
Advisory Council on Sustainability

May 17, 2018 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

McGill University, James Building, room 302

Minutes

Present: Yves Beauchamp (Co-Chair), Paul Chesser, Robert Couvrette, Alan DeSousa, Bruce Lennox, Christopher Manfredi (Co-Chair), Francois Miller (Steward), Jim Nicell, Kathleen Ng, Lauren Rathmell, Muna Tojiboeva, Nathalie Zinger

Guests: Joyce Donohue, Ali Rivers, Sebastien Wagner

Regrets: Jade Corriveau, Kakwiranó:ron Cook, Jayne Engle, Anja Geitmann, Hélène Lauzon, Robert Leckey, Amy Luers, Amir Nosrat

1. Welcome & Roundtable

Prof. Manfredi welcomes the participants, reminding everyone of the mandate¹ of the group, and thanking everyone for their participation.

Prof. Manfredi introduces the two guests invited to join the meeting:

- Sebastien Wagner, Team lead on climate mitigation and adaptation at the City of Montreal; and
- Ali Rivers, McGill's Climate Officer with the Office of Sustainability.

A quick 'tour de table' ensues. Ms. Tojiboeva advises that this would be her last meeting, as another SSMU representative from the incoming cohort would be taking her place on the ACS in the fall.

2. Approval of minutes from the last meeting (February 27) and today's agenda

Regarding the minutes of the previous meeting (February 27), on page 3: one member asks to add that expense reports should provide distances travelled and emissions details for information purposes, regardless of whether associated offset costs were being collected by McGill or not. This would serve as a reminder of the carbon footprint of air travel.

Prof. Manfredi confirms that participants have no further changes to make to the minutes of the previous meeting nor for the day's agenda.

3. Latest News Related to Sustainability

Mr. Miller provides a few updates related to sustainability at McGill:

¹ i.e. "position McGill as a leading institution in North America on sustainability by contributing to the implementation and evolution of McGill's Sustainability Strategy, and related plans, policies, and performance indicators."

- McGill was recently recognized as one of Canada's Greenest Employers;
- The Sustainability Projects Fund, which is subject to student referenda every five years by each of the three major student associations, successfully passed at PGSS with Yes votes of 73%. The SPF referenda had already been passed at SSMU and MCSS with Yes votes of 82% and 98% respectively.
- Installation of electric vehicle charging stations at the Gault, downtown and Macdonald campuses was ongoing, which would bring capacity to 25 vehicles in the coming weeks. This is intended to contribute towards McGill's target of carbon neutrality by 2040.
- The annual Catalyst Awards Gala had taken place on April 3rd, with approximately 100 people in attendance.
- A phase-out of single-use plastic bottles on campus from food locations and vending machines by May 2019 was announced. This project, funded by the Sustainability Projects Fund, includes provision for installation of 25-30 additional fountains throughout the campus with 3 fillable stations for bottles. Regardless, removal of single-use plastic bottles at events remains a challenge to be addressed.

Much discussion ensues revolving around the bottled water ban. Comments included:

- The need to have a contingency plan when municipal water is unavailable;
- The need for systematic reduction in the use of single-plastics in general (bottles, straws, etc.)
- The need to remain mindful of companies' efforts to fill the vacuum with alternatives (non-recyclable boxed water, flavored waters, unhealthy sugary drinks, etc.);
- The importance of communications to facilitate culture change.

Mr Couvrette responds that Facilities Management and Ancillary Services (FMAS) is already committed to addressing plastic and waste issues in the coming months and years, identifying opportunities to reduce plastic use on campus.

Prof Lennox commends the Office of Sustainability for their media relations, public relations and communications approach, citing them as a model for the University. Prof Nicell adds that their active engagement in the community also builds trust.

4. Update of McGill's Sustainability Policy

Prof. Beauchamp provides some background about the Sustainability Policy to preface the discussion.

- McGill's Sustainability Policy was originally adopted by the Board of Governors and Senate in May 2010. It had been developed over a period of two years by a multistakeholder sub-committee of the Senate Committee on Physical Development, under the leadership of Prof Nicell.
- The document is meant to be aspirational (as opposed to prescriptive), and broad enough to withstand the test of time (as opposed to being overly specific).
- On October 5, 2017, the Board of Governors approved the Policy for the Development and Review of Governing Documents which provides that governing documents shall be reviewed at least once every five years by their Executive Sponsor. This means that the Sustainability Policy must be reviewed since it was approved eight years ago.

The proposed changes to the Sustainability Policy (previously circulated to ACS members with the meeting documents) are updates based on the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan, which was developed based on extensive community consultations. These proposed changes:

- Better describe the role of the higher education sector in the transition towards a sustainable future;
- Make a more explicit reference to climate and to our Sustainability goals;
- Define the scope of the Policy; and
- Establish the authority to approve procedures and the review process of the Sustainability Policy.

Members are invited to share their feedback about the proposed revisions to the Policy. Prof Nicell also provided some of the deliberations behind the original wording of the policy that were struck in the revisions. Recommendations heard include strengthening the wording and including a reference about the University's power of influence.

McGill's role in ensuring that its suppliers adhered to the Sustainability Policy was brought up. In fact:

- McGill has made large strides in sustainable purchasing in the past few years with its Sustainable Procurement Strategy, and the Procurement Policy directly references McGill's Sustainability Policy.
- Similarly, there are sustainability considerations for contractors, suppliers and service providers (ex. in FMAS).
- McGill serves food sourced from its own campuses (Gault and Macdonald) in the cafeterias, in addition to having obtained Fair Trade and Marine Stewardship Council certification.

Mr Miller thanks participants for the comments. He will revise the Policy accordingly and circulate this for review in the coming weeks with the meeting minutes. As for next steps, Ms Donohue indicates that the revisions would be sent to Senate for consultation prior to presentation to the Board in the fall.

Mr Couvrette volunteers to give a presentation on sustainable procurement initiatives with Francois Pouliot (Director of Procurement Services) at a future ACS meeting.

5. Montreal's Climate Adaptation Plan

Mr. Wagner presents salient facts from the Montreal Climate Change Adaptation Plan. It includes six climate hazards, 24 adaptation measures, and 1733 associated commitments. Based on the GIS mapping done therein, it appears that McGill's downtown campus has some vulnerability to heat waves and heavy rainfall, whereas the Macdonald campus more susceptible to drought.

Mr. De Sousa, who had presented at the Trottier Institute for Sustainability in Engineering and Design (TISED) Symposium on Climate Resilience in April, indicated that there was opportunity for collaboration with the Faculty of Engineering/TISED/McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative going forward.

6. Climate risk and adaptation at McGill

Ms Rivers provides an overview of McGill's climate risk assessments process that will be undertaken. The intended approach is to conduct a first level risk assessment, prioritize material elements then identify adaptation measures as relevant.

Participants are asked:

- Which climate change vulnerabilities and hazards do you believe McGill is exposed to?
- What balance of physical vs. socio-economic impacts should be included in the risk assessment?

Suggestions were largely inspired from previous extreme/emergency events experienced by McGill such as the 1999 ice storm. They include:

- Physical impacts:
 - Damage to persons and property (immediate as well as long-term, ex. from freeze-thaw cycling)
 - Inability to access generator fuel in emergency situation (commandeered by the military)
 - Lack of heating/cooling, impacting occupant comfort and productivity
 - Lack of water
 - Loss of digital and biological assets due to loss of power, causing severe setbacks in academic work
 - Impacts to agricultural research
 - Impacts from invasive species, biodiversity loss, fire/drought
- Social impacts (in addition to those mentioned above):
 - Need to provide support to community, especially vulnerable students
 - Capacity to accommodate faculty, staff and students impacted by climate change

Members then share their thoughts on the scope of the climate risk assessment, indicating that:

- The downtown, Macdonald and Gault campuses should be prioritized;
- The involvement of the McGill community in this process should focus on vulnerable areas where our students are mostly likely to be affected;
- McGill should collaborate with the City of Montreal (upon whose infrastructure the campus sits).

Next steps: the Office of Sustainability will continue working on the climate risk assessment and revisit this topic with the group as appropriate.

7. Greenhouse gas inventory (2016 & 2017)

Ms Rivers provides an update on McGill's greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory: this involved updating the calculation methodology and addition of previously-excluded sources. Since 2015, the GHG inventory shows:

- Significant reductions in Scope 1 (direct emissions). This is largely thanks to McGill's Energy Management Plan, now in its second iteration.
- Small reductions in air travel and vehicle fleet.
- Unavoidable increases in livestock and cattle emissions (research activity).

Moving forward, the intention is that

- The methodology for GHG reporting will become increasingly comprehensive.
- The information will be further communicated to engage the McGill community (ex. providing campus-specific carbon footprints and including GHG emissions on the Pulse energy dashboard).

8. Next steps and closing remarks

Members respond positively to Prof Beauchamp's query as to whether three to four meeting per year were appropriate. Mr Miller will be therefore be in touch with all members to establish the calendar of meetings for the next year. A tour of campus sustainability initiatives could also be offered in the fall, for all those interested – Mr Miller will follow up by email.

Prof. Beauchamp and Prof. Manfredi thank members for their participation and encourage participants to bring topics forward for discussion at upcoming meetings.