

The Popular University Student Housing (PUSH) Fund

1. Mandate

In the 2015 general election, undergraduate students voted overwhelmingly in support for a referendum question to begin the establishment of the PUSH Fund with \$1.85 million. The PUSH fund is a financially innovative tool being harnessed for the purpose of creating Montreal's first student housing cooperative. As an independent non-profit legal entity, the PUSH Fund aims to improve student living conditions across Quebec. The PUSH Fund has a clear twofold mandate: to finance the creation of affordable student housing cooperatives & to build partnerships that will expand the Fund's financial capacity. The second mandate compliments the ability of the Fund to achieve its primary mission. Through the creation of a permanent financing mechanism, our potential to accelerate the expansion of cooperative student housing amplifies substantially. The scope and scale of the PUSH Fund will change the discourse around student housing at a Provincial, Municipal and university-wide level!

2. A Revolving Fund

The PUSH fund is able to permanently finance student housing cooperatives because of its 'revolving' status. A revolving fund is a fund that remains available to finance future initiatives by replenishing its money through the repayment of finances from the loans it makes. Until original loans get repaid revolving funds don't make new loans. Revolving funds can be found in government and the non-profit sector. By creating a fund with this unique model the CSU is able to have a much larger impact than financing a single cooperative housing project. Being the PUSH Fund's founding member, the CSU and its membership (you!) will benefit from having exclusivity on the first student housing cooperative it finances. Another revolving fund seen in the university milieu across North America is the Green Revolving Fund (GRF) typically utilized as part a long term strategy/commitment to finance environmentally sustainable projects.

3. Financial Partners

Establishing cooperative student housing is no small feat, given any real estate project requires significant capital and a comprehensive plan. That's why the CSU isn't the only financial partner involved in the cooperative student housing project. Last year, the CSU secured the financial support of the *Chantier de l'économie Sociale*, to the tune of **\$1.5 million!** The *Chantier* has a fund of its own with over \$53

million which has a mandate to finance socially orientated project like worker cooperatives and community spaces. Before agreeing to make any financial commitment, the *Chantier* rigorously tested the financial model of the PUSH Fund with their investment team. We are extremely excited to embark on this groundbreaking partnership with an organization that holds such a strong reputation in the social economy sector!

4. Patient Capital

As a general principle, the PUSH Fund isn't seeking to make a profit from the projects it finances. That's one reason why affordability can be prioritized in the CSU's student housing cooperative. The investment model being employed by the PUSH Fund is called 'patient capital'. With patient capital, social outcomes take precedent over maximising a return on investment (ROI), and the investor is willing to forgo immediate repayments on principal, excluding interest. Another method by which the PUSH Fund can support increasing affordability is by making loans with interest rates that are below the standard market cost. The PUSH Fund will make loans at an interest rate that's tied to inflation (around 1.5 – 2.0%); this allows the Fund to maintain its purchasing power over time and still provide access to affordable loans.

5. The CSU's Housing Cooperative

The CSU is an instrumental actor in making cooperative student housing a reality in Montreal! As previously mentioned, the CSU will have exclusivity on the first project financed by the PUSH Fund. Although this is a privilege, it also means the CSU and its members (you again!) have a big responsibility in the creation of the first project. A provisional committee has been formed by the CSU to act as an interim board of directors for the housing cooperative. With representation from 4 faculties across Concordia, a diverse array of perspectives and experiences are coming together with this incredible project. Under the current timeline, our plan is to invite students to live in the housing cooperative by the summer of 2017. When the project is delivered through the usage of novel financing, nothing prevents the model from being replicated and exported elsewhere; putting the CSU and Concordia on the map for good!