General Assembly Meeting Minutes  
Hybrid: Zoom and In Person: Quiet Room, Multi-faith center 
Friday, October 27, 2023; 5:30 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.

Meeting Called to order by chair at : 5:38 p.m.

1) Meeting comes to order

Review of Meeting Etiquette

The chair of the meeting first went over some basic meeting etiquette with the attendees prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Neelofar, A., asked if any guest can propose a motion or only UTGSU Assembly Members can do so. The chair explained that only the Course Union Representatives and Assembly Members can propose a motion. However, motions proposed are ineffective until it has been further investigated and passed by the Board of Directors (BOD) at the next BOD meeting which was scheduled for Oct 31, 2023. He further added that, guests who may have motions can forward it to their Course Union Representatives for them to have it proposed on their behalf as this meeting is not intended for the UTGSU general membership.

Christiana, M. was curious to know how the General Assembly Members can voice their concerns about some of the motions that are proposed for the upcoming BOD meeting. The chair clarified that Course Union Representatives have the opportunity to propose agenda items during the session for the “Adoption of the Agenda”. This comes after the equity statement has been read. He explained that when this item is successfully passed or approved by other members, it will be further discussed as part of the agenda at the BOD meeting.

An in-person attendee asked if guests are allowed to vote in this meeting. The chair answered by saying that guests cannot vote at this meeting; instead, they are allowed to vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Another in-person guest asked that in an occasion where a proposed motion is not deemed necessary for discussion at the BOD meeting, can it be taken off the agenda. The chair responded by explaining that in
such an instance, a motion must be passed at the Assembly meeting to not have those motions considered by the BOD. The BOD in turn must approve that motion in their meeting before it can be taken off the agenda.

a. Equity Statement (Commitment)
The Chair asked for volunteers to read a paragraph each of the equity statement. Volunteers who raised their hands were called upon to read a paragraph each.

b. Adoption of the Agenda (Discussion and Decision)

**MOTION**: BIRT the UTGSU Assembly Members approves the agenda for October 27, 2023 Assembly Meeting as presented. Moved by Robyn, L., seconded by Ayesha, K. Motion carries with majority.

Amendments of Agenda

Robyn, L. proposed the following motions to be included in the agenda:

BIRT that the Assembly proposes the following motions for consideration at the next Directors’ meeting:

WHEREAS the Executive of the GSU currently only has 3 of 6 positions filled,

WHEREAS the Board of Directors of the GSU currently only has 8 of 38 positions filled,

WHEREAS these Directors were elected with a turnout of 5% of the GSU membership,

AND WHEREAS the agenda for the Board of Directors meeting on October the 31st contains motions suggesting large-scale bylaw and budget changes,

**MOTION**: BIRT the Board of Directors does not enact any large-scale bylaw or financial changes until the next Meeting of the Members and by-elections.

**MOTION**: BIRT the Board of Directors increases transparency by opening their meetings to course union representatives.
MOTION: BIRT the Board of Directors drafts language for a clear recall process of Directors to be motioned at the next Meeting of the Members.

These motions were seconded by Christiana, M. (online) and Mark, A. (in-person). Since there were no discussions on the proposed motions, the chair went straight to voting. Motion approves with majority.

Christiana, M., also requested for the amendment of the agenda to include the following items:
Motion to recommend to the Board of Directors to vote against the motions proposed for the Board of Directors meeting by Friedemann Krannich and Chris Rodgers that pertain to:

i) Reallocation of GSU funding to increase course union funding
ii) Removal of UTGSU stances from policy book (policies I1 to I13)
iii) Condemnation of Hamas without nuance

These items were seconded by Robyn, L. Since there were no discussions on this item, the chair requested for a vote. The motion passes with majority.

Ashley suggested to the chair that proposed motions in the future must be read out loud for those who are not in the position to read from the chat.

Robyn, L. also suggested that the meeting be extended to 7:30 p.m. given that it is 6 o'clock but the agenda had not been adopted yet. This was seconded by Zachar, DW. Thirty-seven members voted IFO of the motion and thirty-seven others voted against the motion. Motion fails.

Harshvir, B. also requested for the agenda to be amended to include the item below:

MOTION: The GSU should vote to stand in solidarity or issue a statement to stand in solidarity with undergraduate peers at the Mississauga Student Union who issued a statement on the 10th of October, 2023 that condemned the ongoing Palestinian crisis and the atrocities committed against civilian life by the Israeli apartheid government.
This was seconded by Ayesha, K. Motion carries with majority.
Rui, X., asked what happens if they are unable to discuss all the agenda items by the expected meeting closing time. The chair explained that in that case, the motions that are not discussed will be carried over to the next meeting.

Ashley, again suggested that since the agenda items are often shared with members ahead of time, they should endeavor to submit their amendments prior to the meeting to ensure the maximum use of their time. The chair acknowledged the suggestion and further added that people are at liberty to still add on agenda items during the meeting.

Chris, R. also suggested that a motion be added under the ‘other business’ item on the agenda to condemn all civilian lives that have been lost in all international wars.

**MOTION:** BIRT the UTGSU condemns all killings of / loss of civilian life in international conflicts.
Moved by Chris, R. and seconded by Mark, A.
In the absence of additional items to amend the agenda, the chair requested for votes on the adoption of the agenda.

**MOTION:** BIRT the UTGSU Assembly members approve the agenda for October 27, 2023, Assembly members meeting as amended. Motion passes with the majority.

c. Seating Guests

The chair asked for votes to confer on all guests seated with speaking rights.

**MOTION:** BIRT the UTGSU Assembly Members move to seat all guests with speaking rights. Moved by Robyn, L., and seconded by Thomas, D. Motion carries with majority.

Adam asked how guests are identified especially for those on zoom. The chair asked all guests on zoom to indicate it by attaching ‘guest’ to their names.

2) Introduction and Reports
A) Welcoming the attendees and introduction (Information)

The chair indicated that this item had already been addressed at the beginning of the meeting.

B) Executive Committee Updates (Information and Discussion)

The chair took the first turn to introduce himself. He revealed that he is the VP Academics for Division 3 & 4. He went ahead to describe what his portfolio entails including advocacy for graduate students in the health sciences and engineering departments. He added that he has so far been successful in assisting about 19 students who have been experiencing severe issues with their departments. His main initiative this year has been a food banking initiative for graduate students that need assistance in this aspect. He has been partnering with other groups to ensure that this initiative is successful. He further informed the Assembly Members that all the executive reports are published on the UTGSU website, and encouraged members to visit the website.

Zoya, T., the VP Finance was the next to present an update to the assembly members. She revealed that she has been mostly focused on the summer term; disbursing the major awards that were left from last year. She has also been working keenly on the Graduate Community Development Fund (GCDF). She mentioned that the BGSCB committee was formed to review applications for the Black Graduate Excellence Awards. She admitted that two rounds of students conference bursary have been completed already and they are currently working on a third cycle. She added further that the UTGSU is in its audit season, hence, she is working closely with the finance administrator, meeting auditors and familiarizing herself with the entire process. Again, she mentioned that she is also working together with the finance administrator on the 2024 budget for the UTGSU. The first draft is almost ready and will be presented to the finance committee in the coming weeks. In addition to the above, Zoya, T. informed the Assembly that she has held two finance committee meetings where they have predominantly discussed donation requests from the membership for events or initiatives they need extra donations for.

Finally, the VP External, Neelofar, A. introduced herself to the Assembly members. She hinted that she served in the capacity as the VP Finance last year. According to her, most of her work is related to partnering with the external stakeholders as well as supporting the course unions and being on different committees including Student Life and Hart house. She further added that her responsibilities go beyond her role to include the smooth administration/ functioning of the administrative team as she is the only executive member from the previous executive team. She does this by integrating the bylaws, policies and ensuring that
the activities of the UTGSU executive team are in coherence with the bylaws and policies. She ended by extending an invitation to individuals or groups who would like to discuss subjects related to their caucuses, course unions, levy groups or any other thing that they believe she can be of support to.

Lily proposed two motions: 1) to have the meeting extended to 7:30p.m and 2) to move the other business item to the top after the Executive Committee updates.

The chair asked for a seconder and an onward vote on the proposed motions.

Travis, intercepted with a point of order. He clarified that since the motion had been voted on earlier, it cannot be voted on again. The Chair agreed, and also went on to clarify that the agenda items cannot be moved anymore.

Christiana, M. moved that the meeting be extended to 7:25 p.m. Since that was a different motion, it was seconded by Priya. Christina, M. highlighted that there were time sensitive motions with severe consequences that needed to be discussed urgently, hence, the extension of the time will be relevant towards ensuring this.

Amir, (Guest) said some other students have other commitments with their unions for which they had to be present for an event happening at 7:30pm.

The chair explained that even if they vote IFO of the motion, they can exit the meeting before it ends. Ashland, commended the chair for doing his best to accommodate the large membership present. However, she added that because of time constraints, the chair has the prerogative to put a maximum time limit on a particular agenda. The chair consented to this.

The chair finally asked the members to vote on the extension of the meeting time to 7:25 pm.

MOTION: BIRT the UTGSU Assembly Members extend the meeting to 7:25pm. Moved by Christina, seconded by Priya. Motion carries unanimously.

C) Course Union Updates (Information and Discussion)
The chair asked if any course union has updates they would like to share with the Assembly Members. No member motioned to provide updates. The chair then encouraged the Course Union Representatives to contact them whenever they have any questions, concerns or updates.

D) Motion to receive all other reports (Decision)

The chair asked the Assembly to vote on the Executive reports that were presented earlier since no other Assembly Members had reports to present.

**MOTION:** BIRT the Assembly Members accept the reports of the UTGSU Executive Committee. Moved by Ruth, and seconded by Emmanuella. Motion carries with majority vote.

3) Any Other Business

A) **MOTION:** BIRT that the Assembly proposes the following motions for consideration at the next Directors’s meeting:

WHEREAS the Executive of the GSU currently only has 3 of 6 positions filled,

WHEREAS the Board of Directors of the GSU currently only has 8 of 38 positions filled,

WHEREAS these Directors were elected with a turnout of 5% of the GSU membership,

AND WHEREAS the agenda for the Board of Directors meeting on October the 31st contains motions suggesting large-scale bylaw and budget changes,

1. **MOTION:** BIRT the Board of Directors does not enact any large-scale bylaw or financial changes until the next Meeting of the Members and by-elections.

2. **MOTION:** BIRT the Board of Directors increases transparency by opening their meetings to Course Union Representatives.

3. **MOTION:** BIRT the Board of Directors draft language for a clear recall process of Directors to be motioned at the next Meeting of the Members.
Moved by Robyn, L. and seconded by Rui, X. Motion carries unanimously.

Jesse argued that according to the bylaw, any guest can attend the BOD meeting if they register. Hence, he is curious to know the purpose of the motion. He queried, are you amending the bylaw or are you proposing that the BOD considers amending the bylaw? He therefore sought clarity to the motion proposed.

Robyn, L., responded by saying that with the second motion, she would confirm the exact bylaw which says that the BOD are the only members entitled to be at the meeting. The intent of the motion is to have that amended in the bylaws to include that Course Union Representatives are also entitled to be present at such meetings. The spirit of having more open meetings is what she intends to achieve with the motion.

Regarding the third proposed motion, Chris, R., also questioned if that was also a bylaw amendment.

Robin, L. responded by saying that that is the intention of the motion. Robin, L. further stated that there has been a letter circulating through some Course Unions detailing a set of concerning motions to be introduced at the upcoming BOD meeting on October 31, 2023. She added that more specifically, there is a motion in this letter to increase the headgrant fund from 24% to 50% of the membership revenue. According to Robin, L., from an outsider's perspective, this looks like it is effectively decreasing the UTGSU operation budget by a third. This motion does not seem to be accompanied by any supporting documentation detailing the effect this would have on the UTGSU. This issue is of concern as it can push the UTGSU into complete dysfunction and ultimately put the organization, healthcare, student support and collective power, at risk.

She indicated further that at the bottom of this letter shows signatures of over 90 members of the union mostly consisting of Course Union leaderships and UTGSU Executive Committee Members have signed their names in opposition to this motion. She further highlighted that it is not clear if this motion has been put forward in bad faith or negligence but given that the UTGSU has a history of individuals attempting to undermine the function of the union and even attempting to dissolve it, it is important that the general membership and the course union heads task the BOD with responsible and transparent governance. This is especially relevant at a time when the BOD only has 8 of the 38 elected positions filled; making it particularly vulnerable to any actions from the membership.

This, however, accounts for the spirit of these motions, she said. Hence, discussing these amendments and clarifying what that actually means in practice is expedient, Robyn, L. added.
The chair notified Robyn, L. that most in-person attendees questioned that with the motion that proposed for Course Union Representatives to be present at the BOD meetings, will these people be seated as guests with speaking rights or not?

Robyn, L., responded by saying that the purpose is to have the Course Union Representatives attend as guests with speaking rights.

Zahra, W. suggested that the motion proposed should be edited to capture the clarity given by Robyn, L. in response to the questions asked.

Owen, M., spoke in favor of the motions proposed. He argued that it would be great if the membership received more funding from the UTGSU in the short term. However, looking over these motions, he believes that messing with the UTGSU finances will be extremely problematic especially considering the long-term ramifications.

Therefore, going about this in a democratic and open way, is the right thing to do. Owen, M., again added that it is super important that these motions are approved or voted in favor of to ensure that large-scale financial decisions are made in an open and democratic way and the whole membership is involved in the process, not just an elected few.

Adding on to the discussion, Adam argued that it is likely that the same group of people who had made that decision previously will be tasked with making a decision as to whether to act on this proposed motion. So, democratically, it makes more sense to actually handle this through a special meeting with the membership or probably ban the directors from making major financial decisions for the UTGSU alone, he says.

Robyn, L., added that although the setup of the UTGSU clearly invests power to the BOD to vote on motions alone, Assembly Members should still be making these motions to signal to the BOD that they are paying attention to all happenings within the union and will also hold them accountable, too.

Chris, R. made a point of order to remind guests and assembly members present to address all questions to the chair and not to individuals directly.

Shalom, B., also affirmed support for the motions put forward by Robin, L., and further proposed an amendment to the motion to require a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the BOD to be elected and present to pass any large scale financial decision.
MOTION: BIRT any large scale votes be moved until after a by-election and introduce a bylaw that requires a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the BOD to be elected and present to motion, or pass any large scale votes (including the financial decision proposed). Moved by Shalom, B., seconded by Mark, A.

Prior to a vote on the motion, Chris, R. pointed out that any by-election needs a notice of two weeks, and the bylaw mentions that any motions that are proposed by the assembly should be discussed and voted on in the next BOD meeting which is scheduled for October 31, 2023.

Robyn, L., also highlighted that a fifty percent requirement might be quite unreasonable given the present low turnout of the BOD. Hence, she is unsure if the proposed amendment will strengthen the previous motion as it seems unattainable.

Votes to add Shalom, B., amendment to the original motion failed.

58 members voted IFO of motions moved by Robyn, L., while 1 member voted against the motions. Motion carries with majority.

B) Motion to recommend to the Board of Directors to vote against the motions proposed for the Board of Directors meeting by Friedemann Krannich and Chris Rodgers that pertain to:

i) Reallocation of GSU funding to increase course union funding
ii) Removal of UTGSU stances from policy book (policies I1 to I13)
iii) Condemnation of Hamas without nuance

Moved by Christiana, M., seconded by Shalom, B.

Chris, R. made a point of information to suggest that the official tab with the Google Doc must reflect the change in the meeting time to the extended time just so everyone knows the duration of the meeting.

Mark, A. following up on the proposed motions, requested for text of these policies to be pasted in the chat. The chair offered to provide a summary of these policies which are already available on the UTGSU website under the Policy and Bylaws. According to the chair, the policies at the bottom of the page are the UTGSU stance policies. He further cited two of these stance policies: the UTGSU stands for women’s right of their body and women’s right of abortion.
Robyn, L., clarified that the motion on the removal of UTGSU stances from the policy book was specifically in relation to I1 to I13. She argued that there is a motion before the BOD to take out the official opinion of the UTGSU. However, she pointed out two important policies: the I3 (democracy and University governance) policy that highlights that the union is a democratic organization and is an advocate for students and advocates for democracy within the University; and then the education fees policies. This is the official stance that the union does not support increases to education fees. Although she admitted that there may be varying opinions to these motions she does not think it is necessary to get rid of these motions.

Ayesha, K. proposed that if the Assembly Members are required to cast a vote on this motion, then, they should be given some time to read through these policies, first. She explained further that in her opinion, voting on this motion now may not be the ideal thing to do, however, since she does not know how the UTGSU structure works, she can only recommend to the chair to allow them vote later.

The chair clarified that this is the first time for many assembly members here. He went further to explain that the proposed motion is not necessarily changing policies but to suggest to the BOD to not remove these policies from the policy book.

Christiana, M., also explained that the reason for the proposed motion is to avoid the possibilities of these policies being completely erased from the policy book at the October 31, 2023 BOD meeting without any input from the Assembly Members.

Ayesha, K., then sought clarity of what voting IFO of this motion would mean. The chair explained that voting IFO this motion means that you are proposing to the BOD not to remove these policies. Robyn, L. also added that this particular motion is in response to a motion put forward for discussion at the October 31, 2023 BOD meeting which is suggesting to the BOD to remove these policies mentioned above from the policy book. Therefore, by proposing this motion, the intention is to recommend to the BOD not to remove these policies from the policy book as suggested by the previous motion.

Adam also hinted that no matter the decision of the BOD, it is ineffective until it has been approved by the members at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM). He emphasized that all amendments to the policies and bylaws need to be approved at the next AGM, hence Assembly Members will have a say, regardless.
Neelofar, A., also confirmed Adam’s submission and further added that such kind of motions and discussions actually exhaust the time and it deviates from the more pressing or important issues that the BOD meeting should be discussing. So, she really appreciates that this motion was brought up in the Assembly Meeting.

A vote was cast on the motion. Fifty members (50) voted IFO the motion and one (1) member voted against the motion. Motion carries with majority.

C) **MOTION:** I motion to ask the GSU for a vote to stand in solidarity with our undergraduate peers in The University of Toronto Mississauga Students’ Union (UTMSU), who issued a statement on October 10, 2023 that condemned the ongoing dehumanization of Palestinians and the atrocities committed against civilian life by the Israeli apartheid government. Moved by Harshvir, B., seconded by Mark, A.

Alex, R., recommended that some of the polarizing language should be removed in order to shift attention from the students union to focus more on the innocent civilians who are being killed. Therefore, he proposed that the motion should be amended to remove all forms of polarizing language.

Mark, A. advised that it would be more appropriate to have the actual text and then somebody that wants to amend it can then say which section to be amended directly instead of just talking about it by itself.

Syeda, A. also intimated that refusing to acknowledge and address that Israel is an apartheid government is a disservice to the graduate students at the UTGSU who have knowledge and have access to resources, and it is also a disservice to the students that we speak for.

Tim, G., also confirmed that many international and human rights organizations within Israel have all referred to the state as an apartheid state, so, the use of apartheid in his opinion is not polarizing or particularly ambiguous. Therefore, maintaining apartheid in the proposed motion in solidarity with UTMSU who was also brave enough to say the same thing is recommended.

Mark, A. motioned to have the meeting extended to 7:40 p.m. due to relocation from the in-person meeting room.

**MOTION:** BIRT the UTGSU Assembly Members extend the meeting to 7:40 p.m. Moved by Mark, A., seconded by Christiana, M. Motion carries with majority.
Discussing the previous motion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Alex, R., elaborated further that speaking from the perspective of a journalist, the news cycle will be affected greatly if polarizing words are used. Considering the flaws in the way headlines are made and stories are directed, and as someone who has covered these kinds of issues in the past, he would advise that the UTGSU focuses on the innocent civilians who are currently being killed. According to Alex, R., apartheid remains a polarizing language in his opinion, thus, he strongly recommends its removal from the motion.

Hai also reminded all the Course Union Representatives that this is a very sensitive issue in which they may not have all the information needed to effectively represent their respective unions. Thus, voting must be done based on the opinions of their course union membership and not their individual opinions. To explain further, Hai clarified that although he is very supportive of the statement, the use of some polarizing language for which the general consensus of the students he is representing has not been sought, he cannot vote IFO of the motion on behalf of his course union.

Ava, F., submitted two points of arguments to the chair. By drawing on debates from the Black Lives Matter movement, she admitted that no one wanted to make the polarizing statement that it was an issue of white supremacy and that the US is built on these fantasies. In her opinion, all of these issues of social activism are polarizing. However, that does not prevent societies from speaking about it and speaking truth to power. The second point made was that in politics a representative speaking for your constituents does not necessarily have to check in first with them. The belief is that you have been mandated by the people to speak on their behalf, hence it will be strange to see any political institution or educational institution where representatives move around to seek constituents’ consensus or opinion on an issue before making a decision. According to Ava, F., the focus should be to clarify why innocent lives are dying, and trying to blur the lines of that will not be helpful to anyone, especially the Palestinians.

Votes were casted to amend the motion to remove polarizing language from the motion.

**MOTION:** I motion to ask the GSU for a vote to stand in solidarity with our undergraduate peers in The University of Toronto Mississauga Students’ Union (UTMSU), who issued a statement on October 10, 2023 that condemned the ongoing dehumanization of Palestinians and the atrocities committed against civilian life by the Israeli government. Moved by Alex, R., seconded by Mark, A. The amended motion fails.

Votes were casted on the original motion.
MOTION: I motion to ask the GSU for a vote to stand in solidarity with our undergraduate peers in The University of Toronto Mississauga Students’ Union (UTMSU), who issued a statement on October 10, 2023 that condemned the ongoing dehumanization of Palestinians and the atrocities committed against civilian life by the Israeli apartheid government. Moved by Harshvir, B., seconded by Mark, A. Motion carries with majority.

D) MOTION: BIRT the UTGSU condemns all killings of/loss of civilian life in international conflicts. Moved by Chris, R., seconded by Mark, A.

Shalom, B. argued that he does not see the need to repeat a statement that is widely accepted by all humanity. Hence, they do not think that having this motion in the policy discussion is relevant.

Shalom, B. also added that the motion minimizes current happenings across the globe. According to her this is an unjust and unfair statement that generalizes that all lives matter and ignores specific genocide issues occurring across the world.

Tim, G., also consented to submissions of previous speakers and further mentioned that, he does not think that anyone was worried about the UTGSU supporting civilian life, hence, this motion is pretty pointless.

Jesse also argued that so much time has been spent on Israel-Palestine war in the past, causing the UTGSU to deviate from addressing pertinent student governance issues, yet the UTGSU has not been able to make any significant impact on the matter. Therefore, he thinks that the UTGSU’s unionized voice or opinion on this issue does not really matter and taking stances on such controversial issues can be problematic.

Chris, R., clarified the intention for this motion by stating that taking very strong stances on such sensitive issues as the Israeli-Palestinian war can be controversial. Irrespective of individual members' view, the union must be more impartial and take a stance that upholds all human lives.

While some assembly members thought that the motion was redundant and that discussing it was just a waste of time, Ava, F. intimated that having this discussion on a Friday night obviously shows that the UTGSU membership cares. She elaborated further by stating that this a safe space where students’ protest, movement
and actions take place. Since the UTGSU has an obligation to stand up for human rights, it is important that these discussions are held and students do not remain silent about such injustices.

Chris, R. called the question. This was seconded by Mark, A.

The chair asked for a vote to be casted IFO of going to vote on the motion. 20 people voted IFO of while 3 people voted against the motion to call the question. The motion passes with majority.

**MOTION:** BIRT the UTGSU condemns all killings of/loss of civilian life in international conflicts. Moved by Chris, R., seconded by Mark, A. Motion fails.

Meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

**SMB**

Susana/ Secretary

Amir Moghadam

Amir, M./ Chair