**Final Report of the**

**AMUSE-MUNACA Merger Committee**

Presented November 2014

***Members of the Committee***

MUNACA: Kevin Whittaker, Jane McAslan

AMUSE: Amber Gross, Justyn Teed

PSAC: Alexandre Leduc, Jean-Michel Fortin

***Background and Reasoning***

For around a year now, delegates appointed by MUNACA, AMUSE and PSAC have been working in a special committee in order to look into the details of a merger proposal between two major PSAC locals at McGill.

This merger proposal was initiated after an exploratory vote was taken in both AMUSE and MUNACA general assemblies almost two years ago. It was understood at that time that we needed to fight back against the loss of permanent jobs to casual positions. MUNACA was rapidly losing membership - a process which was accelerated due to the voluntary retirement program last year. Many of these open positions have not been filled, causing remaining members to take on more work. When the positions *are* filled, it is often done with casual workers and not full-time MUNACA members. AMUSE members, of course would rather have access to good permanent positions instead of a growing number of casual jobs, and so AMUSE also wants to stop this process.

What does this look like in terms of numbers? In 2009, there were 1050 casual (AMUSE) and 1600 permanent (MUNACA) positions at McGill. Five years later, in 2014, the number of casual jobs on campus has risen to 1400 while permanent positions have dropped to 1300. That means jobs on campus are becoming more precarious, lower-paid, and provide far fewer benefits overall. This is not the kind of workplace we want at McGill. It hurts permanent MUNACA members just as much as it hurts AMUSE members. We need to fight back against this ‘casualization’ of the McGill workforce, both to provide better, permanent jobs for members of *both* our unions, as well as to increase our collective strength in a time of austerity budgets and sustained attacks against working people.

The best way to stop this is for MUNACA and AMUSE to work as closely as possible. Both groups need to be constantly aware of job abolitions and replacements, and respond together. To do this efficiently and in a way that is fair to all of our members, our executives, Boards, and stewards need to work together on a daily basis – coordinating two unions with two membership bases to tackle a problem that is central to both is simply too hard. With a much closer organizational relationship, we could more accurately and efficiently identify which jobs are AMUSE positions and which are MUNACA, and ensure every situation is handled with the interests of all members considered at once. An administrative merger like this means that the bargaining units (AMUSE, MUNACA and Floor Fellows) will maintain their own collective agreements, but we can coordinate and work together as we each bargain separately, supporting our respective members with increased numbers. In the end, this type of merger will increase our bargaining power. It is the opinion of the members of this committee that a merger of this type is the best way to protect all members’ rights in the future and produce an even stronger union and better workplaces.

It must be stressed that if nothing is done soon to stop McGill from replacing permanent positions with casuals, the number of permanent positions will decrease to the point that there will be no full-time positions and MUNACA’s numbers and position choices will reduce to zero. Full-time casual workers will have their already few opportunities for permanent positions diminished much further, and part-time casual workers will feel the strain of higher workloads without increased pay or benefits.

The proposed merger is not a magic solution to all of our problems. Some challenges remain ahead if we decide to accept the merger: we will need to adjust our mutual union culture, finding ways to work together and build strengths out of our differences. Yet throughout this consultation process, we have been able to work together well and feel confident about our relationship going forward.

We strongly believe that a political merger is the best solution to fight back against McGill and protect our jobs and working conditions. Maintaining the status quo allows McGill to continue reducing our jobs and limits our future growth. Choosing the merger, however, shows McGill that we will fight as one to protect our units, and the work that belongs to us now and in the

future!

***Common Questions and Concerns***

Since the committee released the detailed “Better Together” documents on the merger proposal, several public info-sessions have been held, including one at Mac campus. We received a few recurring questions in those sessions. Some of the more frequent questions are:

***Will the merger affect my collective agreement?***

No. The proposed merger is an administrative one, meaning each group will retain its own collective agreement. We will share a structure, a budget, employees and a common will to fight back McGill on job insecurity. This means that each unit’s (AMUSE, MUNACA and Floor Fellows) members will independently vote and decide on their unit’s Collective Agreement. As well, as each collective agreement is independent of each other, no one group can cause another to walk out on strike. Each group would have to independently decide that on their own.

***Will it affect the bargaining process?***

No. The next round of bargaining, which is to begin soon, will be done separately. In other words, each group will vote on their own demands and whether they accept the final deal or not. We *will* invite a member of the other unit as an observer to take notes on how McGill acts, analyse where there is room to make gains, and to show solidarity.

***Will it affect my dues?***

No. AMUSE dues are currently set at 1.64%, and MUNACA’s at 1.6%. As we have said previously, analysis of the current budgets of MUNACA and AMUSE leads us to believe there is no reason to raise them. However, to ensure that the new union has a common dues rate, we will reduce the AMUSE dues to the level of MUNACA’s. Of course, the general assembly will always remain the place where this kind of decision is made.

***Why can’t the two unions just communicate more often to solve the problem we face?***

Some people asked if we could just communicate better between AMUSE and MUNACA, instead of taking such a big step and merging the two unions. If it were as easy as that, the committee would agree. However, we are facing a coordination problem, and the time it takes to maintain *two* unions – two boards, two executives, three councils, three collective agreements, two of every committee – means that there are so many duplicate bodies it is impossible to keep communication going constantly between all the groups. We have tried! But the casualization of McGill’s workforce is happening so fast in every workplace in the university, a real barrier to our response is how difficult it is to maintain communication when there are two separate unions trying to counter the problem. We coordinate our efforts as best as we can, but the reality is we can’t do enough right now as two separate unions.

***Final Proposal***

**WHEREAS** the membership of MUNACA and AMUSE approved the commission of a committee to determine the feasibility and benefits of a potential merger of their unions;

**WHEREAS** the committee has met over twenty times, hosted seven informational sessions on both campuses, and presented its proposal to both MUNACA and AMUSE executive committees, Board of Representatives, and memberships;

**WHEREAS** permanent jobs at McGill continue to be abolished and replaced with precarious and low-paying casual employment, to the detriment of both MUNACA and AMUSE members;

**WHEREAS** the merger committee, after extensive study and consultation, believes the best and only option remaining to stop this trend is a political merger of the two unions;

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** MUNACA commits fully to the merger project; and

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Board of Representatives call a Special Meeting of the MUNACA membership to present and vote on the proposed merger project;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** upon a positive vote from each union the merger committee be mandated to prepare new by-laws for presentation and endorsement by the combined membership of both unions in Spring 2015, at which point a new, merged union will be founded; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the by-laws be written so as to accurately reflect the structure proposed by the merger committee in the June 2015 “Better Together” document.