

Advisory Council on Sustainability
McGill University, Zoom Online Meeting
November 23, 2021 (3:00 PM – 4:30 PM)

Present: F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, D. Dutton, C. Manfredi, D. Mondou, E. Bennett, B. Harvey, K. Hogue, C. Aubrac, P. Cigana, A. Desousa, A. Porlier, L. Rathmell, N. Volland, J. A. Dudeck, L. MacDonald, K. Houser

Absent with regrets: B. Lennox, J. Nicell, D. Daryanani, T. Phillips

1. Welcome New Members and Roundtable Introductions, Approval of Minutes from the Last Meeting and Today's Agenda

F. Miller welcomes the group to the meeting. He 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:

- The [Climate & Sustainability Annual Report](#) was recently released. It provides highlights of sustainability accomplishments across McGill's campuses. Additionally, the [2020 Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#), prepared in partnership with Utilities and Energy Management, was also released and highlighted that McGill saw reduced overall emissions in 2020 for a net total of 42,381 tCO₂e.
- As part of the Bicentennial Celebrations, 6,000 plants grown at Macdonald Campus were given away at 6 distribution points across our campuses and at the Maison du développement durable over a 3-day period in October. This project was supported by the Sustainability Projects Fund.
- The Sustainability Projects Fund awarded \$400,000—the largest award to date—to support the project “Improving McGill's Waste Systems to Achieve Zero-Waste.” This project will install approximately 230 new indoor and outdoor multi-stream sorting bins across the downtown and Macdonald Campuses, in addition to creating a comprehensive waste education campaign. These efforts are in alignment with the University's long-term target to become zero-waste by 2035.
- McGill served as a host institution for the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Global Conference on Sustainability in Higher Education, which took place from October 12-14. Two workshops were presented by sustainability staff and McGill community members were able to attend the conference free of charge.
- McGill hosted a Fair Trade Campus week from October 25 -29. Highlights included a PGSS bake sale selling fair trade brownies donated by SHHS, and promotion sale for Roddick Roast coffees.
- A new Sustainability Officer has been hired with the support of the Office of the Principal. She will join the office in January to work on advancing key education initiatives outlined in the Strategy.

3. Bike Infrastructure at McGill

J. A. Dudeck and L. MacDonald joined to share about work being done to improve the quality and quantity of bike infrastructure on campus, an action in the Travel & Commuting category of the Climate & Sustainability Strategy and a consideration included in the Campus Master Plan. They shared the results of a recent bike infrastructure inventory, a demand assessment, as well as best practices. All of these elements will inform a Bike Infrastructure Action Plan that is currently in development. Attendees were asked for their thoughts on their desired ideal state of bike infrastructure at McGill, as well as examples of best practices that McGill could potentially adopt.

Members suggested:

- Key elements to consider are circulation and connectivity (both on-campus and with municipal infrastructure), conviviality of the experience, as well as accessibility and security of the bike parking.
- Are there any covered bike parking solutions available? This could be a good option to implement over existing outdoor parking racks.
- If there is an indoor facility, consider that salt will be an issue—a rinsing station would be ideal.
- E-bike adoption is an emerging trend and should be considered when making the plan.
- Some great examples of infrastructure include the University of Sherbrooke bike parking facility and University of Sussex bike infrastructure.
- Vélo Québec offers services to help develop these solutions.
- Corporate BIXI memberships are often popular with employees traveling to local destinations.
- Promoting intermodal transport or campus-to-campus cycling (once a year could be interesting) and making sure that buses can accommodate that type of travel is an idea.
- Consider that cyclists outside of the McGill community may want to use the infrastructure.

4. McGill Carbon Offsetting Program

F. Miller and K. Houser presented information about the McGill Carbon Offsetting Program, the flagship action in the Travel & Commuting category of the Strategy. While there are many ways to reduce emissions from travel and commuting, this presentation focused solely on offsetting. McGill has a partnership with AMARIE, an Indigenous women’s NGO, and the traditional Embera authorities in eastern Panama to plant approximately 45,000 trees over 3 years. This project has been successful in planting 28,000 trees to date that will sequester approximately 10,000 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent. It was shared that an extension to the program is in development that would allow McGill community members to participate by making contributions to offset their travel or commute. Members were asked to discuss if the program was clear and compelling, and if they would hypothetically participate in the program.

Members suggested:

- The program is great and tells a good story.
- It is a bit more appealing to offset trips in one payment vs. a recurring payment (e.g., payroll).
- For air travel, in many other organizations business travel is offset by the organization.
- Ensuring that the program is well-managed is very important—this could be done by third-party certification, transparent reporting, etc.
- Several members raised the point that it would also be compelling to plant trees on McGill’s properties, noting that there is value of having something more visible and tangible locally. This could be a demonstration project that serves as an educational or informational point of engagement.
- Remember that offsetting can be seen as a license to emit greenhouse gases—reduction should always be prioritized.
- Institutionalization would be ideal. This should be embedded in the current processes and structures at McGill.

5. Next Steps and Closing Remarks

F. Miller mentions the next Advisory Council meeting will take place on February 22, 2022. A poll was launched to determine whether the meeting should be held in person (conditions permitting) or online. The results were split (4 in-person, 4 online, and 3 no preference votes). This decision will be made closer to the meeting date.