual violence response and prevention are prioritized in all facets of the MSU.
- C. The MSU is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers receive mandatory training at their time of hire and throughout regular intervals during their employment. Implementing standardized training across all full-time, paid part-time, and volunteer part-time staff will require outreach with University partners to ensure that training is feasible, consistent, and of quality.



## 5. Selection and Training

### **Commitment to Action:**

- A. The MSU commits to engaging with stakeholders on not only the creation of new policy, but also on recommendations regarding future training practices.
- B. The Board of Directors are currently in the process of establishing training sessions for full-time staff, and this will be instituted on a yearly basis.
- C. The MSU will conduct a Needs Assessment for all staff and services to understand the gaps in our training processes. From this assessment we will work with stakeholders to institute new training and update policies. We will ensure that our policies and training processes will be within alignment with established best practices as well as the Universities policies.

### **Additional Commitments to Action:**

Prior to the completion of the review, the MSU took additional steps outside of the scope of the current investigation.

1. The MSU will develop an onboarding resource that informs all staff and volunteers of organizational policies, their rights under the MSU and University Anti-Violence, Harassment, and Sexual Assault, as well as resources that exist for survivors.
2. The Board of Directors will not permit the use of the MSU accounting department for the organization or collection of personal finances related to service specific excursions or social events, such as a trip to Blue Mountain by members of the Maroons.
3. The MSU will not approve events or gatherings that
  - a. Contain alcohol outside of license establishments
  - b. Encourage or promote excess drinking at licensed establishments
  - c. Create the perception of free alcohol being given away (e.g. drink tickets)
    - i. The MSU has already modified the planning process for annual events such as Eggnog, Sangria, and Student Recognition Night to meet this expectation.