

# OTR-Podcast-2024Sept27

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

students, union, money, campus, student union, tuition, university, advocate, important, ran, bike lane, unaffordable housing, dental, events, supports, toronto, responsible, honestly, election, dundas square

## SPEAKERS

Belle O'Neill, Streeter 4, Streeter 5, Streeter 8, Streeter 3, Streeter 6, Streeter 9, David D'Aversa, Jake Barton, Streeter 2, Streeter 7, Streeter 1, Grace Draznin

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- B** Belle O'Neill 00:00  
Belle, welcome back to the OTR Podcast. I'm Belle O'Neill.
- G** Grace Draznin 00:10  
and I'm Grace Draznin. This semester, we're doing things a bit differently for our podcast.
- B** Belle O'Neill 00:15  
We're gonna focus on some of the big questions students have about their experiences at TMU
- G** Grace Draznin 00:20  
From unaffordable housing in the GTA to tuition woes to the safety around Yonge and Dundas
- B** Belle O'Neill 00:25  
...to anything you want to talk to us about, email us at [ontherecordnews@torontomu.ca](mailto:ontherecordnews@torontomu.ca).
- G** Grace Draznin 00:32  
Today's big question is, what does the TMSU do for you?
- B** Belle O'Neill 00:35

**B** Belle O'Neill 00:55

Grace, we're both graduate students now, but were you ever involved in your Student Union when you were still an undergrad at Western honestly, I didn't even know we had one. The closest I ever got to being a part of a student council is when I ran for back in high school in my hometown, Innisfil, Ontario. I didn't get on, but I ran,

**G** Grace Draznin 00:53

I mean, A for effort. Well, here at TMU, we have something called the Toronto Metropolitan Student Union, better known as TMSU. I've seen them in the concourse and during orientation, but all I know is that the role is to represent us as students.

**B** Belle O'Neill 01:07

Oh, yeah, I've seen them. I've also seen the \$122 annual fee charged with my tuition every year. What does that even go towards?

**G** Grace Draznin 01:17

\$122 a year? Yeah, I'm not too sure either, and I don't think many students are.

**S** Streeter 1 01:23

I know I pay them, but I don't know exactly specifically what they do.

**S** Streeter 2 01:29

I was aware of what they were doing. I'd feel a lot more confident in seeing the result of where my funds were going. Yeah, it would be a lot more lovely if you know they advertise a little more.

**S** Streeter 3 01:36

No, I actually didn't even know that \$122 of the tuition goes to TMSU.

**S** Streeter 4 01:41

I really don't, because I was actually in attendance at a tmsu event just a couple of days ago, and I was wondering where the budget for it came from. So I googled it, and it gave me absolutely no information as to where the money goes. The only information that I could find was what incoming money the school has per year, but there is no information about where any of that money went. And as a student, my money goes towards these things, I would like the clarity of knowing exactly where it's going.

**S** Streeter 5 02:12

My knowledge is very limited. As far as I'm concerned, they just deal with student financing and like where the budget goes. In regards to those kind of things.

**S** Streeter 6 02:21

I would like to say they do a lot, other than perhaps, advocate for our insurance and their dental and stuff like that. But other than that, no, I have a vague understanding of it.

**S** Streeter 7 02:32

So I don't really know what the TMSU uses the money for, but Offset performed at Dundas Square, and I figured they would be in charge of that, and they used that money for it. But generally, I'm not so sure.

**S** Streeter 8 02:42

I didn't really know what they did. I know that they provide like insurance and benefits, and they do like photocopying and stuff, but I have no idea what they did with my money. And I had whatever they did had no bearing on my experience as a student, in my opinion,

**S** Streeter 9 03:01

I think they just do anything that, like supports students on campus, whether it's like just events around campus to get involved in, or like healthcare, mental health, like supports and stuff like that, they will be able to help you with anything you need.

**B** Belle O'Neill 03:19

Okay, so clearly, most of us are a little confused. Let's work on clearing that up and talk about what the TMSU actually does.

**G** Grace Draznin 03:27

Well, according to their website, and I quote, The tmsu works to build campus life, advocates for its members, organize campaigns and initiatives, provide cost saving services and work with students across the province and country. End. Quote.

**B** Belle O'Neill 03:41

I mean, yeah, that sounds great, but honestly, I still don't know exactly what our money is used for. According to the Tmu undergraduate calendar, we have 48,000 active graduate and undergraduate students, assuming we're all paying the same \$122 fee. That would mean that the tmsu is pulling in over \$5 million in student fees alone.

G

Grace Draznin 04:03

\$5 million that's a fat stack of cash. Ideally, we would have a member of the tmsu break down where exactly that money is going and for what. But after trying to get someone from the current tmsu on the phone for more than a week, we were told they simply weren't interested in speaking with us for the story.

B

Belle O'Neill 04:21

Okay? Well, according to their website, they are responsible for a lot more than just events around campus. Did you know that they are the ones responsible for creating our health and dental plan every year, or that they run student academic advocacy, equity and sexual violence support centers on campus.

G

Grace Draznin 04:38

They also have emergency grants year round for students to apply for good food centers. And I even saw they have a Tax Clinic where they will do your taxes on campus for free.

B

Belle O'Neill 04:47

Well, that would have been good to know last tax season, I had no idea they were even responsible for creating our health and dental plan. That's a lot of responsibility and trust to put into students.

G

Grace Draznin 04:58

I agree. And since the student body changes every year and is responsible for delegating where our money goes. I feel like we should hear more about the election process. I can't even remember hearing about there being a vote.

B

Belle O'Neill 05:09

Me neither. But now that I think about it, I don't think it's ever been at the front of my brain, because honestly, I've never really noticed a difference in our Student Union, how it's run, or the services available to us regardless of who is in office.

G

Grace Draznin 05:22

**G** Grace Draznin 05:22

That's a fair point. Why don't we get someone who has been in office to weigh in here welcoming David D'Aversa, former member of the University of Toronto Students Union, the student government for over 41,000 students at the St George campus.

**D** David D'Aversa 05:37

So I was on the Governing Council, the Board of Directors, in terms of the specifics of what the Union did. It was all the above. Health insurance was a big one, dentist, medications, access to therapists, which was really important, anything that students needed. We were there. We had a food bank as well for the community. We had a bike shop. It was really great. Student initiatives. I do think, though, the work that we do matters, and it was the main point of liaison between the university administration and students themselves.

**G** Grace Draznin 06:07

So after we recorded in the studio, we had a two time presidential candidate for the UTSU, which is the University of Toronto, Students Union, reach out to us with some great insight on why student unions are so important, and it was so good, we just have to include it, introducing Jake Barton.

**J** Jake Barton 06:27

Like any union, it represents an identifiable group that has a collective interest, you know, that being the interest of students. And there's so many different things it can do with that big functions of the Union, you know, as I'm sure you know, like advocacy, not just advocating to the university we attend, like, Hey, here's the collective interest for your students. They also advocate to different levels of government, which is phenomenally important, and it's something that when you pool all these voices behind the union, it's a level of communication that you otherwise couldn't get. You know, maybe two people would write to their city council and say, Oh, I wish we got a bike lane on this street, but a union comes in. They're like, hey, you know, 3000 of our students use this street. Put a bike lane on it. It's a lot more powerful. They also there's a community aspect to the union. They hold social events, they hold fundraisers for different causes. I think that's phenomenal. And then they provide resources to students. But I'd say the thing that has me as an individual, most interested is the pooling of funds, right where you can collect money from all your students. But from the perspective of the Union, you guys have such an incredible amount of capital year over year, and I feel like there could be a lot more done with it.

**B** Belle O'Neill 07:34

I had no idea Student Government was that important, but we want to hear what you thought. So starting with right outside our newsroom, the physical poll results are in 13% of you felt like you knew what the tmsu does for you, whereas 87% of you did not know what the tmsu does

for you. Hopefully, this episode provided you with a bit more of an understanding there is not any news on the next tmsu election as of right now, however, keep checking for updates as we move towards the spring, when most of the tmsu elections are generally held. Remember,

 Grace Draznin 08:08

if you have a big question for us, email us at [onthereckardnews.ca](mailto:onthereckardnews.ca), I'm Grace Draznin, special thanks to Almost Barely for our theme music, "Letting go."

 Belle O'Neill 08:18

And I'm Belle O'Neill. talk to you next week you.