



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
ENGAGING THE WORLD

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Senate of Simon Fraser University held on
Thursday, March 17, 2022 at 5:00 pm at the West Mall Complex (Room 3210)
and via Zoom Video Conferencing

Open Session

Present: Joy Johnson, Chair

Andreoiu, Corina
Bains, Serena
Bhalloo, Shafik
Bird, Gwen
Brennand, Tracy
Bubela, Tania
Chapman, Glenn
Chenier, Ele
Chessel, Patrick
Coleman, Gordon
Collard, Mark
Daniel, Bryan
Dauvergne, Catherine
Denholm, Julia
Derksen, Jeff
Egri, Carolyn
Elle, Elizabeth
Everton, Mike
Fiume, Eugene
Gray, Bonnie
Hall, Peter
Hendrigan, Holly
Hoffer, Andy
Kandikova, Alisa
Kayande, Ujwal
Krauth, Brian
Krogman, Naomi
Kumpulainen, Kristiina
Laitsch, Dan
Leznoff, Daniel
Liosis, Gabe
Liu, Connie
Masri, Kamal
Malott, Brianna
McTavish, Rob
Mirhady, David
Murphy, David

Nagy, Judit
Neustaedter, Carman
O'Neil, Dugan
Pahou, Helen
Parkhouse, Wade
Parmar, Abhishek
Percival, Colin
Phangura, Almas
Shapiro, Lisa
Silverman, Michael
Spector, Stephen
Stockie, John

Absent:

Chowdury, Saima
Dhesa, Priyanka
Gardinetti, R. Georges
Hogg, Robert
Lord Ferguson, Sarah
Lu, Joseph
Martell, Matt
Myers, Gord
Nepomnaschy, Pablo
O'Neill, Susan
Pantophlet, Ralph
Parent, Micheal
Schiphorst, Thecla
Shinkar, Igor
Vrooman, Tamara
Walsby, Charles

In Attendance:

Gustafson, Réka

1. Approval of the Agenda

The agenda was approved as distributed.

2. Consideration of a Motion Concerning Face Coverings (S.22-40)

Moved by G. Liosis, seconded by B. Malott

“That Senate recommend to the President and Board of Governors that face coverings be required in lecture halls, classrooms, and labs at Simon Fraser University for the remainder of the Spring 2022 semester.”

Réka Gustafson, Provincial Health Services Authority Vice-President, Public Health and Wellness and Deputy Provincial Health Officer, was in attendance to provide context on the lifting of the mask mandate and to respond to questions.

Citing concerns raised by librarians and that the proposed motion singles out lecture halls, classrooms and labs at the expense of other spaces on campus where masks would be required, an amendment to the motion was put forward:

Amendment moved by G. Bird, seconded by G. Coleman

“That face coverings be required in all indoor common areas, or in learning spaces on all SFU campuses rather than only in lecture halls, classrooms and labs.”

A question was called and a vote on the amendment.

MOTION CARRIED,
with one abstention*.

*Senator Catherine Dauvergne requested that her abstention be recorded in the minutes.

With the amendment to the original motion being carried, a lengthy discussion ensued as to why a mask mandate should or should not be reinstated for all indoor common areas and learning spaces on all SFU campuses.

Arguments made for reinstating a mask requirement:

- The pandemic has not impacted communities equally and the lack of a mask requirement will continue to disproportionately burden the most vulnerable members of the population.
- The sudden change in the mask mandate can be anxiety inducing for students and other SFU community members given there was less than 24 hours' notice provided for the change.
- The perception of being required to work in an unsafe environment can have negative mental health outcomes for individuals.
- Public health orders allow businesses to maintain a mask mandate if they so choose, thus a reimposed mask mandate would be just as enforceable now as it was previously.
- When students and faculty decided to return to in-person activities for the Spring 2022 term, they came back under an assumption that they would be doing so in a masked environment.

- A decision could have been made to lift the mask mandate at the end of the Spring 2022 term, thereby allowing people to adjust their summer learning plans accordingly.
- There is nothing that legally prevents SFU from adopting a standard that is higher than the one outlined by the Provincial Health Authority.
- Even if it can't explicitly be enforced, stating that it is a requirement to wear a mask will increase the number of people wearing them.
- Consideration needs to be given to what type of message the University is sending to the most vulnerable members of its community by failing to reinstate a mask mandate.

Arguments made against reinstating a mask requirement:

- The motion is in contradiction to the guidance of the Provincial Health Authority.
- From a public health perspective, requiring the wearing of masks is no longer a fair, equitable or proportionate public health intervention.
- The wearing of masks in a specific situation, such as in a classroom, is not thought to make any measurable difference to the population level of coronavirus.
- There is no way to enforce a mask mandate imposed without the backing of public health directions.
- SFU should encourage continued engagement with effective public health measures but not go so far as to reinstate a mask mandate.
- There is no good public health justification for continuing a mask mandate and a distinction should be made between a mask mandate, which requires the wearing of a mask, and encouragement for people to wear a mask voluntarily in support of their colleagues.
- It would be inappropriate for a public institution, guided by science, to explicitly go against the guidance from the Provincial Health Authority.
- Based on the framework that Public Health uses to determine whether or not to impose a requirement, SFU does not currently meet that framework.

A question was called and a vote taken (on the motion, as amended)

MOTION FAILED

Following the failure of the motion the Chair informed Senate that she would be reporting on the discussion at Senate to the Board of Governors and that the University will be monitoring the public health of the community, and if it is warranted, new measures will be implemented in the future.

Open session adjourned at 6:37 p.m.

Tom Nault
Senate Secretary