

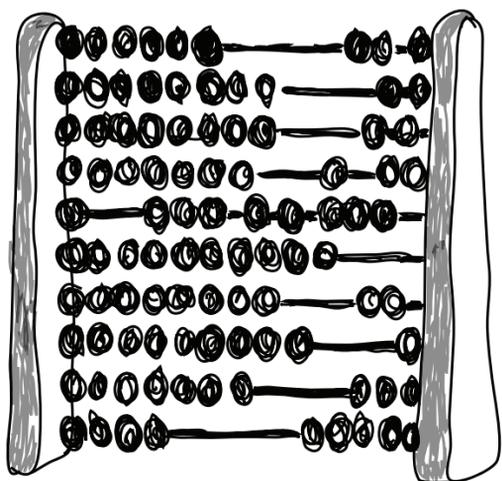
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President's Page



THE AUDIT IS IN

The audited statements of the last fiscal year have been released - Andrew follows the money trail and discusses how your MSU services are doing financially



The MSU audit, conducted by chartered accountants from Deloitte, has been released and I encourage everyone to visit

the MSU website and check it out in its entirety. On a whole, the audit reveals that the MSU is doing rather well, and that the deficits we saw last fiscal year are quickly being turned around.

Many of you will have an abundance of questions regarding the MSU's performance in the previous year, so I would like to take a moment to explain some of the numbers. The MSU lost approximately \$356,089 in the last fiscal year, mostly due to the \$447,816 loss we experienced from our operating fund. I realize this seems steep, however there are some simple explanations for the loss, as well as effective plans already in place to remedy the situation. Furthermore, these numbers have a tendency to overshadow the positives we witnessed in the audit, numbers that the MSU is proud to announce.

The first issues are some key anomalies that have almost single handedly brought the MSU into an operating deficit last year. Over the past

two years, we have been significantly under charged for the services provided by the Ombuds office. It was our responsibility in 2008-2009 to pay them back. Therefore, Ombuds cost us \$100,000 more last year than it will in future years. Furthermore, in 2008-2009 the Marmor cost the organization almost \$200,000. As a result, it was the decision of the Student Representative Assembly (SRA) to combine the Marmor publication with the Underground Media and Design Centre. By placing the Marmor under direct, full-time staff supervision, it is expected that it will become much more cost-effective and consistent in the future. Finally, the biggest hit we took last year was a loss at Quarters of slightly over \$375,000. For those who don't know, the MSU made a significant investment in renovating Quarters into Twelve Eighty and I am happy to report that the new venue has already shown positive figures in its very first month.

Outside these unique circumstances over the past year, the MSU has done very well. CFMU 93.3-your campus radio station-continues to thrive, as their surplus has increased by over \$25,000. Some of our other business units also grew; both Short Stop and Union Market saw increases in total

sales, with Union Market alone posting an impressive \$54,340 in sales, which is a significant growth from the 2007-2008 fiscal year. Another promising finding was that the MSU Child Care Centre posted positive figures for the first time. With Executive Expenses down by \$45,000 as well, the MSU has demonstrated a very responsible and effective way of making financial decisions.

In addition to testing and reporting to us on our financial data, Deloitte assessed some of our relative strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations accordingly. Their first recommendations have to do with control factors. This refers to the MSU's ability to have more consistent, thorough policies surrounding how we handle our money, including counting, depositing and reconciling. This also pertains to a long-term backup plan, which is essential should the MSU find itself in a crisis situation. Our recently hired Comptroller has already taken a lead on addressing some of these issues and has so far done a terrific job in implementing Deloitte's suggestions. Their second set of recommendations has to do with communication. This pertains to the timely communication of decisions made by the SRA to the full-time staff

that are responsible for implementing said decisions. The Vice-President Administration has taken on this task personally and is currently developing a communication policy to address this issue.

It would be naïve to assume that the MSU hasn't shown weakness in the past, but it's important to identify the ways in which we can act and improve the organisation. Every year the MSU evolves based on what we have learned from the year previous. Building upon our strengths and learning from our weaknesses is the reason that we have thrived financially this year, and the reason we will continue to see improvements even in the case of unforeseen expenses. If you take the time to look over the audit, I expect you will share my sentiment that the long-term wellbeing of the MSU's financial situation is very optimistic.

I would like to emphasize that the MSU is accountable to its members, the undergraduate students of McMaster University, and you can rest assured that the student fees you contribute are in good hands.

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STRIKE WATCH '09

CUPE 3906 in legal position to strike

Chris explains that the student experience is at risk if CUPE and the University cannot reach an agreement



In the recent Globe and Mail University Report, M c M a s t e r ranked second in Canada with regards to student satisfaction,

compared with other large-enrolment schools. There are a number of reasons for MAC's status, but I'm going to pick out one motivation as fundamentally important: We as students of McMaster University value the student experience.

Research has shown that opportunities for collaborative learning within a small group of peers is highly beneficial to student engagement. McMaster has been a leader in this regard for a number of years, having basically pioneered inquiry and problem-based learning. This environment has made us a school that produces more satisfied students than most other schools our

size. I am explaining all this because the learning environment that we assign so much value to is being threatened. CUPE Local 3906 and the University have yet to sort through differences in the current round of contract negotiations for TA's and RA's. Come Monday of next week, the undergraduate student body could be facing a TA strike.

So here's what you need to know if there is a strike:

- Classes will continue. The University has indicated repeatedly that classes taught by professors will not stop.
- Tutorials and labs *may not* run. You should also expect slowdowns with regards to receiving marks.
- Some TA's may choose to continue running their tutorials, you will want to find out if your TA plans to continue teaching in the event of a strike.

The MSU has taken an impartial position with regards to all details of

contract negotiations. During a strike, we will be advocating that both sides return to the bargaining table, and take the process seriously for the benefit of all undergraduate students. We will also be providing objective information on our website, as well as through this page.

The HSR will not run on campus if there is a strike. Instead, busses will be re-routed so that they run adjacent to campus. Take an earlier bus than normal to ensure you get to campus on time.

Students who rely on vehicular transportation should expect slowdowns while entering campus, as picketers are empowered to stop cars for the purposes of distributing information. Please plan accordingly and leave yourself more time to enter campus.

At this point, I am uncertain as to whether we will have a strike, as there are two days of negotiations left. My personal plea to the negotiators on both

sides is that they bargain in good faith, with the knowledge that inflexibility will create a situation that is detrimental to all students. I caution both sides from the use of unnecessary hyperbole, as undergraduate students are smart enough to ignore remarks concerning the quality of education at McMaster, from people and parties willing to jeopardize our learning environment and place our education at risk.

Please refer to the MSU website, the McMaster Daily News and the CUPE Local 3906 bargaining blog for updates regarding the status of a strike. Check throughout the upcoming weekend, as CUPE Local 3906 will be in a strike position as of early morning Saturday, October 31st.

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Your MSU representatives want to hear from you. Look out for Vish on campus in his legendary Kermit the Frog hat on **Friday, November 6th**, from 12:00 - 3:00 P.M. to chat with him about your student issues.