



Question

TO: Senate

QUESTION FROM: Senators Eran Shor, Madeline Wilson, and Gregory Mikkelsen

RESPONSE FROM: Ms. Edyta Rogowska, Secretary-General

SUBJECT: Question Regarding Board-Senate Collaboration on Divestment

MEETING DATE: February 20, 2019

PREAMBLE: WHEREAS, the Senate passed, by a wide margin, a motion on September 12, 2018 favoring “in principle, a move to divest the endowment from all companies whose primary business is the extraction, distribution, and/or sale of fossil fuels; and from all mutual funds that invest in such companies¹”;

WHEREAS, on November 21, 2018, the Senate subsequently appointed two representatives “to participate in the Board of Governors’ Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility (CAMSR)’s consultation process on the motion concerning divestment approved by Senate on September 12, 2018²”;

WHEREAS, “The two representatives appointed by Senate would be invited to meet with CAMSR in the context of a meeting taking place on December 3, 2018 and any subsequent meeting, as necessary³”;

WHEREAS, thus far, the two representatives appointed by Senate were invited to the December 3rd meeting but not to any subsequent meetings;

WHEREAS, these Senate representatives informed the CAMSR at its meeting on December 3, 2018 that “[they] see an opportunity for the Board and Senate to work closely together on this topic”, and that “On behalf of Senate, [they] would hope CAMSR can complete its work by the end of this academic year⁴”;

WHEREAS, the two academic staff representatives serving on the Board itself also stressed at that same December 3 meeting the need for a “timely” and otherwise credible process⁵;

¹ McGill University Senate Minutes, September 12, 2018, p. 11

² [Report](#) of the Senate Nominating Committee (D18-15), November 21, 2018, p.7

³ Ibid.

⁴ Summary of presentations to CAMSR, published on January 8, 2019 on the CAMSR webpage:

<https://mcgill.ca/boardofgovernors/committees-0/social>

⁵ Ibid.

WHEREAS, the Board nevertheless declined, at its December 13 meeting, to require recommendations from the CAMSR any earlier than the next (2019-2020) academic year;

QUESTION: How indeed are Senate and the Board to "work closely together on this topic" to ensure a satisfactory and expeditious outcome? For example, why have the two additional and temporary Senate representatives to CAMSR not simply been added to the CAMSR for the duration of its deliberations on the matter of divestment? Most immediately, why were they not invited to the subsequent February 18 CAMSR meeting?

RESPONSE: Thank you for your question.

The two representatives were appointed by Senate to participate in CAMSR's consultation process on Senate's resolution on divestment. More specifically, their mandate is to ensure that the diverse views of Senate on the matter of divestment are communicated to CAMSR. The understanding was that the representatives would be invited to meet with CAMSR on December 3, 2018, and they would be invited to subsequent meetings, *as necessary*. The Senate representatives participated in the consultation session on December 3 and a summary of their presentation, along with others, is available on the CAMSR [webpage](#). While Senators are welcome to submit comments to CAMSR, either through the representatives or directly, by emailing the Committee at bog.mcgill@mcgill.ca, Senate and the Board do not have a joint mandate on this topic as governance matters related to investment policies and practices are within the sole purview of the Board.

When Senate was asked to appoint the representatives on November 21, 2018, it was explicitly indicated that they would not become members of CAMSR. The composition of CAMSR is set out in the Committee's terms of reference and CAMSR is operating within that framework, which does not provide for additional temporary members. It is necessary for CAMSR to respect the Board's established practices and procedures.

CAMSR's February 18, 2019 meeting was mainly dedicated to reviewing the University's current SRI investment framework and consultation sessions with external investment managers and organizations. While further consultations with the Senate representatives are not necessary in the context of the February meeting, the two representatives may be invited to attend future meetings. This remains to be decided by CAMSR.

In the meantime, an information session dedicated to the University's SRI investment framework will be organized to take place before the March Senate meeting. The Senate representatives will be invited to this session, and will have an opportunity to report on it and their December consultation with CAMSR, at the March Senate meeting. The session will also be open to any member of Senate and CAMSR.

As agreed at the December 13, 2018 Board meeting, CAMSR will make every effort to submit its final report to the Board by the last Board meeting of the 2019 calendar year. CAMSR will therefore be meeting regularly throughout the year to meet this deadline. The Committee's meeting schedule is available on the Board's [website](#) and additional meetings are being scheduled for summer and fall 2019.
