

**TERRY
CHRISTODOULOU**

'26

A very special thanks to the MSU folks involved in the various consultations that helped make this platform possible

To my lovely team, thank you for all the effort you continue to exert for the campaign and the amelioration of campus, next dinner is on me

Jill Knight, of the Waterloo University Students Union, who was central in making STEP possible

Finally to Andrew Mrozowski, whose ambitious weekly article requirement forced me to sift through libraries of MSU documents in order to have something interesting to write about for the campus newspaper

Preamble

Your voice, not their resume.

I ran for MSU president this year and came up short.

But campaigns can be informative experiences. What I saw wasn't apathy from students, but a distance from the structures that claim to serve them.

But the office of MSU President isn't the only forum for change.

While the SRA can only manage single digit electoral support, as a body they hold real legislative authority. Used properly, they have the ability to meaningfully impact the student experience.

I'm not willing to throw in the towel just yet.

My vision remains unchanged, tangible student involvement through STEP, improved transparency, and delivering campus-wide projects that reignite the vibrancy of McMaster culture. This isn't business as usual. It's about building a practical, accountable MSU that reflects student priorities.

Like most folks, I'm not a career insider. I've watched decisions get made that don't reflect what the average student actually needs, all while costs climb and participation limps.

Change requires persistence. That's why I'm running.

Land Acknowledgment

We at McMaster University gather on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, and within the lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement.

To acknowledge this territory is not enough. We must also recognize that colonialism continues to shape our institutions and our politics. As university students, we benefit from stolen land, and have a responsibility to act beyond words.

That means supporting Indigenous governance, returning decision-making power to Indigenous nations, and advocating for partnership, on campus and beyond.

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ENGAGEMENT

Student Trend and Engagement Polling (STEP)

Why is MSU governance surprised that participation and engagement is low when they refuse to directly engage with our voices?

It's time they started listening.

Conducting an annual poll to survey student priorities is a crucial first step to bridging the obvious divide. Not only would it allow our governance to understand support for policy, it would also provide the ability to map public priorities and justify spending directions.

Throughout MSU history, our governance has relied on anecdote and vibes, exacerbating blind spots and funding without understanding whether students actually care.

Our leadership should be driven by students, not inertia. With STEP, for the first time, we can provide our campus with more targeted events, more efficient spending, and a democratic MSU that caters to its assembly.

Future Presidential and SRA candidates can mold their policy platforms around student opinions, ensuring that our government accurately reflects the student body and amplifies representation, especially for marginalized and alienated groups on campus.

This isn't just a theory, the Waterloo students' union has already been polling successfully. Engagement, voting and advocacy have all had measurable improvements since their system was implemented.

Why shouldn't the MSU do the same?

Complete a survey, get a gift card. Meanwhile the MSU will make use of a new advisory committee for analysis. That means more targeted, engaging events, streamlined democratic governance, facilitated advocacy initiatives and more efficient spending of our money. We can even get your thoughts on who you want performing at HOCO.

For the first time, we'll be able to point to our MSU and say: this is what we asked for. STEP is how they stop guessing and start delivering.

ENGAGEMENT

Reemphasizing Campus-Wide events

Our campus events represent moments of real connection, but they should feel like a celebration, not a test of patience.

Right now, our Light Up the Night festival tends to buckle under its own popularity. Amenities are stretched thin. The lines are simply way too long.

By expanding sponsorships and strategic partnerships with companies aligned with MSU values, and significantly increasing our events budget, we can scale up our biggest traditions to actually meet student demand. Who says the Holiday Market needs to end at 4:00?

At the same time, greater MSU investment in daytime and alternative events throughout the year can ensure that whether you're into live music, food festivals, or cultural showcases, there's space for you on campus.

On day one I will get started on ramping up the support for our events. No more waiting. The end goal is simple: creating a culture that feels vibrant and worth showing up for.

Revitalization of TwelvEighty

Arguably the greatest amenity on campus, TwelvEighty remains incredibly undervalued. Unfortunately, while they offer some of the best food in Hamilton and the cheapest pint I've seen in Ontario, their early closing time hinders their ability to serve students.

Closing at 5:00 pm means that for most students, TwelvEighty is removed from the campus dinner economy, and getting a drink at the bar is out of the question for all but our most courageous.

By extending their hours, and increasing advertisement for the venue, TwelvEighty can take advantage of a greater share of the dinner crowd, cutting into their six figure deficit and also expanding affordable food access on campus.

Pairing these new hours with consistent MSU events at the venue allows us to finally have a viable space on campus, hosting Leafs games, comedy nights, and live music. First event during September? Y2K theme, Y2K prices.

Why wait in line at Snooty's and pay double?

ENGAGEMENT

Plain English Budgets and Transparency

Please keep in mind, I'm in social sciences, not business.

But exploring the endless sea of spreadsheets, SRA meetings and financial statements that make up the MSU's communication with the student body should be worth a credit or two.

While the student fee breakdown is visible on the MSU website, the \$167 organizing fee (a massive chunk of the MSU's operating budget) is only elaborated upon in the raw data of excel spreadsheets and auditor reports.

Engagement should be the MSU's biggest concern, but access to information is a fundamental prerequisite. We deserve financial data in readable formats, and I will ensure the MSU is accountable to its assembly and enhance financial transparency, including data relating to reserves and investment holdings.

Renewing the SRA

The policy-making wing of the MSU also suffers from similar transparency concerns. Information on how they vote individually, what they vote on, who they are or any information on their platform might as well be occult lore.

By revitalizing communications on lifeless SRA social media pages, providing candidates tangible data through STEP, implementing new voter incentivization programs and retooling their election process so that they are held accountable to their electors, we can say goodbye to the 4 percent turnouts and develop an engaged legislative branch where campaign promises become testable claims year over year.

Students aren't disengaged because we're apathetic, we disengage because the system makes caring labor-intensive and unrewarding. It's about time that changed.

EFFICIENCY

Increasing Ad Revenue

As a result of the burgeoning MSU spending to bring HOCO back to campus and other initiatives, the expense spending spiked for 2025-2026.

With an expended drop in enrollment next year, this becomes increasingly unsustainable.

The most feasible way to expand and maintain our campus-wide events is partnership with outside companies that align with MSU values to cut these costs. By exploring these options, along with increasing readership and access to analytics for the recently consolidated CFMU, we can continue to increase revenue across the board in order to maintain the same level of services.

All without increasing costs for students during an affordability crisis.

Strategically Reviewing OUSA Membership

Advocacy is a critical facet of undergraduate expression.

Paying six figures yearly for our OUSA membership might not be.

The MSU certainly has a duty to its members to engage with provincial parliament and represent the interests of McMaster students, but we've spent well over a million dollars on on our affiliation with OUSA over the last decade and have very little to show for it.

Outsourcing our provincial advocacy is a great way to build a resume, but the returns have been vague, symbolic and marginal. Publishing a policy paper as a response to Bill 33 is at best too little too late.

OUSA's model depends on being palatable to the government, and their over-reliance on political connections rather than student mobilization paired with weak democratic legitimacy erode the viability of the institution. Truthfully, there's also nothing they advocate for that we couldn't manage better internally and at a fraction of the cost, providing advocacy opportunities to McMaster students, not full-time OUSA office workers.

There's a reason UFT, TMU, and UOttawa aren't part of the club.

I would strongly advise the SRA to organize a referendum and put this issue into the hands of students for the first time. In tandem with STEP, we can ensure MSU advocacy reflects lived student priorities, not backdoor meetings for a select few.

ACCESSIBILITY

Equity Advisory Committee

While the MSU already makes use of a committee centered on increasing the diversity and representation of student government on campus, our governance lacks a body to review MSU policies, budgets, and initiatives through an equity lens.

That should change. McMaster University already has two advisory committees fulfilling similar roles (PACBIC, Equity & Inclusion Office).

In tandem with evidence based analysis through STEP, this new committee would provide written recommendations and flag unintended exclusion or structural bias within our governance.

This would force all major MSU initiatives to include a short equity impact note, either accepting or rejecting the committee's policy recommendations.

This committee would further develop our institutional competence and streamline diversity and inclusion on campus. That way we can avoid structural blind spots and further reinforce the strength of our campus diversity. Not to mention helping amplify indigenous and marginalized students voices on campus.

OUTREACH

Continuing Successful AI Integration

One of the greatest advocacy success stories of my undergraduate career at McMaster has been the Popovic era of AI integration.

I will continue to advocate for McMaster students, to ensure AI will not be used for grading and continue to work with University bodies to ensure that students are not punished for AI use that wasn't clearly defined in course rules.

The current guidelines on AI remain provisional and subject to change, and I want to ensure that student interests remain central to the ongoing conversation surrounding AI integration at McMaster.

Bill 33

It's no secret how much I loathe this piece of legislation.

I won't mince words, this is an opportunity for Ontario's conservative government to grab at power they don't have, and was previously ruled beyond their jurisdiction by the Supreme Court.

I don't think there's space for provincial involvement in campus affairs and my platform is centered around our right to self-determination. STEP and my initiatives to develop our campus democracy clearly demonstrates to the Ford government that we can handle our own governance.

The goal of the legislation seeks to reduce mismanagement. My initiatives provide the transparency, engagement and data backing necessary to ensure that any form of provincial involvement in our student union is redundant.

We don't need provincial supervisors managing our fees. We need effective representation. That's what my platform provides.

When student institutions don't ask students what they want, it becomes easier for others to decide for us. The best defense against Bill 33 is not a press release, it's a student union that clearly represents its members. A student union powered by data.

A student union for its students.