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President's Page

WHAT TO LOOK (OUT) FOR IN THE NEXT MSU PRESIDENT

On the eve of Presidentials, Chris and Vish encourage students to make an informed decision



Every year since I've been on campus, the MSU has been criticized by election campaigns in some way or another for not doing a good enough job looking after the student interest. This has meant that every single year, the tone and tenor of most Presidential campaigns has been "I know you've been let down before, I'll be the one that actually does stuff like fix MUGSI/SOLAR, increase HSR presence, and make campus more sustainable." Thus far, this election has proven to follow the same general trajectory.

Trust me, if a promise sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If it has been promised for years and never delivered upon, there's a reason for it. Here are some things to watch out for in during the campaign period:

Lofty Promises: Change is hard to administer in a university environment, and it happens over a long period of time. Anyone promising that they'll be able to completely change the way the MSU or the University works (particularly if that change involves money), is getting themselves into a bigger fight than they might realize. This is especially true since resources are scarce both for the MSU and University.

No Mention of "How": It's nice to think about goals, but how many candidates actually have an action plan in place to accomplish their platform? Do they know who in the University or the government to talk to? Do they know who the MSU's allies are on the issue?

No Mention of Work Already Being Done: If it's a student concern, chances are someone in the University community is already working on it. Have candidates made efforts to research their platform goals and address what work is already being done by the MSU and other campus partners?

Gimmicks: Every smart campaign will have strategies to make their candidate fun and appealing. This is to be expected, but ensure you don't base your vote on how fun someone seems. Very little about the MSU Presidency involves being a fun person. Can you imagine this person commanding respect from the 200+ employees of the organization?

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It's disheartening to see how misrepresented the role of MSU President is to the student body. Even with the backing of the whole organization, the MSU President often fights uphill battles both internally and externally to keep the organization relevant and effective. The idea that one person's efforts will fix all student concerns flies in the face of all of my experience with the MSU. However, with hard work and realistic goals, I strongly believe one

President can make a tangible and lasting positive impact on student life.

It may be difficult to identify which candidate appeals to you, but with a general idea of what the role of the President entails, it can hopefully make your decision more informed when you vote. Each and every candidate brings something different to the role and I would like to provide you with some personal insight into what to look for in a candidate before voting at the polling stations on February 3rd and 4th.

The cursory glance: Having an organized team, well designed posters, a well constructed website and general campaign messaging are all good indicators of how much thought and preparation they have put into this election. Observe the candidate as well - their general demeanour when not engaged in a debate or a classroom visit can also be telling - are they usually smiling and content or stoic and unapproachable?

Being the face of the organization: Regardless of the 9a.m. to 5p.m. work week, as the figurehead of the MSU, the president cannot separate themselves from their title - do you feel comfortable with this person representing you at all times? Looking beyond the perceived work week, this person has a life outside the office and will go out. Boardroom or club, this individual's actions will be constantly criticized.

Standing their ground: There will always be competing interests. The president needs to have the ability to stand their ground when faced with difficult situations. Articulating student issues is the job of the president, and depending on the environment, it can be easier said than done. Can you see the candidate standing their ground on student issues in the face of conflicting interests?

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IMPORTANT FINANCIAL UPDATE



As many of you may have heard, the MSU was selected by the Ontario Ministry of Revenue for an Audit regarding the remittance of

our PST. The general results of the audit pertaining to our day-to-day operations were fine, and our operating budget saw only a small amount of PST owed from the last seven years outstanding. It was however our Health Plan fund that saw the most discrepancy and as a result, a large sum of money outstanding.

From 2002 to the end of last fiscal year, the MSU collected but failed to remit PST on our Health Plan annually. This has resulted in a maximum assessment of \$377,000 owed

plus interest. Although this number seems rather high, it should be noted that this is money we collected and simply failed to remit. Instead of paying our PST, surpluses were accumulated and invested under the parameters of our organizational policies. The returns on the investments have been approximately 4% annually.

The difficulty however, and the biggest concern regarding this figure, is the nearly \$100,000 in interest payments now owed. The interest was approximately 8% annually on the monies that were not remitted, which when taken into account of the 4% investment interest previously mentioned, the total hit to our organization is approximately \$50,000 over seven years.

We are continuing discussions with the Ontario Ministry of Revenue

regarding the assessment and hope to have the matter resolved by late February.

I would also like to stress that this does not significantly hinder our organization financially. Although it is a substantial amount, our Health Plan reserve is currently valued at over \$720,000. Furthermore, our operating budget will be impacted by a one time charge of \$39,000 from PST owed and its corresponding interest which again, is manageable based on the strength of our organization's financial position. As at the end of last fiscal year our operating reserve was slightly over \$2.1 million. Therefore, there will not be an impact to the delivery of student services.

This has become a priority for myself and the Board of Directors. We are still in the process of appealing and have sent the results to Deloitte (the

firm who produces our annual Audited Statements) to be looked over by their tax and commodity specialist.

We have paid the amount owed in order to halt further interest charges; should we be successful in our appeal, we will be credited back those funds. Furthermore, Deloitte has been contacted for feedback on how this happened, who is responsible and how to ensure it does not happen again.

The Board of Directors and MSU executive appreciate your patience as we continue to investigate this situation. Students will be updated as soon as the information is available.

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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 **Tuesday, February 2nd**, from 3:00 - 5:00 P.M. to chat with him about your student issues.

CONGRATULATIONS TO
ADRIAN EMMANUEL

Winner of a \$400 Titles gift certificate for finding all 20 OUSA blue chairs!

Each empty chair represents those students who were unable to access post-secondary education.
<http://www.ousa.ca/>

