

# Environmental Policy for McGill University

## Preamble

McGill University shall strive to be recognized as an environmentally safe and responsible institution of learning, and as a model of environmentally responsible living.

To this end, the McGill University community shall make every reasonable effort to:

1. Prevent the over-consumption of energy and other resources and reduce the production of waste and the release of substances harmful to the biosphere;
2. Maintain purchasing policies which favour environmentally benign, post-consumer, bio-degradable, and non-toxic products wherever possible;
3. Encourage all members of the McGill community to be environmentally aware and the University's Environmental Policy to be well publicized;
4. Encourage all members of the McGill community to Re-think/Reduce/Re-use/Recycle. Given the costs that recycling entails, reduce and re-use options shall always be considered first; and
5. Seek additional ways of achieving our goal of being environmentally safe and responsible.

[Executive: October 7, 2002, minute 3]

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We at McGill University are committed to fulfilling our academic mission and managing all resources in harmony with our natural environment. We are committed to meeting our social, scientific, ethical and educational leadership responsibility in actively promoting the restoration and preservation of a healthy environment for the future, and in contributing to building an equitable world.

Our commitment to raising environmental awareness and acting on it is manifested in our teaching and research activities, in other services which we provide to the McGill community and society at large, and in the individual and collective decisions which we take to offset the negative impact of the University's operation and activities on the Environment.

We are committed to increasing the University community's awareness of environmental issues, by fostering the appropriate values, knowledge, and skills to enable us to work towards the restoration and preservation of the Environment.

## **Accompanying principles**

*The University shall abide by the following principles:*

- 1. McGill University shall have the goal of being recognized as an environmentally safe and responsible institution of learning and a model of environmentally responsible living.*
- 2. McGill University shall be in conformity with the principles of the 1990 Talloires Declaration and 1991 Halifax Declaration (Appendices I and II), and respect all municipal, provincial, and national legislation, and the spirit of the various international accords that Canada has signed. Should these obligations conflict, the University shall select the standards most compatible with the four principles listed below, in keeping with its leadership role and its goal of excellence.*
- 3. The McGill University community shall minimize the overconsumption of energy and other resources, the production of waste, and the release of substances harmful to the biosphere.*
- 4. The University shall maintain purchasing policies which favour environmentally-benign, post-consumer, bio-degradable, and non-toxic products wherever possible.*
- 5. The University shall encourage all members of the McGill community to be environmentally aware and the University's Environmental Policy to be well publicized.*
- 6. All members of the McGill community shall be encouraged to Re-think/Reduce/Re-use/Recycle. Given the costs that recycling entails, reduce and re-use options shall always be considered first.*

[Board of Governors: May 30, 2001]

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## **Appendices:**

- I. The Talloires Declaration, October 1990
- II. The Halifax Declaration, December 1991

## TALLOIRES DECLARATION

McGill is one of the 270 signatories of the Talloires Declaration of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future, a process initiated at the Tufts University European Centre in Talloires (Haute-Savoie, France) in October 1990 and coordinated by the Tufts University-based Secretariat of University Presidents for a Sustainable Future. As such, McGill University has committed itself to taking a number of actions, in particular "to encourage that all university graduates are environmentally conscious, and have the awareness and understanding to be ecologically responsible citizens", and "to set an example of environmental responsibility". In order to "set an example of environmental responsibility" as required by the Talloires Declaration, the McGill community is expected to commit itself seriously and to act sincerely to minimize negative environmental impact. The Talloires Declaration reads as follows:

*We, the presidents, rectors, and vice chancellors of universities from all regions of the world are deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale and speed of environmental pollution and degradation, and the depletion of natural resources.*

*Local, regional, and global air and water pollution; accumulation and distribution of toxic wastes; destruction and depletion of forests, soil, and water; depletion of the ozone layer and emission of "green house gases" threaten the survival of humans and thousands of other living species, the integrity of the earth and its biodiversity, the security of nations, and the heritage of future generations. These environmental changes are caused by inequitable and unsustainable production and consumption patterns that aggravate poverty in many regions of the world.*

*We believe that urgent actions are needed to address these fundamental problems and reverse the trends. Stabilization of human population, adoption of environmentally sound industrial and agricultural technologies, reforestation, and ecological restoration are crucial elements in creating an equitable and sustainable future for all humankind in harmony with nature.*

*Universities have a major role in the education, research, policy formation, and information exchange necessary to make these goals possible. Thus, university leaders must initiate and support mobilization of internal and external resources so that their institutions respond to this urgent challenge.*

*We, therefore, agree to take the following actions:*

- 1 Use every opportunity to raise public, government, industry, foundation, and university awareness by openly addressing the urgent need to move toward an environmentally sustainable future.*
- 2 Encourage all universities to engage in education, research, policy formation, and information exchange on population, environment, and development to move toward global sustainability.*
- 3 Establish programs to produce expertise in environmental management, sustainable economic development, population, and related fields to ensure that all university graduates are environmentally literate, and have the awareness and understanding to be ecologically responsible citizens.*

4. *Create programs to develop the capability of university faculty to teach environmental literacy to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students.*
5. *Set an example of environmental responsibility by establishing institutional ecology policies and practices of resource conservation, recycling, waste reduction, and environmentally sound operations.*
6. *Encourage involvement of government, foundations, and industry in supporting interdisciplinary research, education, policy formation, and information exchange in environmentally sustainable development. Expand work with community and non-governmental organizations to assist in finding solutions to environmental problems.*
7. *Convene university faculty and administrators with environmental practitioners to develop curricula, research initiatives, operations systems, and outreach activities to support an environmentally sustainable future.*
8. *Establish partnerships with primary and secondary schools to help develop the capacity for interdisciplinary teaching about population, environment, and sustainable development.*
9. *Work with national and international organizations to promote a worldwide university effort toward a sustainable future.*
10. *Establish a Secretariat and a steering committee to continue this momentum, and to inform and support each other's efforts in carrying out this declaration.*

## HALIFAX DECLARATION

McGill University is one of the sixteen Canadian signatories of the Halifax Declaration (December 1991). The University Senate, on March 25, 1992 and on motion by former Vice-Principals Buckland and Prichard, voted in favour of supporting the Halifax Declaration and of asking "that all academic units within the University be informed of this Declaration". The Halifax Declaration called for the University's dedication to a number of actions to be taken within the University and at the local, national and global levels. The Halifax Declaration reads as follows:

*Human demands upon the planet are now of a volume and kind that, unless changed substantially, threaten the future well-being of all living species. Universities are entrusted with a major responsibility to help societies shape their present and future development policies and actions into the sustainable and equitable forms necessary for an environmentally secure and civilised world...*

*The Halifax meeting (held in December 1991) added its voice to those many others world-wide that are deeply concerned about the continuing widespread degradation of the Earth's environment, about the pervasive influence of poverty on the process, and about the unsustainable environmental practices now so widespread. The meeting expressed the belief that solutions to these problems can only be effective to the extent that the mutual vulnerability of all societies, in the South and in the North, is recognised, and the energies and skills of people everywhere be employed in a positive, co-operative fashion. Because the educational, research and public service roles of universities enable them to be competent, effective contributors to the major attitudinal and policy changes necessary for a sustainable future, the Halifax meeting invited the dedication of all universities to the following actions:*

- 1. To ensure the voice of the university be clear and uncompromising in its ongoing commitment to the principle and practice of sustainable development within the university, and at the local, national and global levels.*
- 2. To utilise the intellectual resources of the university to encourage a better understanding on the part of society of the inter-related physical, biological and social dangers facing the planet Earth.*
- 3. To emphasise the ethical obligation of the present generation to overcome those current malpractices of resource utilisation and those widespread circumstances of intolerable human disparity which lie at the root of environment unsustainability.*
- 4. To enhance the capacity of the university to teach and practice sustainable development principles, to increase environmental literacy, and to enhance the understanding of environmental ethics among faculty, students and the public at large.*
- 5. To cooperate with one another and with all segments of society in the pursuit of practical capacity-building and policy measures to achieve the effective revision and reversal of those current practices which contribute to environmental degradation, to South-North disparities and the inter-generational inequity.*
- 6. To employ all channels open to the university to communicate these undertakings to UNCED (the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Brazil in 1992), to governments and to the public at large.*