
Advisory Council on Sustainability (ACS)

February 20, 2019 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM
McGill University, James Building, room 302

Minutes

Present: Yves Beauchamp (Co-Chair), Robert Couvrette, Alan DeSousa, Joyce Donohue, Diana Dutton, Anja Geitmann, H  l  ne Lauzon, Bruce Lennox, Christopher Manfredi (Co-Chair), Matthew McLaughlin, Francois Miller (Steward), Jim Nicell, Kathleen Ng, Lauren Rathmell, Helena Zakrzewski, Nathalie Zinger

Guests: G  rald Cadet, Philippe St-Jean

Regrets: Kakwiran  ron Cook, Jayne Engle, Robert Leckey, Alice L  f  bvre, Amy Luers

1. Welcome & Roundtable

Prof. Beauchamp invites everyone to introduce themselves in a ‘tour de table’, welcoming the participants and the day’s guests, Philippe St-Jean (Sustainable Construction Officer), and G  rald Cadet (Director of the Bicentennial).

2. Group picture

[A group picture is taken of ACS members.]

3. Approval of minutes from the last meeting (December 10) and today’s agenda

Prof. Beauchamp confirms that participants have no changes to make to the minutes of the previous meeting or further additions to the day’s agenda.

4. Latest News Related to Sustainability

Mr. Miller provides the latest news related to sustainability:

- **Sustainability Soir  e:** This event showcased research and applied sustainability projects from the McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative, as well as projects funded by the Sustainability Projects Fund. Approximately 150 participants attended the event, with a good mix of staff, students and faculty present.
- **Master plan consultations** are under way: to date, this included six mobile displays, online surveys, and two community briefings (at Macdonald and downtown campus). The final campus master plan should be presented in the spring.
- **Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) criteria:** The SPF had recently realigned its criteria to facilitate applications for project funding.
- **Eco-driving training:** Training material adapted from Natural Resources Canada was sent to all fleet coordinators. The McGill fleet of vehicles produces approximately 600 tonnes of

greenhouse gas emissions per year, and 5-10% fuel savings could be generally be expected from eco-driving practices.

- **New research on melting ice sheets** was published by Natalya Gomez, an assistant professor in Earth and Planetary Sciences. The findings of her research team would be related to policies on climate change.
 - Prof Lennox commended her work over her past four years at McGill: it is example of how McGill is deliberately making the investment and choices around climate.
- **McGill climate risk assessment:** Consultation of key stakeholders to inform the climate risk assessment will begin at the end of March – beginning of April 2019.

Mr Miller shows a graphic outlining the five Vision2020 categories (Research, Education, Connectivity, Operations, Governance & Administration) and some of the topics highlighted therein. This could guide ACS members to map ACS discussion topics across the Vision2020 framework.

4.1. Bottled water update

The McGill phase-out of the sale of bottled water by May 2019 was announced on World Water Day in 2018. Progress is being achieved via a multi-pronged approach addressing sales, events, installation of water fountains, affordability of reusable bottles, and awareness. The project was recognized by [Les Trophées des campus responsables francophones](#) in the Ecological transition of campus category (2018 edition).

Following this update, Advisory Council members brought forward several points. Participants mentioned that:

- Refrigerator space should be filled with sustainable alternatives to bottled water, such as refillable bottles.
- The 4R hierarchy (Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) should be respected: the proliferation of reusable water bottles being given away can be problematic given that these needed to be reused a certain number of times to offset the associated impacts compared to disposable alternatives.
- Access to bottled water should still be available for emergency situations and research purposes.

5. Vision 2020 Midway Progress Report

Prof. Beauchamp reported that 71% of the Vision2020 Sustainability Strategy deliverables were achieved, with 1.5 years remaining. The progress report providing details across the five Vision 2020 categories had been distributed prior to the meeting. Mr Miller provided some highlights of deliverables achieved and those that were more challenging to be completed.

The two discussion questions posed to ACS members:

- *Is the progress report clear and comprehensive?*
- *How would you recommend moving forward on the actions that are not completed yet?*

Highlights from the discussion:

Re. clarity and comprehensiveness of the progress report:

- A suggestion is made to provide more context around the items in the progress report, ex. an explanation of what number or percentage of the fleet had been decarbonized, what are the features of a sustainable event, etc.
- ACS members are also interested in the outcomes of specific deliverables, such as the results of the Sustainability Literacy Test, traction of the initiative to include sustainability in performance dialogue, etc.

Re. facilitating achievement of as-yet incomplete deliverables:

- A suggestion is made to engage with more faculties: this could include recognition of the work already being done, providing clarity around areas where faculties had more control over, and providing incentives where feasible.

6. LEED Buildings at McGill

Prof. Beauchamp introduces Sustainable Construction Officer Philippe St-Jean. The presentation provides an overview of green building practice at McGill, benchmarking with peers, and suggests that green building made sense financially in addition for conforming with internal and external building standards/requirements. A few recommendations are proposed:

- **Positioning:** in next 5-10 years, position McGill in the Top 5 universities in Canada (among the U15) for total of LEED certified projects
- **Policy alignment:** embed LEED certification requirements in master planning initiatives
- **Enforcement:** for projects NOT pursuing certification, establish revision and approval process to justify why not (instead needed to justify why LEED certification is included).

Advisory Council members are asked these discussion questions:

- 1) *From your experience, are the recommendations aligned with best practice? Do they fit in the McGill context?*
- 2) *Would you advise McGill to adopt these recommendations?*

Summary of feedback received included:

Defining appropriate metrics:

- In lieu of total LEED certified projects, the University could use percentage of eligible building space that is LEED certified.
- Demonstrate that resources invested in buildings would actually increase productivity of education and research activities in the buildings (ex. reduced absenteeism).

Aiming high:

- One ACS member cited the example of their organization, which had reached the 10-year mark in their policy of building to LEED Gold standard for new buildings. This was established in 2009 as a leap of faith, and the decision validated with research since. It was therefore recommended that McGill go further and target LEED Gold instead of Silver.

Overall, feedback from Advisory Council members were positive about adoption of the recommendations, taking into account the issues discussed.

7. McGill Bicentennial: Student competition on sustainability

Prof. Manfredi invites Mr Cadet to speak about McGill's bicentennial. Mr Cadet provides an overview of bicentennial activities planned between Homecoming 2020 to December 2021, including eight signature McGill events highlighting accomplishments and launching the University into next 100 years.

One of these is a student competition on sustainability modeled on the Dobson Cup over a 14-month period (from October 2020 to November 2021).

- A communiqué would be distributed in the Winter 2020 semester to advise students of the impending competition, allowing time for ideas to percolate.
- Judges from the internal and external community would be approached over the next year based on expertise and interest. Criteria for mentors/judges have yet to be established, as well as the criteria for project assessment. However, the student body could also vote on these initiatives.
- Given that students should be the face and driving force of the challenge, Mr Cadet indicates that the working group was seeking student involvement in the planning process.

Advisory Council members are asked for recommendations on:

- 1) How to ensure a high level of engagement of participation from student body;
- 2) How to ensure internal and external McGill community participation; and
- 3) How to ensure that projects that students work on would live on after the bicentennial.

Some recommendations from the discussion:

- **Align projects with McGill priorities.** For example, students could self-identify around Vision 2020 priorities.
- **Consider providing financial incentives to participants.** Example: scholarships or a financial award structure could improve participation numbers.
 - The potential to use the SPF for funding could be explored.
 - Each faculty could find existing resources to fund their students, such as internships and summer fellowships granted through philanthropy. Prof Lennox pledged six of these on behalf of the Faculty of Science towards the bicentennial student competition.
 - Mr Cadet is already in conversation with University Advancement to build a preliminary budget.
- **Consider awarding academic credit.** Example: a pan-McGill course code could be established as a construct across the university, branded under McGill200, thus allowing faculty to get onboard to participate in teaching and students to get on board regarding the challenges.
- **Establish framework to support participants from diverse backgrounds.** Example: workshops and resources could give people the background to develop meaningful applications and the opportunity to contribute.

Mentorship appears to be a popular idea. Faculty and staff, as well as alumni, could provide expertise, quantitative and qualitative data. This could take place via a hybrid model of a core mentor assigned to a project team and ad-hoc advisors for specific competencies (ex.

marketing). Contribution to bicentennial activities could be considered as “service to community” requirements for both faculty tenure and staff performance dialogue consideration. One participant provides the example of one company where recognition by managers and peers had been a good incentive for participation.

The discussion runs overtime, therefore Mr Miller will share Mr Cadet’s contact information with the participants so that they can submit additional recommendations directly.

8. Next steps & closing remarks

Prof. Beauchamp invites members of the Advisory Council to an announcement from the federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change that is taking place the next day. McGill will be awarded \$1.8M under the Low Carbon Economy Fund. The funds would be used to convert McGill oil and gas infrastructure to renewable energy, resulting in a 20% reduction in emissions (10 kilotons of CO₂ equivalent).

Prof. Beauchamp and Prof. Manfredi thank members for their participation. They reiterate the invitation to attend the Catalyst Awards on Sustainability Gala on April 1st.

The next meeting will take place May 2nd 2019.