

# Q&A about the proposed merger of AMUSE and MUNACA



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\*This proposal is a work-in-progress. If you have questions that were not answered in this document, please send them to [info@munaca.com](mailto:info@munaca.com) or [pres.amuse@gmail.com](mailto:pres.amuse@gmail.com).

## What is a merger?

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A merger is when two different unions join together because they share a common employer, common interest and/or common work. The proposed merger here is a political one, meaning that the units will retain their own collective agreements.

## Is this common at McGill? In other unions?

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At McGill, AMURE is a merged union with two units (research assistants and research associates) that have separate contracts but share a common bargaining table and resources to run the union. AGSEM is a union composed of different bargaining units as well. With the recent unionization of Floor Fellows, AMUSE also manages two bargaining units.

Composed unions are quite common in North America. When workers share the same employer, the same work, same goals, they tend to share a similar union structure.

## How does it help? Why are we doing this now?

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The main advantage to merging now is to become more powerful when we go back to the bargaining table in the years to come. The 2011 strike taught us that we need more bargaining power in order to make McGill move on issues. Waiting will not make us more effective. By improving working conditions for

casuals, we can put pressure on McGill to stop the conversion of permanent positions into casuals. Both groups would profit from this situation.

We need to become better organized if we want to achieve this goal. The merger is a good way to move forward on this issue.

## Why are we separated in the first place?

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“Divide and conquer” is as old as it is effective. McGill has become quite good at using this tactic. Since MUNACA was accredited in 1994, McGill has been trying to diminish the power of the new union by creating new job titles – casuals and M’s - outside MUNACA’s certificate. The number of casuals and M’s has risen remarkably, especially in the last few years. In 2010, casuals unionized under AMUSE-PSAC. The following year, MUNACA signed a service contract with PSAC resulting in full membership in 2012.

Having the support staff and the casuals separated into two different unions is an historic error we should try to correct.

## Since when has the merger between MUNACA and AMUSE been discussed?

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We have known for years that there are concrete disadvantages in having separate unions as we have now. As casuals do very similar jobs to regular support staff, McGill is slowly but surely converting permanent positions into casual ones. The result is more precarious work and weakened unions.

Since 2011, casuals have been unionized with PSAC. The transfer of jobs from the MUNACA bargaining unit has diminished since then, but in order to reverse the stream, we need to go further. The merger is a good way to start the work necessary to close the breach McGill opened years ago. Therefore, resolutions

have been adopted at the 2012 General Assemblies of both MUNACA and AMUSE to begin open discussions regarding a merger.

The first meetings occurred in late 2012 but then paused with the change of PSAC regional representative. They restarted in late 2013, ending up with the *Better together* document released for consultation during the summer of 2014.

## Who are the casuals? What do they do?

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AMUSE represents between 1300 and 1400 non-academic support staff at McGill who perform work considered temporary or seasonal. Casual workers are used to fill gaps in the workforce and have the same job descriptions as MUNACA members. Many MUNACA members actually started their McGill careers as casuals!

A lot of AMUSE members are students working in the bookstore, athletics, and libraries; a lot of Work Study jobs are also with AMUSE. However, about a third of AMUSE's members are not students and many of these members have worked at McGill for years.

A large minority of AMUSE's membership are workers replacing MUNACA members on leave. When a MUNACA member goes on a developmental assignment, disability, or parental leave they are usually replaced by a casual. These AMUSE members (we call them "MUNACA replacement workers") perform the exact same job as MUNACA members, and work alongside members of MUNACA for the duration of their contract.

Unfortunately, many departments at McGill use casuals on a much more permanent basis, hiring large numbers of casuals instead of creating better-paid permanent MUNACA jobs. By merging, we hope to coordinate a response to this

trend, protecting the permanent jobs that already exist and working to create better jobs for long-term casuals who currently have no path to a permanent position.

## Who are MUNACA members? What do they do?

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MUNACA also represents around 1400 non-academic support staff. MUNACA members work as Clericals (C's), Technicians (T's) and Library Assistants (L's) in offices, labs and libraries all over campus, just as AMUSE members do. They may be full-time, part-time or sessional; they may be permanent or on research funds. In general they have better pay and working conditions than casual workers; this is why McGill would prefer to hire casual workers.

## Is the merger inevitable? Is this a done deal?

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No. The merger will only proceed if both MUNACA and AMUSE members cast a majority vote in favor of the merger in their respective general assemblies. A detailed proposal, written by representatives of both unions, will be sent to the members well before a vote takes place. This will ensure that everyone will have time to ask questions and make up their own minds about this important project.

The consultation process will take place several months before we come to a final vote in the general assemblies. This project is an important one and we need to take the time necessary to ensure that every member understands what is at stake here.

## Is the merger going to affect my working conditions?

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We definitely hope so! Becoming stronger together will help our brothers, sisters and friends at the bargaining table obtain better working conditions for all of us. We do hope the new union will be able to quickly propose an action plan to fight precarious jobs on campus.

Nevertheless, the next round of bargaining will be done separately, meaning that each group will vote on their demands and whether they accept the final deal or not. Each group will retain its own collective agreement.

## Is the new merged union going to be run by students?

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First, a third of AMUSE members are not students. They do almost identical jobs to MUNACA members.

Furthermore, not all students think the same. It would be almost impossible for ALL students from AMUSE to gather and impose a unique candidate for any position. The goal here is to work together in a cooperative, not competitive manner. McGill is trying to push us against each other. Let's prove to them solidarity works better.

The common proposal includes a structure with safeguards to ensure both previous groups are well represented. For more details, please consult the document **Better together**.

However, the President position is a full-time position, so only someone that is able to commit their entire work day to the job can run for it.

Prohibiting a member from running for president because he/she is a student would clearly be against the charter of rights.

## Is this going to affect my dues?

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No. There is no plan to raise the dues as a result of the political merger. The general assembly will always remain the place where this kind of decision is

made. In the event of the merger moving forward, a new budget would be submitted to the members at the new union's general assembly.

## What challenges would the new merged union face?

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The main challenge is probably going to be to manage the political differences between the groups. The average age of MUNACA's membership is higher than that of AMUSE, which implies different life priorities and concerns.

Both groups have preexisting union cultures, especially MUNACA. Merging the two cultures may be a challenge - but an interesting one.

MUNACA and AMUSE are already managing diversity within their ranks (gender, sexual orientation, cultural minorities, etc). The challenge will be to manage this diversity on a somewhat larger scale so everyone in the union feels properly represented.

\*For a more detailed version of the merger project, please consult the **Better together** document.