

**Advisory Council on Sustainability**  
McGill University, Zoom Online Meeting  
December 17, 2020 (3:00 PM – 4:30 PM)

**Present:** F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, D. Dutton, C. Manfredi, D. Mondou, E. Bennett, B. Harvey, B. Lennox, J. Nicell, K. Cook, N. Dworek, C. Aubrac, P. Cigana, A. Desousa, A. Porlier, L. Rathmell, G. Cadet, K. Houser.

**Absent with regrets:** J. Earle, H. Lauzon.

**1. Welcome, Approval of Minutes from the Last Meeting and Today's Agenda**

F. Miller welcomes the group to the meeting. He asks for approval for the minutes from the last meeting, which the Council approves. There are no additions to today's agenda.

**2. Latest News Related to Sustainability**

K. Houser presents recent sustainability news, including:

- A sustainability survey was launched to gather information on awareness of sustainability initiatives and topics, as well as information on commuting habits from the McGill community.
- The 2020 Catalyst Award winners were announced and the 2021 call for nominations was publicized, with a submission due date of January 18, 2021.
- The Sustainability Working Group at Macdonald Campus has been active at identifying and implementing projects on campus, including a recent tree planting initiative.
- McGill has partnered with Ecosia, a search engine that plants trees based on the number of searches performed; approximately 1 tree is planted per 45 searches.
- The Sustainability Projects Fund approved a \$50,000 envelope to expand green lab initiatives on campus (e.g. pipette tip box recycling, non-hazardous glove recycling). Labs can request a maximum of \$4,000 through a form that will be on the sustainability website in January.
- The Sustainability Ambassadors program is running and the students will be promoting the Strategy during the winter semester.
- The Office of Sustainability has applied for an updated AASHE STARS rating. The result will be a higher gold rating, which is good progress towards the long-term target of a platinum rating.

**3. Update on the Climate & Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025**

F. Miller and K. Houser present an overview of the final version of the Strategy. Of note, next steps were outlined for communications and implementation. Additionally, images designed by School of Architecture students that envision a future McGill were shared. The Strategy was endorsed by the Board Committee on Sustainability, and subsequently approved by the Board of Governors on December 10, 2020.

Members suggested:

- The Strategy is clear and well-prepared.
- Sharing the cost of implementing actions, especially when they are capital intensive, along with funding sources can assure readers of the achievability of targets. Particularly, the carbon

neutrality target seems ambitious and expensive. It is suggested that an existing presentation on closing the gap to carbon neutrality is shared at the next meeting.

- Make sure that engagement ideas such as the roadshow reach a wide audience and not just the usual crowd. Lead by example and share best practices. Some ideas to increase reach are asking to have a guest speaking slot in different faculties, as well as hosting public check-ins that have engagement elements such as scenario development, competitions or games.
- External engagement, including partnerships and alumni engagement, is also important. Have a plan for these partnerships.

#### **4. Embedding Sustainability in McGill's Bicentennial Celebrations**

F. Miller and G. Cadet present the sustainability events and interventions planned for the McGill Bicentennial Celebrations. The celebrations have been impacted by the current situation with COVID-19. On a positive note, impact200, has been successful so far: 44 teams submitted applications. Finalists will be chosen after a pitch session in late March and will work on their sustainability projects over summer 2021. 30-40 trees were planted this Fall as part of the ongoing initiative to plant 200 trees. Sustainability will be featured in the Sustainability Conference and Sustainability Week, where both internal and external communities will be highlighted. Sustainable Event certification will be implemented across the events. Finally, the New Vic project will likely be the biggest legacy; the Bicentennial will focus not only on the groundbreaking but about the work that will be done there in the future.

Members Suggested:

- Ensure that in-person events are blended, meaning that they have an online participation element. This will help expand reach.
- There is a great opportunity to engage alumni in the bicentennial. Providing a challenge that they can do in their own communities (e.g. planting a tree) that aligns with the University's actions could be powerful. Sharing recordings and insights from sustainability actions/research with this network has a significant potential for influence.
- Connect with Jérôme Waldispühl, an Associate Professor of Computer Science, as he has expertise in game development that could be relevant.

#### **5. COVID-19: Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainability**

F. Miller presents the topic context: as a vaccine is distributed and on-campus activities will eventually resume, a discussion regarding the sustainability challenges and/or opportunities is timely. K. Houser launches a poll to gauge attendees' thoughts on 3 questions regarding pre-pandemic to post-pandemic behavior changes. (Full poll results are at the end of the document.) F. Miller summarizes that the response to the waste question was less clear, but for the commuting via private modes of transportation and business travel questions, there seems to be a consensus: they increase and decrease, respectively.

Members Suggested:

- People will be eager to travel and have gatherings because they have missed this element, but it will be gradual.
- People may have an enduring hypersensitivity to germs and being in close proximity to others. This could bring back old habits or cause people to avoid sharing anything.

- Preparing for behavior changes in advance to help make good habits stick is important (e.g. implementing incentives to reward these positive behaviors).
- Masks will likely continue be used in the future, which could increase waste.
- Many people may be averse to using public transit because it implies close contact with people. Additionally, since many people will be working at home at least part time, they may not be willing to buy monthly passes that made public transit affordable. Either way, usage will change.
- Keeping virtual conferences and online options will be a way of the future and should be encouraged. Replacing certain in-person activities, such as meetings or guest lectures, with virtual versions may actually be more cost effective, save time, and reduce emissions without losing the essence of the activity. Also, travel may be chosen more mindfully by grouping several activities in the same location to reduce the number of total trips.
- There will be both gains and setbacks: paper use will likely stay less than pre-COVID levels, but travel might increase. Some practices, such as determining how many people can fit in rooms on campus or what ventilation systems are necessary, will be challenging in the future.

## **6. Next Steps and Closing Remarks**

The next Advisory Council meeting will take place in February 3, 2021.

## Poll Results:

### In comparison to behaviours pre-pandemic:

1. Post-COVID-19, the use of private modes of transportation (car, walking, biking) for commuting will:
  - **Increase significantly (19%)**
  - **Increase slightly (44%)**
  - Decrease slightly (31%)
  - Decrease significantly (0%)
  - I don't know (6%)
  
2. Post-COVID-19, demand for single-use and/or disposable items will:
  - Increase significantly (6%)
  - **Increase slightly (50%)**
  - **Decrease slightly (31%)**
  - Decrease significantly (6%)
  - I don't know (6%)
  
3. Post-COVID-19, the University's business-related travel (including air travel) will:
  - Increase significantly (6%)
  - Increase slightly (6%)
  - **Decrease slightly (44%)**
  - **Decrease significantly (38%)**
  - I don't know (6%)