

## **SSMU's Guide to Writing Legislation**

Prior to each meeting, the Speaker of Council will announce an official call for agenda items along with a due date. This deadline is final and unforgiving – all final versions of an agenda item must be submitted before this deadline or risk not being included on what is always a very full agenda. Resolutions can be fine-tuned, reworded, etc., at the meeting, but no new resolutions will be accepted after a cut off-date decided by the Speaker of Council. Those resolutions that comply with these guidelines will be the only ones on the agenda for the meeting.

### **Resolutions are comprised of five main components:**

#### ***1. Title***

The heading serves as identification for the resolution and informs the reader of the topic to be discussed as well as where, or at which meeting, the resolution is to be submitted.

#### ***2. Background***

The background is not mandatory but is helpful in cases where there is a relevant history in SSMU about the topic that the delegates would benefit from knowing.

#### ***3. Preamble***

The preamble builds the argument for why the action in the operative clauses should be taken. Clauses in this section are called preambulatory clauses or *whereas* clauses. For each preambulatory clause, the first phrase following 'whereas' should set the 'tone' for the statement that will follow. Tone has to do with the strength of your conviction about the topic. Therefore, the stronger the phrasing, the stronger the conviction about an issue. \*See Appendix B for a list of suggested preambulatory words.

#### ***4. Action***

- Co-signed: A short list of people after the author. The purpose of the co-signers is to act as a support group for the author during debate. A strong voice in debate is far more important than a name on a piece of paper. Co-signers can be individuals, boards, or taskforces.

\*\*As a general rule, pieces of legislation should be long enough to cover the subject but short enough to maintain interest. If in doubt, aim for the shorter side, especially in the background and preambulatory clauses.  
One can make more arguments in debate.\*\*

### **Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Accuracy**

A piece of legislation with poor grammar and spelling will slow down the meeting and is likely to be poorly received by the assembly. Please use a dictionary and other resources to proofread and hone your writing. Some suggested sources beyond dictionaries: "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell and *Elements of Style* by Strunk and White.

A resolution is, in fact, a very long sentence, and thus requires special standardized punctuation. Please follow the example from Appendix A – "Resolution Regarding the Colour of the Shatner Building."

Accuracy is paramount in the meeting. Be sure to check all of your arguments and assertions to make sure they are indeed fact. It is to your benefit to cite all facts and information within your resolution, especially statistics or elements of the SSMU Constitution and Bylaws. Use footnotes or in-text citations as appropriate.



## Appendix B: Suggested Preambulatory Words

|               |               |            |              |           |             |
|---------------|---------------|------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| Acknowledging | Contemplating | Fulfilling | regard for   | Realizing |             |
| Affirming     | Convinced     | Fully      | reviewed     | Recalling |             |
| Alarmed       | Declaring     | aware      | viewed with  | Rec ling  | awRe-nrmnxd |
|               |               |            | apprehension |           |             |