

Advisory Council on Sustainability
McGill University, ZOOM
November 30, 2022 (3:00 PM – 4:30 PM)

Present: F. Miller, Y. Beauchamp, D. Mondou, D. Dutton, J. Nicell, B. Harvey, A. DeSousa, C. Aubrac, L. Buckley, P. Cigana, A. Porlier, K. Houser, B. Zsigovics

Absent with regrets: F. Labeau, B. Lennox, N. Volland, L. Rathmell, R. Wright, G. MacDonald

Guests: Lauren MacDonald, Sustainability Officer, McGill Office of Sustainability
Kimberly John, Sustainability Officer, McGill Office of Sustainability

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

F. Miller welcomes the group to the 2nd meeting of 4 for 2022-2023. F. Miller asks for approval of the minutes from the last meeting. The Council approves. There are no additions to today's agenda. F. Miller welcomes guests Lauren MacDonald and Kimberly John to the meeting.

2. Latest News Related to Sustainability

K. Houser presents recent sustainability news, including:

- Online Sustainability Module has been available as of mid-November for a soft launch. Accessibility testing with students is underway and a launch event will take place on January 26.
- The MCSS and SSMU student societies held a referendum this fall for the renewal of the SPF. Both votes were successful, and the referenda passed. The last vote to renew the SPF will be held by the PGSS during the winter semester. This will help renew the SPF for the next five years.
- 60 ambassadors were recruited in the newly updated Sustainability Ambassadors Program, which has SPF, zero-waste, and sustainable event streams.
- McGill is a finalist for the AASHE Campus Sustainability Achievement Award for the Bayano-McGill Reforestation Project in Panama. This reforestation project allows us to offset a part of McGill's greenhouse gas emissions.
- As part of the project "Improving McGill's Waste Systems to Achieve Zero-Waste" funded by the Sustainability Projects Fund, several new exterior sorting stations have been installed by the Buildings and Grounds team. These new bins now offer the recycling stream outdoors.
- The Sustainability Education Fellows program that Blane Harvey and Jessica Latus presented about at the last meeting was launched. 10 participants were recruited from 6 faculties, and a faculty retreat is planned for December.
- An enhanced partnership between the Office of Sustainability and the McGill Sustainability Systems Initiative (MSSI) is underway.
- The Sustainability Policy is up for review in 2023 and we are proposing a few revisions. One key addition will aim to express the idea that students will learn about sustainability during their time at McGill. Several initiatives are already underway that will help achieve this. Adding this text will help us make significant progress towards the University's KPI to reach a STARS platinum rating.

Members suggested:

- Take care with the policy wording: focus on sustainability awareness and education.
- The initiatives mentioned may not reach all students; there may need to be progress markers and expansion of reach.
- Members would like to see an update on COP15 and what McGill is doing on biodiversity.

3. Zero-Waste Zone

L. MacDonald presents the Zero-Waste Zone project, which is a flagship action in McGill's Climate and Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025. This flagship action is in its initial design phase and the hope is to start the implementation in 2023. This educational space will be an invitation for the McGill community to take action and learn more about waste reduction practices. The zone will be clearly delineated to illustrate its unique purpose: to be free of landfill waste.

McGill aims to become zero-waste by 2035 by attaining a diversion rate of 90 percent. To achieve this target, the University is improving campus infrastructure and bolstering education and engagement initiatives. Over 700 multi stream waste sorting stations have been installed as well as the outdoor multi stream bins that K. Houser alluded to. Composting has been set up in 22 McGill buildings.

The zero-waste zone would be an area to educate, empower, motivate, and inspire the community. It would focus on engagement and education: how to reduce and sort waste in an area to maximize visibility and accessibility. It is meant to provide a look into the future of how McGill campuses will look by 2035 or hopefully before then. The desired outcome being that we provide McGillians alternatives for waste disposal, promote reuse, encourage proper sorting, and discourage overconsumption.

We would like the space to be attention grabbing and welcoming with clear signage and activities. We would like there to be no landfill stream and have consumable materials minimized. Some of the fixtures, educational tools, and displays we would like to have in the space could include: a zero-waste sorting station, a bottle refill station, and a specialty recycling station. We are also hoping to have a station to promote the reusable mug program, a little free library, and some upcycled artwork.

Members suggested:

- The interactive piece of this project is great, it encourages people to be engaged and get involved.
- Possible locations to consider: the McGill Engine Centre, the Leacock hallway, and Libraries. Choosing a high traffic zone would be the best. You should choose the location based on the space and criteria: consider what are the attributes you need for this project to be successful and if it is transferable to other locations. It may be good to also consider using a pre-existing dining space, which would allow you to re-assess how these spaces are designed and used.
- Discomfort with the term of zero-waste because it implies 100% zero-waste versus moving toward zero-waste. You will really need to define what waste are we talking about: it seems like we are targeting municipal waste rather than all waste.
- You may want to reconsider having no landfill space, will people just export the landfill items?
- You should showcase the elements and discussions used to create the space. Make sure your objectives are clear and make sure to define the success criteria.
- Be careful in your messaging and keep it simple. Tweaking the name of the zone may be needed.

4. McGill Sustainable Labs Program

There are over 900 labs at McGill, spread across many buildings and faculties. Labs use only 17% of the physical space of downtown and Macdonald campuses yet use 47% of the total energy. McGill aims to embed a culture of sustainability in labs, and to enable lab users to take actions that reduce the negative environmental impacts of research, support human health and safety, optimize financial and material efficiencies, and maintain the record of research excellence.

Creating a sustainable lab certification program is an action in the Climate & Sustainability Strategy and is a priority for the university to explore. A certification program where lab staff complete pre-determined actions in order to achieve certain recognition levels is a common framework used by universities to

improve sustainability in labs. We feel that developing a certification program for sustainable labs would make sense for the McGill community, and we are working to develop an in-house certification program versus a pre-made certification.

While a certification would touch on all aspects of a lab, we are also taking another action aimed at reducing energy consumption: participating in the International Freezer Challenge. This will be another way that labs can become involved in sustainability at McGill.

Members suggested/asked:

- You may want to target graduate students rather than the faculty. The students will usually be more responsive and are very present in the labs.
- Perhaps have internal audits of the labs – that way you can get a real picture of what is working.
- Possibly rethink the approach of doing the certification internally – there are costs associated with implementation, IT needs, tracking and audits. A brief on the benefits and costs for both options would be an important step.
- Could we incentivize graduate students by providing them with a certification as a “green lab researcher”? This could differentiate them on the job market and could possibly help with grant applications.

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 February 22, 2023 in person.