

Advisory Council on Sustainability
McGill University, Zoom Online Meeting
May 17, 2022 (3:00 PM – 4:30 PM)

Present: F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, C. Manfredi, D. Mondou, B. Lennox, B. Harvey, C. Aubrac, P. Cigana, A. Porlier, L. Rathmell, N. Volland, K. Houser, B. Zsigovics

Guests: Sophie Leblanc, Chief Investment Officer and Treasurer (Office of Investments), Shona Watt, Sustainability Manager (McGill Office of Sustainability)

Absent with regrets: E. Bennett, D. Dutton, J. Nicell

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

F. Miller welcomes the group to the meeting. F. Miller asks for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. 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 new sustainable Travel Guide was published, which includes a checklist on how University travellers can reduce the environmental impacts of their travel.
- McGill was named one of Canada's Greenest Employers by Mediacorp Canada for a fifth consecutive year.
- In complement to the new waste infrastructure installed on campus, a Zero-Waste Ambassador program was launched in March 2022.
- The Staff Gardens urban agriculture program is returning to on-campus activities after pivoting online during the pandemic. Orientation sessions will be held this week.
- An innovative online platform called [Sus](#) was launched in April. Sus helps policymakers, researchers, community leaders and members of the public explore and understand urban sustainability issues in the Montréal region. It was developed out of the Urban Sustainability theme funded through the McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative (MSSI).

3. Reducing the carbon footprint from University investments

S. Leblanc presented an overview of the carbon reduction strategy for the McGill Investment Pool (MIP). In 2020, the University committed to reducing the carbon emissions of the MIP public equity portfolio in order to achieve and sustain, by 2025, a 33% carbon emissions reduction. The Board of Governors mandated the Investment Committee to undertake six actions with respect to decarbonization: impact investing, screening, engagement, ESG integration, and annual reporting. S. Leblanc shared notable achievements to date, including the fact that carbon emissions of the MIP listed equity portfolio have decreased by 53% from Sept. 2019 to Dec. 2021. In addition, McGill has invested \$55M USD in a Global Renewal Energy Fund and a Private Equity Impact, as well as practiced active shareholder engagement to push for better corporate sustainability policies and practices. S. Leblanc concluded the presentation by reiterating that going with the comprehensive strategy has proved to be an effective result-oriented approach, as some goals are being reached sooner than expected. F. Miller presented two questions to the group for discussion:

- How would you suggest increasing awareness on McGill's efforts in decarbonizing our investment portfolio?

- How can we better engage with students, staff, and faculty?

Members suggested:

- It would be important to voice your achievements so far, to some degree. Students, staff and faculty appreciate the effort especially when they are not left in the dark about what is going on.
- The work looks like it is well underway, however the key may be to focus on communicating big achievements and announcements instead of focusing on the little things. For example, the achievements around impact investing and engagement.

4. Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) Referendum Communications Plan

S. Watt joined the meeting to present and share plans regarding Sustainability Projects Fund communications this year. Every 5 years, students must vote to renew the fund in referendum process. In October 2022, SSMU and MCSS will vote on whether or not to continue the Fund, and then PGSS will vote in February 2023. Given that there have been decreased on-campus activities due to the pandemic, it is even more important this year to raise awareness about the SPF, as students return to campus. The SPF will bolster visibility through high-visibility signage on downtown campus, tabling by SPF ambassadors, partnering with CLE for SPF-related swag, and co-hosting a Sustainability Soiree to name a few. To conclude, S. Watt and F. Miller asked the participants to discuss the following questions:

- Do you have any recommendations on how to further raise awareness of the SPF, especially among students?
- Given the pandemic context, do you have any recommendations on how to leverage both digital and in-person tactics?

Members suggested:

- Mentorship and ambassadorship are important. In-person awareness raising, such as presentations in lecture halls can be very effective.
- It is also important to foster to engage all faculties when raising awareness about the Fund.
- Regarding newly admitted students, it would be a good idea to collaborate with enrollment services and student services to include information about the SPF in their different touchpoints with students, including on their websites and in welcoming emails.
- Providing specific examples/links to the SPF's impact, its accessibility, and the fact that it is the largest fund in Canada, are important to emphasize as students consider the renewal of the SPF.
- It is good to have a communications plan component in the SPF application for projects.
- Finally, it was suggested to use the acronym "SPF" sparingly.

5. Next steps & closing remarks

F. Miller thanks the guest presenters for their contributions and reminds everyone that the next Advisory Council meeting will take place in the fall. As per the poll sent out, the decision was made to have two of the meetings in person and two of the meetings virtually next year. Times and dates will be scheduled and shared with the participants in the coming months. For the members that are coming up to the end of their three-year mandate, they will be contacted soon to confirm their interest in remaining on the council.