

Better together

A plan to merge MUNACA and AMUSE into one strong new union.



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MUNACA : McGill University Non Academic Certified Association

AMUSE : Association of McGill University Support Employees

PSAC : Public Service Alliance of Canada

INTRODUCTION

Since 2012, both MUNACA and AMUSE have voted in favour of resolutions to initiate discussions regarding merging the two associations into one. Recently, discussions between our representatives and our regional PSAC representatives (meeting on 29 Nov and 6 Dec of 2012, 3 Apr 2013; and 27 Feb, 3 March, and 29 April 15 May of 2014) have resulted in an agreement in principle touching on the various issues detailed in this report. This report was prepared by Kevin Whittaker and Jane McAslan from MUNACA, Amber Gross and Justyn Teed from AMUSE, and Alexandre Leduc from the regional PSAC office.

HISTORY

MUNACA was accredited in 1994. Since the beginning, McGill has tried to weaken the union by multiplying new job titles and removing positions from the union's certificate. Two main strategies were used by McGill to do so. First, they transformed a lot of positions into managers' positions, the famous "M's." By labour jurisprudence, managers can't be members of a union. Of course, many of these new M positions are not real managers under the law. MUNACA and PSAC are working together to address this issue.

The other strategy used by McGill was to transform permanent positions into casual ones in order to pay the workers a lot less money and offer them almost no benefits at all.

PSAC, with its unionization expertise, was able to organize the casuals in 2010, and AMUSE was born. The new casuals' union signed their first contract in 2012.

The unionization of casuals with PSAC was one of the reasons that MUNACA chose to affiliate with PSAC, so that support staff and casuals could be part of the same large union and work together.

There may be a few hurdles to overcome with a political merger. The two units must have solid communications and share information regularly, which may take some time to establish. Members may feel that they have lost their identity. Change is never easy but it is clear that more and more casuals are being used to fill MUNACA positions. The best way for us to combat this is to have knowledge about where and who these casuals are, where MUNACA positions have been cut and what is the work that is being done. The executives of both AMUSE and MUNACA, as well as the PSAC, feel that with a political merger, we can correct this problem and add more strength to both units.

“POLITICAL MERGER”, A DEFINITION

A political merger is when two different unions merge their structure and bylaws into one but conserve their pre-existing collective agreements for their separate units. A complete merger is when two different units have a single collective agreement.

The political merger can be done anytime. A complete merger can be done only during periods clearly defined by the Quebec labour code.

The plan proposed here is a political merger. Thus the next round of bargaining would be done side by side, but AMUSE and MUNACA members would vote separately for their respective contracts.

SHARED VALUES

Before discussing structure, bylaws and dues, we thought we needed to agree on a series of shared values. We understand that all of these values are not necessarily shared by all members, but we think that, as a group, they are the core of a good and effective union culture and it is our hope to build the new union on this solid foundation.

The new union will be driven by values already held by MUNACA and AMUSE:

Solidarity: Solidarity amongst ourselves, with other McGill groups, with other workers and with the Montréal community.

Education: We need to put in place an ongoing education program for our members.

Information: Well-informed members are the backbone of a good union.

Transparency: The union works for its members; it should be open and transparent to them.

Democracy: A union is more effective when the members are involved and take part in the decision-making process. The general assembly is therefore the highest decision-making body in the union.

Professional labour work: Providing quick and efficient answers to members' questions regarding their labour rights is the fundamental basis of a union

Fight job instability on campus: In order to maintain unity within the membership and to protect and improve the working conditions of McGill workers, the new union will make sure to fight precarious and unstable working conditions on campus.

Social Justice: Members want better working condition but they also want justice for other workers. They belong to a larger movement of unionized workers in which the new union should play an active role.

UNION DUES

Even though the political merger entails two separate contracts, all members should be paying dues at the same rate. AMUSE dues are currently set at 1.64%, and MUNACA's at 1.6%. We foresee no reason to raise them, so to ensure that the new union has a common dues rate, we will reduce the AMUSE dues to the level of MUNACA's.

In other words, there would be no dues increase resulting from the proposed merger.

BUDGET

AMUSE's budget is approximately \$80,000 and MUNACA's is about \$330,000. Both

unions' expenses are largely due to liberation, staff, training, retainer with legal firm, external legal counsel, etc. No major changes are foreseen here, but obviously greater resources will mean better service to members. Of course, there will be more members to look after, but more resources will give the union the ability to perhaps hire more staff or to liberate more members for union duties.

EMPLOYEES

MUNACA has a full-time office manager, a full-time labour coordinator and currently a casual file clerk. AMUSE has 2 or 3 part-time outreach coordinators. All those positions would remain under the new union, with the possibility of also creating a new position. Further discussions will need to be held concerning the exact tasks of this new position but it might be related to general coordination or mobilisation. Of course, all of these employees would now be working on behalf of the entire membership.

STRUCTURE

This proposed new union structure is based on the history of MUNACA and AMUSE and on the experience we see in other similar unions in the university sector. The objective is to have an effective and democratic union where the decision-making process is open, inclusive and most importantly, where all members feel represented.

Assembly: The consensus is that the General Assembly (GA) should remain the highest decision-making body of the new union. Further discussion will be needed on what a reasonable quorum would be for the new General Assembly. The GA meets at least once a year to discuss various issues such as the budget and the annual report of the executive and committees. Special assemblies can still be organized as outlined in the bylaws.

Union council: A new Union Council will replace the existing Board of Representatives, C, L and T Councils and the Steward meetings. As well as being the most common structure for similar unions both in the university sector and elsewhere, it is more streamlined, less cumbersome, and provides a better check and balance for the union,

while integrating members from both unions to work together for their common good. Sharing problems and finding solutions together, in the same forum, is the best way to make the merger a success.

The new Union council would be composed of 33 members. The C, L and T representatives are based on the proportion of members they actually represent; to these we have added the Casuals, the Floor Fellows and 2 more executives. The Union council meets at least twice a semester and more if needed. They inherit the responsibilities of MUNACA's BoR and Councils, and AMUSE's BoR.

	Proposition	% of seats	% of seats excluding executive (total 26)	Nbre members	% of members
Executive	8	23%	-	-	-
C representatives	7	21%	27%	800	29%
L representatives	2	6%	8%	70	3%
T representatives	5	15%	19%	500	18%
Casuals	10	29%	39%	1300	47%
Floor fellows	2	6%	8%	70	3%
total	34	100%	100%	2840	100%

Executive: The executive runs the everyday business of the union. It is important for the executive to reflect the diversity of the membership so everyone feels represented. We do hope that one day this diversity will be realized naturally. Nonetheless, we thought that, at least at the beginning, it was important that we reserve some seats to have safeguards against too many of the same group getting elected.

We suggest an 8 member executive composed of 3 positions open to all members, 2 positions reserved for casuals members (AMUSE), 2 for MUNACA members and 1 for floor fellows. The President and VP Labour Relations (MUNACA) would be liberated full time. The VP (casuals) and VP Labour Relations (casuals) would both be liberated part-time. The other exec positions would be liberated approximately one day a week.

President (All members)

Vice-President (casuals)

Vice-President (MUNACA)

VP/VPLR (Floor fellows)

VP Finance (All members)

VP Communication and mobilisation (All members)

VP Labour Relations (casuals)

VP Labour Relations (MUNACA)

Committees Currently existing committees: MUNACA: Communication, Grievance, Health and Safety, Social Justice, and Social. AMUSE: Bylaws, Equity, Finance, Health and Safety, Mobilization.

Some committees may merge: Health and Safety (MUNACA + AMUSE), Social Justice (MUNACA) and Equity (AMUSE), Communication (MUNACA) and Mobilisation (AMUSE), etc. Others will still exist and integrate members of both units. The Grievance committee is the only one that needs to be in the bylaws due to legal issues related to the duty of representation.

Elections: The consensus of the committee is that elections should proceed as already outlined by MUNACA bylaws. Members receive their ballot vote at work or they can come to the union office to pick one up. Then, members send the ballot by internal mail, or bring it directly to the union office. This system seems simple and effective so we see no reason to change it.

NAME

We briefly discussed a new name. We would like to have the word “union” in it. AMUSE delegates understand MUNACA members are more attached to their name because of their strike and long history. The ideal, then, would be to find a name that sounds close

to MUNACA. We discussed the idea of asking the memberships for suggestions for the new name. We have plenty of time for that, there's no rush.

NEXT STEPS

On the basis of this document and the Q&A attached to it, both unions will consult their respective memberships about the proposed merger. Public info-sessions will start early this summer. This consultation will take several months, probably extending from the summer through October.

After this consultation process, the committee will meet again and adjust the proposal to accommodate the concerns and feedback members have brought forward.

This final proposal will be submitted to a vote in the respective general assemblies of MUNACA and AMUSE around the end of 2014 or beginning of 2015. In the event of a positive vote on both sides, the committee, with the help of PSAC professionals, will supervise the technical tasks necessary to make the merger a reality and a success.

CONCLUSION

We hope this document helps you get a clearer picture of this important project. While there is obviously room for improvement from the feedback of our members, we sincerely feel the work done by this committee is a solid base for a better-organized union that will be able to face McGill with new strength and determination to stop creating precarious work that weakens the union's position on campus.