



Advisory Council on Sustainability

November 7, 2016

James Administration, Suite 302

Minutes

Present: Paul Chesser, Robert Couvrette, Alan DeSousa, Jayne Engle, Victor Frankel, Anja Geitmann, Ben Ger, Robert Leckey, Rachel Léger, Bruce Lennox, Christopher Manfredi (Co-Chair), Francois Miller (Steward), Kathleen Ng, Jim Nicell, Lauren Rathmell, Morty Yalovsky (Co-Chair), Nathalie Zinger

Regrets: Karen Richardson

Welcome

The Co-chairs welcome the participants and thank them for their involvement.

Roundtable

Prof. Manfredi invites people to give their name, title, and say why they are interested in being part of the Advisory Council on Sustainability.

Goals of the Advisory Council for the next year

Prof. Manfredi reviews the objectives of the Council for the first year, which are:

- Provide strategic advice on potential actions that could be incorporated in McGill's Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (2017-2020).
- Leverage expertise and opportunities to increase the potential impact of the action plan.
- Ensure that McGill stakeholders are appropriately consulted.
- Ensure alignment with other significant strategic planning initiatives.

Terms of reference

Prof. Yalovsky presents the terms of Reference of the Advisory Council, underlining a few key elements:

- The mandate of the Council is to 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.
- The purpose of the Council is to provide advice/guidance to the university in its sustainability endeavors.
- The members' involvement is for a period of three years, with the possibility of being reappointed.
- For students, terms will be determined in collaboration with the students associations.
- No alternates can be designated.

- The Co-Chairs will report to the Principal on the content of our discussions at least once per year.
- The members are expected to let the co-chairs know if an item puts them in a position of conflict of interest.
- After this meeting, Francois will send a form on potential conflicts of interest that members should complete.

McGill: A leader in sustainability?: *How would you assess McGill's reputation/positioning in sustainability (locally, nationally & internationally)?*

Prof. Yalovsky asks the members to each answer in one minute the question “How would you assess McGill’s reputation in sustainability (locally, nationally & internationally)?”

Comments received included:

- Despite McGill’s outstanding reputation on many levels, from the outside it can be seen sometimes as being less penetrable and hard to move.
- There is room for improvement but also a recognition of the university’s desire to move forward.
- McGill should emphasize its communication in formats better adapted to the needs of various target audiences.
- There could be improved connectivity within/between the internal and external communities leveraging McGill’s research, education, and operational capacities (physical assets, land, etc.), and coordination of efforts.

Context: Snapshot of sustainability at McGill

Mr Miller then provides a brief overview of the history of sustainability at McGill, highlighting key achievements over the past two decades. The group then revisited the first question about McGill’s positioning.

Comments received included:

- McGill’s sustainability reputation can appear understated vis-à-vis our achievements.
- Maintaining credibility is also very important.
- McGill should address the question of branding: What it wishes to be known for and why, while maintaining a true commitment to improve on sustainability.
- There is a need for all McGillians to understand its sustainability initiatives and objectives so they are proud and aware of what the institution is doing, and ensure that their activities are in line with what the university wishes to achieve.
- How and to whom we compare should lead to a better understanding of the meaning of ‘leadership’, considering elements such as key performance indicators or setting of targets.
- There is already an expectation that any large institution would have sustainability initiatives.
- McGill should assess sustainability initiatives for true overall impacts, taking into account externalities.
- A challenge for McGill is identifying means to further recognize students’ contribution to sustainability, especially with regards to their impacts on society after they graduate.

McGill Sustainability Strategy - Vision 2020

Mr Miller presents an overview of McGill's Sustainability Strategy and focuses on the activities that are being planned to craft the 2017-2020 Climate & Sustainability Action Plan.

2017-2020 Climate & Sustainability Action Plan:

- **What actions / commitments could further position McGill as a global leader on climate and sustainability (inspiring & realistic)?**
- **How can McGill's mission – that focuses on the creation and dissemination of knowledge – be fully leveraged for the 2017-2020 Climate & Sustainability Action Plan?**

Prof. Manfredi invites members to share their suggestions on the two framing questions above.

For the upcoming action plan, some suggestions included:

- Actions should be focused on the 3Es (Education, Engagement and Empowerment): ex. integrating sustainability into curriculum;
- Actions selected should embed sustainability within and throughout the McGill ethos;
- Actions should leverage the alumni network – one of McGill's best assets – to ensure that our work has global reach;
- We should aim for carbon neutrality and select actions accordingly;
- We should develop targets to support sustainability research, operations and infrastructure as a potential focal point for McGill's 200th celebration;
- We should recognize those who take action to make campus and its environs more sustainable;
- We should prioritize cross-cutting actions that integrate McGill's core commitments; and
- We should select actions that mobilize the community around McGill to get on board with its sustainability plan.

Next steps

Francois reminds the group of the upcoming meeting dates (February 23 and May 24, 2017), confirming that the briefing material would be circulated approximately two weeks in advance and would include updates from the Action Team meetings.

ACTION:

- McGill Office of Sustainability will distribute a list of existing sustainability policies/plans (2-pager) and the link to the [STARS report](#).

Closing remarks

Prof. Yalovsky invites members to share their ideas on how future meetings could be improved, whether the types of issues being addressed are appropriate, and whether there are additional subjects they wished to bring forward on the agenda. There is general consensus that this meeting did set the stage well in anticipation of future sessions.