



**SENATE AGENDA COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES**

Friday, October 4, 2024 from 12:01-1:06 pm In-person BRCK 2001 and via Zoom

Attendees

- Senators** J. Gilbert, J. Lorien, N. Pindell
- Ex Officio** B.-A. Bacon, L. Burr, J. Fox (Vice-Chair), P. Harrison, K. Lo, R. Ng, C. Rawn
- Regrets** K. Kanji (Chair), W. Norman
- Guests** G. Averill, B. Britton, D. Fontana, K. Hassib, C. Menzies, S. Pelech
- Senate Staff** C. Eaton (Clerk), B. Menard

Call to Order The meeting of the Senate Agenda Committee (the “Committee”) was called to order at 12:01 pm by J. Fox, Vice-Chair.

Agenda **Motion:** *That the Committee adopts the October 4, 2024 agenda.*

Carried by general consent.

Minutes **Motion:** *That the Committee approves the September 6, 2024 minutes.*

Moved: J. Fox
Seconded: K. Lo
Carried.

Business Arising from the Minutes None.

In Camera – Agenda of the October 16, 2024 Vancouver Senate N/A

Moved: J. Lorien
Seconded: P. Harrison
Carried.



**Joint discussion
with the President
& Vice-Chancellor
and the Senate
Nominating
Committee**

All committee members, guests from the Nominating Committee and the Provost provided self-introductions.

The President expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak and noted the Senate's efforts to evaluate its governance and operations. He mentioned having discussions with the External Reviewers. The President acknowledged the complexity of the existing report but understood it was part of the review process.

He noted his commitment to optimizing governance and noted the Senate's responsibility to bring forward recommendations for approval. The President mentioned a desire for earlier meeting times. He expressed support for the initiatives contained in the report and a willingness to engage in discussions regarding his own role, stating they were prepared to advocate for necessary changes.

The Provost provided context regarding the University's budget, noting that his office oversees Enrolment Services, and by extension the Senate Office, and emphasized its significance in the ongoing review. The Provost highlighted current state of international student enrolment over the past two years, which had impacted the budget significantly.

He provided details regarding the budget, and noted the need to balance any deficit through careful revenue generation and cost management. The Provost cautioned against adding new costs to the budget, although he recognized the necessity for well-researched proposals for any new expenditures. He suggested that any potential expansion of the Senate Office should be thoroughly assessed, including a review of staffing levels and functions, to identify any needs or overlaps.

Senator Fox acknowledged the importance of carefully considering any budget implications related to the recommendations being discussed. She noted that the budget was a key priority for the Senate and emphasized the need for increased input on priority topics, highlighting the significance of determining what issues should be addressed by the Senate.

Senator Fox proposed exploring ways in which the President's and Provost's Offices could contribute to the prioritization and planning processes. She also suggested that the Committee could assist in translating these priorities into actionable work plans.



In response, the Provost confirmed the relevance of discussing the budget landscape within the Senate. He mentioned that traditionally, budget reports were presented after approval, but there was potential to enhance consultation with the Senate before the budget reached the Board of Governors. He further noted that this change could lead to more effective collaboration and input from Senate members on budgetary matters.

Senator Fox noted the importance of considering specific recommendations from the report related to Senate Agenda Committee and also meeting times, as well as the possibility of establishing a new Committee by amalgamating the Agenda Committee with the Nominating Committee.

Senator Fontana noted that meeting times conflicted with student classes and suggested that more comprehensive discussions among students were necessary before committing to a specific time.

Senator Lorien added that graduate students often faced challenges with meeting times, particularly if held in the evening, and emphasized the need for ample notice if any changes were to be made.

Senator Hassib mentioned that students on co-op terms might struggle to participate if meetings were scheduled before 6 p.m. due to work commitments. They also pointed out that some students might have long commutes to attend in-person.

Senator Menzies reflected on his experiences as a parent, noting that the time between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. had been particularly challenging for attending meetings or teaching due to school pick-up times. He expressed that having an evening meeting occasionally could be beneficial, suggesting a start time of around 6:30 or 7 p.m. instead of during dinner hours.

Senator Harrison noted that undergraduate students often raised concerns about meeting times before 6 p.m., especially when their classes ran until late in the day. He acknowledged that finding a universally convenient time for meetings was difficult given the diverse schedules of Senators, including classes, work and personal commitments.



Senator Harrison pointed out the importance of encouraging a greater diversity of participants in Senate discussions and emphasized that any decision regarding meeting times would require thorough discussion and consideration of various perspectives. He noted that previous attempts to hold meetings at different times often led to complaints about them being too late or inconvenient, underscoring the complexity of scheduling in a diverse academic environment.

Senator Fox acknowledged the mixed feedback on the issue of meeting times and pointed out the lack of consensus. She posed the question of next steps.

In response, the Clerk noted that past surveys of the Senate indicated diverse preferences, with no clear majority favouring a specific time. Previous attempts to hold meetings at various times, such as 8 p.m. and 6 p.m., highlighted both advantages and challenges.

Senator Fox suggested considering other options, like a 4 p.m. meeting, but emphasized the need for significant advance notice to accommodate everyone's schedules. She also discussed potential solutions to minimize conflicts, such as coordinating with departments to avoid scheduling classes during Senate meetings. She noted the complexity of balancing responsibilities, especially for those with demanding schedules, and suggested that many Canadian universities have found ways to navigate these challenges successfully.

The President suggested that, for next steps, the Agenda Committee develop a survey to determine preference among Senators for meeting time.

Senator Harrison noted the structural change proposed in a report; the creation of a University Secretariat. He noted that the current position of the Senate Office may not be optimal for Senate operations and suggested that it should be removed from its current reporting structure for greater independence.

In response, the Provost acknowledged that while independence may not be the primary concern, there could be benefits to establishing a University Secretariat that could better service both the Board of Governors and the Senates. He expressed



openness to the idea, stating that he had no objections to considering a unified office structure.

The President also conveyed neutrality on the matter, stating he had no complaints about the current functioning of the Senate Office within the Registrar's Office. He suggested exploring best practices from other institutions.

Senator Menzies expressed support for maintaining two separate Secretariats due to the bicameral governance structure. He noted that better communication between the Board and Senate could be beneficial, despite the existing coordination at the staff level.

Senator Rawn highlighted the importance of separating Curriculum Services from the Senate Office. She noted that the workload involved in managing Curriculum Services takes time away from governance staff focusing on the governance of the Senates, and she would support further discussions on how this separation might work.

In response, the President acknowledged the typical division of responsibilities between a University Secretariat, which handles governance functions and the Registrar's Office would manage academic functions. He emphasized the potential efficiencies of having a single office, but noted that establishing a University Secretariat would require careful planning, including staffing considerations. The President underscored that the implementation process would need time and structured organization to be effective.

Senator Hassib discussed the differences in communication methods between the Board and the Senate. He noted the complexity of coordinating multiple calendar formats.

The Provost noted the complexity of communication channels and software used by the Board and Senate. He suggested that while this complexity could argue against merging the two, it might also highlight the need to streamline operations to improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Senator Harrison raised the question of how the Agenda Committee could take steps to communicate with the Board.



In response, the President suggested that the first step would involve the Senate determining its own objectives before approaching the Board. He noted the importance of presenting a clear position, including both advantages and potential pitfalls, to facilitate productive discussions.

The Clerk noted that recent changes at University of Manitoba and at Simon Fraser University, could offer valuable lessons. He mentioned that examining similar cases across Canada could provide insights into best practices.

Senator Fox proposed that the group should have further discussions to develop a detailed recommendation. She acknowledged that while the idea was beneficial, a thorough exploration would be necessary before any concrete actions could take place.

In response, the President agreed that exploring changes to meeting times could be beneficial, as could the idea of merging the Agenda and Nominating Committees, provided that these committees were not overburdened. He acknowledged that fewer committees might foster more effective discussions by bringing diverse viewpoints together.

The President noted the potential advantages of creating a University Secretariat, including efficiency and cost savings, while also recognizing that if two Secretariats were preferred, that was acceptable too. The President clarified that he was not seeking additional committee responsibilities and that he appreciated the exemplary work done by the committees. He suggested that a thoughtful review of existing activities could help identify what still holds value, encouraging a focus on efficiency without increasing costs.

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| Other Business | None. |
| Next Meeting | November 8, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 pm |
| Adjournment | The meeting adjourned at 1:06 pm. |