
Advisory Council on Sustainability (ACS)

May 2, 2019 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

McGill University, James Building, room 302

Minutes

Present: Kakwiranó:ron Cook, Robert Couvrette, Alan DeSousa, Diana Dutton, Anja Geitmann, Bruce Lennox, Christopher Manfredi (Co-Chair), Francois Miller (Steward), Hélène Lauzon

Guests: Kendra Pomerantz, Marcy Slapcoff, Shona Watt

Regrets: Yves Beauchamp (Co-Chair), Coralie Deny, Jayne Engle, Robert Leckey, Jim Nicell, Alice Léfèbvre, Amy Luers, Matthew McLaughlin, Lauren Rathmell, Helena Zakrzewski

1. Welcome & Roundtable

Dr. Manfredi thanks everyone for their involvement and mentions that there are a few guests that will participate in the meeting. He also mentions that there is a new member of the Advisory Council on Sustainability: Coralie Deny. She is the Director of the Conseil régional de l'environnement de Montréal. Unfortunately she couldn't attend today's meeting.

2. Approval of minutes from the last meeting (February 2, 2019) and today's agenda

Dr. Manfredi confirms that participants have no changes to make to the minutes of the previous meeting or further additions to the day's agenda.

3. Latest News Related to Sustainability

Mr. Miller provides the latest news related to sustainability:

- **McGill joins the City of Montreal to reduce air travel impact:** On April 3rd, McGill joined the announcement by Mayor Valérie Plante to commit to reduce air travel impact, along with C3 Montreal and Desjardins.
- **Blue Community designation:** The City of Montreal and McGill University received the Blue Community designation due to their efforts to recognize water and sanitation as human rights, promote publicly managed water services and ban or phase out the sale of bottled water.
- **\$1.8 million towards carbon neutrality:** McGill was awarded funding from the federal government to transform one of the gas-powered boiler to electric. It is estimated that this will reduce about 9,900 tons per year of McGill's reported greenhouse gas emissions.
- **100th sustainable event certified:** The 10-year anniversary of the Desautels Executive MBA received Gold certification from Office of Sustainability. This was the 100th event certified through the "Sustainable Event Certification" program.

- **Launch of McGill carbon calculator:** The McGill carbon calculator is an online tool (www.Mc3Gill.ca) for events organizers to calculate participants' carbon emissions related to their travel.
- **New bin model and compost pilot project:** Garbage and recycling bins have been redesigned to increase signage consistency, and a composting stream has been added in 3 locations in the McConnell Engineering building.
- **Catalyst awards on April 1st, 2019:** The ceremony recognized projects and individuals who have contributed to building a culture of sustainability at McGill.
- **Position paper on the sustainable development federal strategy:** McGill presented a position paper that highlighted the complementarities between McGill and the government's sustainability strategies, as well as some recommendations.
- **Installation of water fountains and water droplets:** About 70 water droplet paths have been installed across the campus to highlight where the water fountains are located in a playful way.
- **Nutritower hydroponic grow towers:** The Office for Students with Disabilities has received SPF funding for 3 hydroponic systems to grow vegetables and herbs. A student group has received additional SPF funding for 3 more units on campus, for a total of 6 on campus.
- **Canada's Top 100 Greenest Employers:** For the second year in a row, McGill was commended for creating a culture of environmental awareness in its organization.
- **McGill students create Montreal Social Value Fund:** Originally based in Vancouver, the project gives student groups the opportunity for hands-on practice in social impact investing.
- **Macdonald campus surroundings flooded:** Swelling of Lac-Des-Deux-Montagnes has caused flooding to the area, but narrowly missed affecting the Mac campus facilities house. The Galipeault Bridge has been closed to Île-Perrot, which has caused substantial traffic and exams officially being delayed for 30 minutes.

Discussion:

- A participant asks which provider has been selected to provide carbon offsets. They suggest that McGill selects an organization that can have a positive impact on McGill's campuses.
 - Mr. Miller mentions that there will be a meeting with Procurement Services in the next few weeks to prepare a list of criteria to guide the choice of the carbon offset provider.
- A participant asks if McGill was asked to participate in the independent climate institute launched by the federal government.
 - Dr. Lennox mentions that Dr. Ragan and Dr. Potvin will be leading two of the five nodes.

4. Membership renewal & satisfaction survey

Dr. Manfredi says that the terms of reference of the Advisory Council state that "Members are appointed for three-year terms (for students, terms will be determined in collaboration with the students associations) but may be reappointed to serve subsequent terms".

We are approaching the 3-year mark for most of the group. Mr. Miller shows a graph to highlight how most people on the council are up for renewal. Participants are invited to renew their involvement for an additional period of 2 years. Mr. Miller will follow up via email.

5. Improving McGill's Waste Management System

Dr. Manfredi introduces Ms. Kendra Pomerantz, who is the Supervisor for Sustainability, Contracts and Special Projects in Building Services. In brief:

- Various stakeholders developed the Waste Diversion Strategy, and there are several challenges to McGill's poor waste diversion rate.
- The main phases to improve the waste system are:
 - Contract and data management
 - Signage & bin standardization aligned with Recyc-Quebec pictograms
 - Waste education and engagement
 - Piloting organic waste stream

Given this information, a few recommendations are proposed by participants:

- Collect data from the beginning in order to measure the expected improvements.
- Work with Procurement Services to purchase waste bins with a favorable life cycle.
- Ensure that bins and signage are easily updated for future recycling and composting streams.
- Remind the community where battery recycling bins are located.

6. Sustainable Events Certification: Expanding the Reach

Dr. Manfredi invites Ms. Shona Watt, Sustainability Officer, to speak about McGill's Sustainable Events Certification. In brief, the program uses a checklist to encourage and recognize event planners for committing to socially and environmentally responsible actions. A team of student volunteers meets with event planners to grant them Bronze, Silver, or Gold level.

Advisory Council members are asked for recommendations on:

- 1) How could we incentivize organizers of large events to get certified?
- 2) How can we embed the event certification in McGill's decentralized event planning process?

Some recommendations from the discussion:

- **Set event certification as an opt-out program, not opt-in.** In room booking form or other processes, an event should be automatically scheduled to be certified unless event planners go out of their way to opt-out.
- **Make some actions mandatory.** Create a baseline of what every sustainable events should include, while additional actions contribute to event certification.
- **Increase outreach across campus.**
- **Provide reward or incentive to get certified.** For example, certification levels could be linked to a discount on services.
- **Align with McGill's greater priorities and targets.** Explain to event planners how collected metrics contribute to university priorities.

7. Campus as a Living Lab

Dr. Manfredi invites Mr. Miller and Ms. Marcy Slapcoff to speak about McGill campus as a living lab. They provide examples of current projects at McGill and other universities, available resources, and how it relates to the Principal's priorities.

Advisory Council members are asked for recommendations on:

- 1) What could motivate staff, students and faculty members to participate?
- 2) How might we embed the Campus as a Living Lab program into the McGill undergraduate experience?

Some recommendations from the discussion:

- **Develop a virtual platform to match students and professors from different faculties.** This could be the role of a program coordinator.
- **Audit what is currently happening at McGill.** This step is deemed relevant, as it will inform the next steps. Environment 401 is a good case study, as many students register and faculty are eager to teach the course.
- **Create space for experiential learning in courses.**
- **Explore the option to require an applied student research course for all students.** This option may be challenging to implement, as there are already many course requirements in a 3-year degree.

8. Next steps & closing remarks

Dr. Manfredi thank members for their participation, and Mr. Miller will coordinate membership renewal and reappointment/replacement. The next meeting of the Advisory Council will be in September 2019.