

Sustainability Assessment 2012-2013

Students' Society of McGill University

August 2013

Montreal, Quebec, Canada

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU) Sustainability Assessment 2012-2013! This is an annual assessment as mandated in the SSMU Sustainability Policy covering June 2012 to May 2013<sup>1</sup>. The Sustainability Policy was passed through SSMU Council in April 2012 with minor revisions in March 2013 and much of this assessment is formatted around it. SSMU has been increasingly aligning its sustainability activities around the Sustainability Policy over the last two years since it overhauled the policy from its previous iteration, the Five Year Plan for Sustainability<sup>2</sup>. We hope you can learn from and refer to this document in your work and watch the progress of the Students' Society through the annual assessments to come.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to help people understand what happened this year around SSMU from a sustainability perspective. It provides a narrative of the year focusing on areas where progress was or was not made in reference to the Sustainability Policy. Its intended audience is current SSMU staff, students working on sustainability initiatives in the McGill community, and students working at other universities on similar issues.

## 2012-2013 Big Happenings on Campus

In no particular order to give context of what was happening at McGill this year of relevance to students.

### **Tuition increases and Summit on Higher Education**

After an intense 2011-2012 academic year in the province on the subject of tuition fees, the conversation somewhat fizzled out with the announcement and results of a provincial election in fall 2012. A minority Parti Québécois government was elected, the tuition increases were eventually reduced to be almost tied to inflation and the student movement momentum mostly disappeared. The Summit on Higher Education<sup>3</sup> in February 2013 hosted some discussion around the future of higher education in Quebec but was criticized by many as empty conversation with predetermined conclusions.

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<sup>1</sup> One assessment was done in 2007-2008 and none were completed again until 2011-2012 which corresponded with the creation of the SSMU Sustainability Coordinator position in summer 2011. Check out the previous assessments at <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/representation/ssmu-policies/sustainability/>

<sup>2</sup> Available for download at <http://gitorious.org/evanescent/evanescent/blobs/master/misc/SSMU%27s%20Five%20Year%20Plan%20for%20Sustainability.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.mesrst.gouv.qc.ca/sommet/sommet/>

## **University Centre lease negotiations between SSMU and McGill**

This was the third year of SSMU executives negotiating with the McGill administration for a lease agreement for the University Centre (aka Shatner or SSMU Building). These confidential negotiations (out of good faith) were a point of tension between SSMU and McGill administration. As they are confidential, it is hard to say much but the SSMU execs found it hard to read what the McGill administration wanted at times.

## **Statement of Principles Concerning Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Peaceful Assembly. Operating Procedures. Revisions to Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.**

After the demonstrations and occupation of the 2011-2012 academic year, this past year saw a lot of policy-focused developments on the subject. After Dean of Arts Christopher Manfredi delivered the “Manfredi Report” on free expression and peaceful assembly on campus in fall 2012, processes were undertaken to update university policies<sup>4</sup>. There were intense conversations on the subject at Senate, criticisms of the processes for not conducting consultation with the community well, and criticisms around the final policy outcomes<sup>5</sup>. The Statement of Principles was approved at Senate and was seen by some as quite general and hard to take issue with<sup>6</sup>. The Operating Procedures were presented for information at Senate and amended at the Board of Governors (but seemingly not approved anywhere) and was criticized for having overly vague language that could be used to halt nearly any demonstration on campus<sup>7</sup>. The Student Code of Conduct was updated<sup>8</sup>. There were times in the process where university policy was questioned for its adherence to provincial, federal, and international law<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> More information at <http://www.mcgill.ca/newsroom/channels/news/administration-accepts-manfredi-recommendations-218605>

<sup>5</sup> A number of people organized in opposition of the protocol <http://protesttheprotocol.com/> with a variety of opinions <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2013/02/letters-protest-the-protocol/>

<sup>6</sup> Statement available at [http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d12-51\\_statement\\_of\\_principles\\_concerning\\_freedom.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/senate/sites/mcgill.ca.senate/files/d12-51_statement_of_principles_concerning_freedom.pdf) and commentary at <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2013/03/senate-approves-statement-of-principles/>

<sup>7</sup> Board of Governors minutes at [http://www.mcgill.ca/boardofgovernors/sites/mcgill.ca.boardofgovernors/files/minutes\\_board\\_open\\_session\\_april\\_26\\_2013\\_final.pdf](http://www.mcgill.ca/boardofgovernors/sites/mcgill.ca.boardofgovernors/files/minutes_board_open_session_april_26_2013_final.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> For example, <https://pgss.mcgill.ca/en/protocol-statement>

## **Principal leaving, Deputy Provost (Student Life and Learning) stepping down**

After 10 years in the role, Heather Munroe-Blum's tenure as Principal of McGill came to a close in June 2013 to be succeeded by Suzanne Fortier (from President role at the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council) in September 2013 (with the Provost, Tony Masi, serving as Interim Principal for the summer). Morton Mendelson, the inaugural Deputy Provost (Student Life & Learning) served his final year in the position and is being succeeded by Ollivier Dyens (from VP for Teaching and Learning role at Concordia University). Professors Munroe-Blum and Mendelson were both prominent figures in the student community, crossing paths with SSMU executives frequently, often in some degree of tension. The arrival of new upper administrators, especially Principal, has brought major changes to the university in the past, according to several McGill staff who have been here for decades.

## **Blackface at SSMU 4 Floors party and other equity issues**

There were several events on campus that were seen by some to be displays of oppressive behavior, and this perspective was refuted by others. One very prominent example was the wearing of blackface<sup>10</sup> by white students for SSMU's 4 Floors Party around Halloween<sup>11</sup>. Debate was had in a variety of for a, including the McGill Daily article's online comments section, with 41 comments to date (as of July 31, 2013) whereas it is not uncommon for McGill Daily articles to have zero comments online. Some aspects of the debate included whether this was a problem, how to deal with such incidents, and how to prevent them in the first place. Similar debates were had around rape culture at orientation, another blackface incident on campus, and behaviour at the SSMU Awards. One campaign that got some prominence on campus was the "Who needs feminism week at McGill?" which received both positive and negative attention.

## **Vision 2020 process in full swing<sup>12</sup>**

Vision 2020 was a process initiated to create a sustainability strategy for McGill University to connect and enhance the many high-quality but disparate sustainability efforts. From its conceptual start in fall 2011 it had grown into quite an effort by the 2012-2013 academic year. With a core team of up to 7 people (in order of joining: Lilith Wyatt, David Gray-Donald, Julia

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<sup>10</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blackface> and [http://www.blackculturalstudies.org/m\\_diawara/blackface.html](http://www.blackculturalstudies.org/m_diawara/blackface.html) and many other resources give some idea of the history and racist tensions around blackface

<sup>11</sup> Coverage at <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2012/11/blackface-and-other-costumes-stir-controversy-at-4floors/> and <http://bullandbear.musonline.com/2012/11/halloween-costume-controversy/>

<sup>12</sup> The process website used to be <http://mcgillvision2020.com/> and the official McGill website that the process migrated to is <http://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/vision2020>. Check out the final documents at <http://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/vision2020/final-reports>

Solomon, Amara Possian, Josée Methot, Martin Kraye Von Krauss, Kathleen Ng) and a sizable and changing team of interns, Vision 2020 held several different iterations and forms of consultation to finalized a “Vision” and “Goals” for sustainability for the university by winter 2013. A draft “Action Plan” was released in June 2013. Conversation about how the overall strategy will be implemented has been an ongoing conversation and the arrival of new upper administrators has added a level of uncertainty for the team. SSMU executives were involved on the Vision 2020 Steering Committee, helping get students to events, and offering the time and expertise of the SSMU Sustainability Coordinator to bring in and support students in the process.

## **Indigenous Studies Program**

McGill, situated currently on what was once an Iroquois settlement, is getting a North American Indigenous Studies program after students organized and consulted people on and off campus over the past year and a bit. At its outset it will be overseen by the McGill Institute for the Study of Canada (MISC)<sup>13</sup>. Several dedicated people were able to make this happen, and benefited from support of the Aboriginal Sustainability Project which is funded in part by the Sustainability Projects Fund. Some see the initiation of this program as overdue.

## **Orientation organization between SSMU and faculties more integrated**

The 2012 Orientation activities ushered in a new area of collaboration between SSMU and the student faculty associations, aided in part by the new position at Student Services of Student Life Coordinator held by Mitchell Miller. Before this, SSMU and the faculties organized their orientation activities in almost complete isolation. This iteration saw continual communication between coordinators of orientation, collaboration on projects such as welcome videos, and cooperation between faculties to offer activities for orientation participants of all ages (under or over 18 years old). Orientation became a more financially successful event, had improved (but not perfect!) social conscience, and was intentionally planned to build to the next year instead of being an isolated blip in history. The orientation coordinators went on a retreat altogether for the first time in recent memory and met regularly together during the planning process.

## **Divest McGill & Demilitarize McGill**

Two separate groups grew in prominence on campus this year. Demilitarize McGill<sup>14</sup> launched education campaigns and used some protest tactics to call attention to the connections between

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<sup>13</sup> For more information, search “Indigenous Studies McGill” online or read this October 2012 article <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2012/10/plans-for-north-american-indigenous-studies-move-forward/>

<sup>14</sup> Website at <http://demilitarizemcgill.com/> and active facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Demilitarize-McGill/341527109286182>

some research happening at McGill and military applications. This campaign was met with some resistance.

The Divest McGill<sup>15</sup> campaign launched in this year with the aim of pressuring McGill to divest its holdings in tar sands extraction companies and companies irresponsibly extracting resources with a focus on Quebec's Plan Nord. The campaign was characterized by a generally positive tone and actions, lively debate, and an extensive petition to McGill's Board of Governors Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility). The campaign was seen as polarizing by some, caused tensions with some groups of students, especially the Engineering Undergraduate Society (EUS), and brought many people together for a 6-professor debate at the "Battle of the Profs" event co-organized with the Economics Students Association (ESA). The petition to the Board of Governors was rejected by its Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility though there was discussion at the May 2013 Board of Governors meeting on the need to update the CAMSR Terms of Reference, which is happening in the second half of 2013.



Photograph of the February 2013 "Battle of the Profs" event in Leacock 232, debating the idea of McGill divesting its financial investments from fossil fuels<sup>16</sup>. Photo credit: Simon Poitrimolt / McGill Tribune

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<sup>15</sup> Website <http://divestmcgill.com/> and active facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/pages/Divest-McGill/509087915801190?ref=br\\_tf](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Divest-McGill/509087915801190?ref=br_tf), there is also a facebook group.

<sup>16</sup> For more information about the event, check out the original facebook event <https://www.facebook.com/events/362038067245832/> and/or <http://mcgilltribune.com/divest-mcgill-and-economics-students-host-battle-of-the-profs/> and/or <http://bullandbear.musonline.com/2013/04/mcgill-professors-battle-divestment-annual-debate/>

## **Sustainability Projects Fund Renewed, SSMU Green Fund Renewed**

The first 3.5 years of the existence and funding of the Sustainability Projects Fund (\$800 000 / year) came to an end this year, as did the first 5 years of the SSMU Green Fund (\$40 000 / year). Several reports were completed to assess the effectiveness and impacts of the Sustainability Projects Fund<sup>17</sup>. No analogous reports were completed for the SSMU Green Fund. This year saw several cuts from the provincial government to the budget of McGill University and some indication from senior administrators that the university would not match the student contributions to the Sustainability Projects Fund. This led to some tense conversation between student leaders and administrators and some political maneuvering eventually leading to a full dollar-for-dollar commitment on the side of the administration if students voted to renew the fee. Following a spirited “Yes” campaign led by former SSMU Environment Commissioner Tanya Taggart-Hodge and other students, renewal of the Sustainability Projects Fund received approval through referenda of the three necessary student societies: SSMU, PGSS (Post-Graduate Students’ Society) and MCSS (Macdonald Campus Students’ Association)<sup>18</sup>. The SSMU Green Fund renewal was approved through SSMU Referendum without noticeable campaigning.

## **SSMU Sustainability Policy**

### **Introducing the Sustainability Policy**

The SSMU Sustainability Policy is meant to help guide behaviours of those doing work at SSMU, including those trying to change practices to make SSMU a better sustainability-performing organization. It is formulated as a document intended to regulate behavior and inspire actions, making its intended audience sometimes hard to identify. As a regulatory document, it should be noted that it is one of many SSMU policies and has not often been used as reference by SSMU employees. The Constitution and Bylaws are much more regularly referred to by those working at SSMU as a guide to regulate behaviour within the organization<sup>19</sup>. The Sustainability Policy is often used by the Sustainability Coordinator, Environment Commissioners, Green Building Coordinator and Green Events Coordinator to inspire their future actions and projects. Bringing the Sustainability Policy to others working at SSMU is primarily the responsibility of those listed in the previous sentence.

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<sup>17</sup> Available at <http://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/spf/reports>

<sup>18</sup> Some coverage at <http://esmontreal.ca/index.php/component/k2/item/5-mcgill-sustainability-project-fund/5-mcgill-sustainability-project-fund> and <http://bullandbear.musonline.com/2013/04/renew-sustainability-projects-fund/>

<sup>19</sup> Available at <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/about-us/who-we-are/constitution-and-bylaws/>



## Understanding Sustainability<sup>20</sup>

Some people have barely heard of sustainability, some think of it only as recycling, and some people see it in every aspect of our existence. At SSMU, our collective understanding of sustainability is constantly changing, and this year brought to light a more nuanced appreciation of the intersection between equity and sustainability.

Research commissioned by then-VP University Affairs, Emily Yee Clare, and carried out by Cameron Butler looked at the historical dominance of environmental issues in sustainability dialogue and tokenization of social justice matters inside and outside of the McGill community. Examples of relevant social justice work may include: anti-racist, anti-sexist, feminist, queer-positive, addressing privilege in all its forms, combating classism, etc. The report, “Equity/Sustainability Integration Research”, concludes that there is room for integrating social and environmental justice at SSMU, that the Equity and Environment Committees should remain separate but communicate and collaborate more, and that the burden for making this work is on the Environment Commissioners and Sustainability Coordinator. The final 13-page report is a solid reference for future Environment Commissioners, Equity Commissioners, related student-staff, and community members taking on sustainability or environment or equity-focused efforts. Look at the report for ideas of projects with potential collaboration between social and environmental justice spheres<sup>21</sup>.

The Vision 2020 process also brought to light some new insights on the understanding of sustainability. While Vision 2020 stayed quite general and avoided defining sustainability outright, it used a broad concept of sustainability “A future orientation: working together toward a shared vision for a better future in a manner that integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions.” The contents of its documents (Situational Analysis, Vision & Goals, and Action Plan) provided more insights into what sustainability means in a research-intensive student-centered university.

## The Role of SSMU in Fostering a Community of Sustainability

Much of SSMU’s role in fostering a community of sustainability is described in the following sections. Progress in the past year on concepts that are not expressly in the following sections is described here:

- Being a catalyst for change in the McGill community: SSMU did champion a few sustainability initiatives that had community-wide impacts (e.g. Vision 2020, Divest McGill, supporting the work leading to the Indigenous Studies program). There is a constant tension within SSMU as to how much it can be pressuring others in the community to adopt certain practices when it has not yet fully adopted best practices

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<sup>20</sup> Check out the Sustainability Policy “1. Understanding Sustainability” for the context to this section <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Notice-of-Motion-Regarding-Adoption-of-a-Sustainability-Policy.pdfm>

<sup>21</sup> Contact the VP University Affairs ([ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:ua@ssmu.mcgill.ca)) or the Sustainability Coordinator ([sustainability.coord@ssmu.mcgill.ca](mailto:sustainability.coord@ssmu.mcgill.ca)) for a copy

internally. For example, how much can SSMU pressure McGill to purchase sweatshop-free apparel when parts of the SSMU organization do not buy sweatshop-free?

- Show leadership beyond the SSMU bureaucracy and the William Shatner University Centre for the good of the student body as a whole and the broader community and society: there were few instances where SSMU showed leadership in the broader community and in society on sustainability issues. With the exception removing fossil fuel companies from its investment portfolio, few bold statements were made.

## **Coordination, Facilitation, Outreach**

### **Coordination**

From the Sustainability Policy: “The SSMU will use its relationships and its understanding of the community to connect members who are working on similar topics, problems, campaigns, efforts, research, etc.” As the only pan-university undergrad student organization, SSMU took on this role through a number of activities, non-exhaustively listed below with brief descriptions:

- **Impact! Youth Program for Sustainability Leadership:** funded by the Co-operators Group<sup>22</sup> and led by the non-profit organization The Natural Step Canada<sup>23</sup>. This program has been a gathering place for campus sustainability leaders in Canada since the first conference in 2009. Around 20 McGill students attended a weekend-long edition of the program this year in Montreal. SSMU helped promote the event to students and was represented at a couple modules by an Environment Commissioner and the Sustainability Coordinator. The event got some students very energized and motivated and was uninspiring to others. A good relationship continues to exist between SSMU/McGill sustainability community and The Natural Step Canada.
- **MXPs:** This year saw the initiation of meetings between the McGill Food Systems Project (MFSP, est. 2008), McGill Energy Project (MEP, est. 2011), and the McGill Waste Project (MWP, est. 2012), three student groups addressing campus issues using a model of applied student research as the way to see progress. The SSMU Sustainability Coordinator was sought for advice at several stages in the progressions of these groups throughout the year and in helping refine the thinking around how the groups all work together.
- **SSMU Sustainability Case Competition:** The 2012-2013 competition topic was “Re-designing McTavish Street”. The Sustainability Coordinator (who unsuccessfully tried to get the VP Internal to join) assembled a group of 5 students to organize the case competition. Over 36 people applied, and 18 finalists competed at the final expo, which saw attendance of well over 100 students and staff. The mentors/judges included a professor, a staff member, an external professional, and a student who won the previous year’s competition. The results were enthusiastically used by the Campus and Space

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.impactyouthsustainability.ca/>

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.naturalstep.ca/>, did some consulting work on the Vision 2020 process.

Planning Office of McGill with encouragement from the VP University Services. Approximately \$2000 was used from the SSMU Green Fund for this competition.

- Sustainability Projects Fund: The Sustainability Projects Fund went to referendum for renewal this year. There were major doubts about its future, and lots of championship from SSMU execs and the Sustainability Coordinator to keep it alive. A review of the fund was undertaken at the request of SSMU, then an impact report, then a series of conversations with McGill administrators to determine the fate of the fund in light of budget cuts from the province, and finally SSMU council endorsing a “Yes” vote to renew the fund for 5 years. The vote passed and the fund is secured for 5 years, amounting to approximately \$1 million annually.
- McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS): This section of the Mention is made in this section of the Sustainability Policy about communication with the Office of Sustainability. The SSMU Sustainability Coordinator started taking notes going to and from the Office of Sustainability and SSMU this year. Communication is still not perfect and the Office of Sustainability staff rarely came to the SSMU office this year.
- Vision 2020<sup>24</sup>: Mention is made in the Sustainability Policy that SSMU has endorsed the Vision and Goals document of Vision 2020 and will actively help the community pursue said Vision and Goals. Aside from lobbying unsuccessfully to Senate Steering Committee to have Vision 2020 on the Senate agenda, SSMU has done little to champion Vision 2020 other than give resources (staffing in the form of the Sustainability Coordinator) to continue developing Vision 2020 content.

## Facilitation

- Green Groups Forum: As mandated, SSMU held semesterly Green Groups Forum events. The fall edition was marketed as a “Green Groups GA”, and the winter version was a “Green Groups Forum”. These were opportunities for green groups to learn about what other groups were up to, meet each other, and interact informally. The winter event was quite successful.
- Environment Committee: SSMU Environment Committee met weekly throughout the academic year. The listserv was quite comprehensive as to sustainability happenings on campus, and had over 800 recipients per week. A few projects were taken on by the Environment Committee, including trying to lobby to protect the biosphere from closing, creating and implementation framework for the Sustainability Policy (which ended up being a simple revision, not a comprehensive plan), redesigning the SSMU Environment website, and promoting bottled-water free day. The Environment Committee continues to struggle with coming to terms with its core mandate and balancing being a resource with being a leader of projects / campaigns.
- Sustainability Ambassadors: the sustainability ambassadors program had originally been established to build a community who knew what sustainability stuff was happening on campus and could act as ambassadors connecting people to various parts of the community. In the absence of institutionalization and of guidance, this year it was more

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.mcgill.ca/sustainability/vision2020>

a series of sustainable lifestyle workshops, including composting, winterizing apartments, cooking, and more.

## **Outreach**

- Looking for collaborations on efforts: The SSMU Sustainability Case Competition was a good example of collaboration with other groups on campus. Vision 2020 saw good SSMU collaboration with various offices around campus in having open conversations and developing mutual goals. Making McGill a Fair Trade Certified Campus was something SSMU was slow on, but eventually became a collaborator along with Oliver de Volpi (Head Chef of McGill Food & Dining Services).
- Let community know what SSMU is doing: Regarding student space in the SSMU building the SSMU team was in a tough position due to lease negotiations with McGill but could have done a better job letting students know what was going on. The Space Campaign was a notable exception but lacked a defined conclusion (again partially owing to lease negotiations with a negotiating team at McGill notorious for being difficult). There was a great collaboration between SSMU and McGill Waste Management whereby SSMU could set up a bin for recycling of small electronic waste generated by people in their personal lives but McGill could not yet do it, though they wanted to see it on campus, including to learn from how it worked<sup>25</sup>. Also, as mentioned the SMSU listserv announced a huge amount of projects to hundreds of people, though this was largely dependent on the hard work of one dedicated Environment Commissioner.

## **Awareness**

- Mini-course on “Doing Sustainability Work” low attendance. Helping First-Year Office with some of their workshops.
- Not much change in signage from sustainability perspective in University Centre building
- Online platform getting close (e.g. Club Hub, ideas at Environment Committee and from Vision 2020)
- Resources available on SSMU website and on Vibe (the internal task and document management system for SSMU employees)
  - Some progress on website resources. SSMU Environment Committee website and Equity Committee site both in need of re-vamping.
  - Not a lot up on Vibe yet, getting there.

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<sup>25</sup> Using the Electrobac system - <http://www.electrobac.com/>

## Internal Practices

### Building

#### Infrastructure

Measurement of energy consumption in the University Centre has been spotty in the years before 2011 and so it is hard to distinguish trends in energy consumption<sup>26</sup>. Fortunately, the Pulse Energy Dashboard, a project of McGill's Utilities & Energy Management office launched in 2011, shows energy consumption data for the University Centre for the last 2 years (since July 2011). It is shown in its entirety here in table form and with a screenshot of the data in a graph (accessed July 31, 2013)<sup>27</sup>.

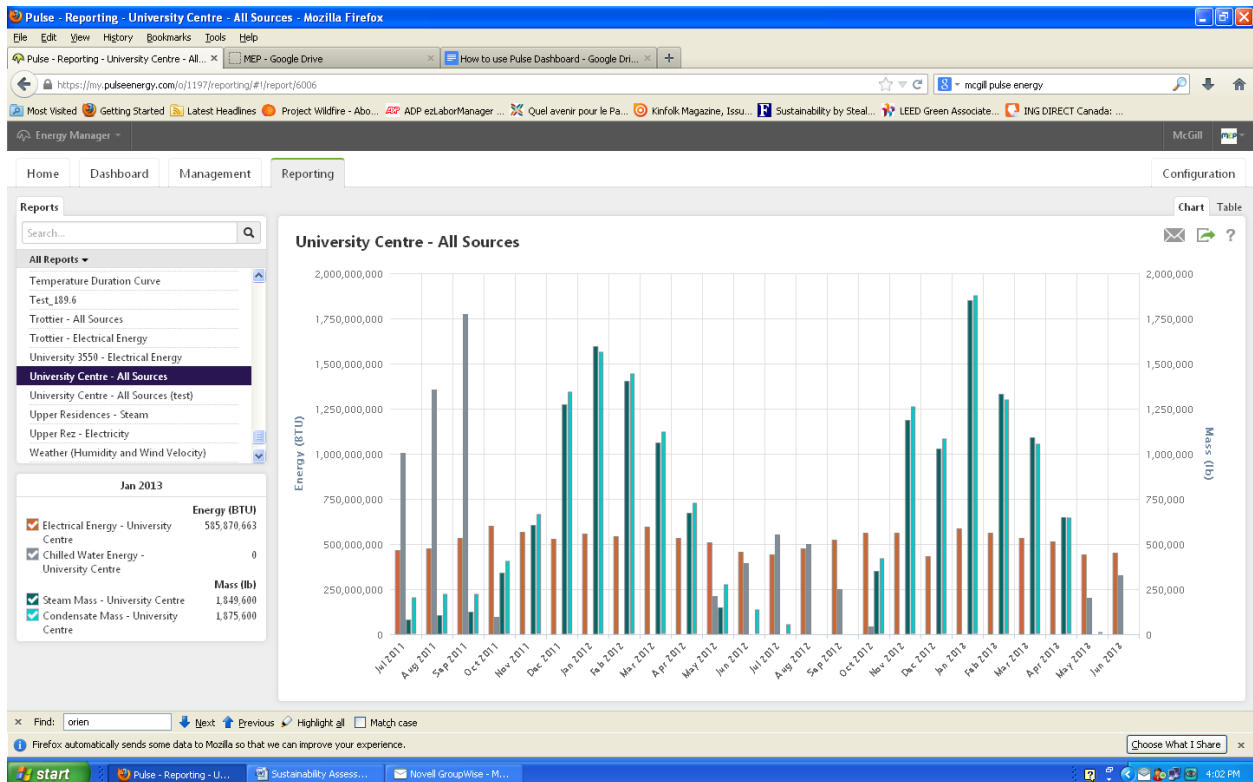
MONTH	ELECTRICAL ENERGY (BTU)	CHILLED WATER ENERGY (BTU)	STEAM MASS (lb)	CONDENSATE MASS (lb)
Jul 2011	463,271,448	1,003,060,000	80,620	205,581
Aug 2011	475,672,142	1,352,660,000	102,550	223,036
Sep 2011	532,924,781	1,770,150,000	122,600	224,652
Oct 2011	596,762,434	92,370,000	339,600	404,050
Nov 2011	562,367,195	0	601,400	665,874
Dec 2011	524,125,616	0	1,271,500	1,341,446
Jan 2012	554,472,990	0	1,595,600	1,563,674
Feb 2012	538,679,467	0	1,399,800	1,445,691
Mar 2012	595,906,198	0	1,060,200	1,122,451
Apr 2012	532,262,935	0	669,000	730,522
May 2012	506,899,634	210,150,000	145,700	275,562
Jun 2012	455,732,440	390,900,000	2,100	135,761
Jul 2012	441,288,845	552,180,000	300	53,335
Aug 2012	471,841,160	496,020,000	0	0
Sep 2012	519,596,639	248,850,000	2,000	6,465
Oct 2012	558,634,950	39,210,000	348,800	422,636
Nov 2012	560,164,442	0	1,187,100	1,263,868

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<sup>26</sup> Though reports are available through Utilities & Energy Management.

<sup>27</sup> Access to the information database can be granted through the McGill Energy Project (a student group working closely with Utilities & Energy Management) by emailing [energyproject@mcgill.ca](mailto:energyproject@mcgill.ca)

Dec 2012	429,888,881	0	1,026,200	1,084,470
Jan 2013	585,870,663	0	1,849,600	1,875,600
Feb 2013	558,716,841	0	1,330,600	1,300,233
Mar 2013	533,000,384	0	1,090,800	1,053,762
Apr 2013	510,803,551	150,000	645,400	644,056
May 2013	439,743,998	200,970,000	2,900	12,122
Jun 2013	448,043,180	321,890,000	0	0



There have been several projects undertaken to reduce energy consumption in the building. The Green Building Coordinator, Rodrigo Jiminez, successfully built off the work of the 2011-2012 lighting survey in the building and had some lights turned off and some lights put on motion sensors so as not to be on 24/7. Planning is underway to renovate the HVAC (Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning) system of the University Centre, which has not been well maintained and never updated since its installation at the original construction of the building in the 1960s. This renovation should reduce energy consumption in the building substantially. At time of writing the Utilities & Energy Management office is working with Project Management and the SSMU General Manager (and previously the Green Building Coordinator) to implement an innovative piece of the renovation, for which some money has been set aside. Ideas for the innovative component include a solar wall and heat exchangers.

No figures exist on water consumption as there is no metering of water use at the level of the building. This will be something to work on with Utilities & Energy Management in the future.

### **Use of Space**

Using space efficiently and in a way that is accessible to all students is a constant challenge. It is relevant to sustainability in creating safer spaces and because the building does require considerable resources (especially energy) to operate and so ratios of people using space to amount of resources being used are important to keep in mind. Posters created by the Equity Committee have been put up around the building to try to create a safer, more anti-oppressive space for all users of the building. An example of use of physical resources may look like: a room using X units of energy for 2 people vs. for 20 people is 10 times less efficient in terms of energy consumed per person using the space. Efforts are underway to overhaul the room booking system and make sure there are feedback mechanisms to avoid having unused spaces in the building. No numbers exist on how many people having been using the building through the years.

### **Procurement (including food)**

The established Procurement Policy got attention from the Financial Ethics Review Committee this year. The largest supplies of goods & services to SSMU, by dollar value, were identified. Some top suppliers include: McGill University (lease), SAQ (alcohol sold at Gert's and at events), and beer companies (beer sold at Gert's and at events). Work is needed to stick to an approach on how to approach these suppliers, whether to look for alternatives or pressure these organizations to change their practices.

With food, new vendors came in on one-year leases with clauses in their contracts to offer some low-cost menu items and some local ingredients, at a minimum percentage depending on the time of year. The cost of items were followed by SSMU and remained at an allowable level. The sourcing of the food was not tracked. Sustainability was considered by the executives by asking for the sustainability coordinator to advise during decision-making of which vendors to select. The sustainability coordinator was not brought into the conversation again until after contracts were written and signed. At that point, there was talk of re-usable dishes and installing a dishwasher, but that infrastructure investment did not materialize due to the short-term nature of their leases and the lease negotiations with McGill.

An inventorying of current physical assets held by SSMU was initiated by the Events Administrator (Tania Canales) with help from the Security Supervisor (Wallace Sealy). Hopefully this continues and will allow SSMU to keep track of the lifecycle of materials used by SSMU.

## **Human Resources**

A comprehensive health and dental insurance policy was introduced for permanent staff. There were more conversations with equity commissioners around the subject of SMSU HR. The HR Advisor (Marie-Elaine Reid) also took on a project of normalizing the pay-scale for people working for SSMU. This is challenging work as there is various parts of SSMU have had various systems of HR payment in the past (e.g. honorarium, hourly wage). This sometimes brought up the question of what legally is defined as SSMU.

## **Events**

SSMU organizes a lot of events, and the space it operates plays host to many events every day of the academic year.

- SSMU-organized events: Unfortunately, the Green Events Coordinator was mostly absent this year, maybe because they felt under-supported or some other reason, and the VP Internal was not willing to take initiative on bringing sustainability into the conversation around SSMU-organized events. Some re-usable practices were introduced this year with re-usable cards for volunteers at activities night (400 cards printed and laminated, saving 400 cards from being printed at each of the 4 nights per year every year) and re-usable mugs were given to orientation participants and in some areas of 4-floors (stopping disposable cups from being used).
- Events hosted in SSMU space: The VP Clubs & Services (a building manager of the University Centre) did some work with the Events Administrator (Tania Canales) and Security Supervisor (Wallace Sealy) to identify points of intervention in the room-booking system. The Plate Club was active this year in its expanded office space (now with a window!) offering re-usable dishwares for events all over campus.

## **Clubs & Services**

Clubs and services do great work creating a supportive community for students and some explicitly do change work to build a culture of sustainability. Those working in the SSMU office (execs and support staff) tend not to interfere with the ongoing activities of clubs and services as these organizations are run by the students involved in them. More tracking of activities, including developing and implementing the sustainability aspect of the club audit is a worthwhile project for the future.



## Implementation

### Leadership (Executive Reviews)<sup>28</sup>

#### VP External - Robin Reid-Fraser

**Description:** The VP External helps enact SSMU's policies on government and community issues outside McGill. The External meets with student unions and student federations, mobilizes students in support of the campaigns that align with SSMU's mandates, and conducts research and media campaigns. In many years, the majority of students at McGill do not express much interest in bringing their student union to bear on off-campus issues.

**Portfolio Integration:** The VP External portfolio this year was in a state of flux. The student movement that had dominated the province and even had a noticeable impact on the McGill community faded quickly just before and in the wake of the provincial election in September 2012. The External remained active in the summit on higher education, aspects of the Quartier d'Innovation development, strengthening relations with the Milton-Parc community and working on TaCEQ. The Street Teams in Milton-Parc continued and the Community Ambassadors program was initiated.

**Addressing Sustainability:** Robin's involvement in social justice as well as environmental issues prior to the job led to excitement throughout the year about a perceived broadening of the conceptualization of sustainability in the Quebec and McGill student communities. This expanded concept that better captures the interplay between equity and sustainability did not feature prominently as goals of projects realized in Robin's term. As with her predecessor, Joël, Robin was also interested in the sustainability of student organizers working on campaigns. Burn-out was a major problem in the tuition fee student movement, and is also a perennial issue with SSMU execs. Robin was inspired by Divest McGill as an example of an initiative with members who very intentionally addressed the issue of burn-out early and continuously.

**Critical Remarks:** Robin did not bring much from off campus to SSMU from a sustainability perspective, but did have sustainability and equity in mind in much of the work performed. The projects that did happen, such as Street Teams in the Milton-Parc community, which were quite successful, focused on a somewhat narrow definition of community respect and not a holistic view of sustainability. There was a tendency in Robin's work to bring up interesting issues but to struggle with developing and implementing adequate problem-solving approaches. Robin recognized a historic lack of collaboration between VP Internal and VP External portfolios though that potential remained latent and unrealized throughout the year.

**In Summary:** Robin brought good sustainability thinking to SSMU but struggles, as many VP External's do, to connect sustainability between the different communities of which McGill students are part of or near to.

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<sup>28</sup> These reviews are based on the observations of the Sustainability Coordinator and exit interviews conducted by the Sustainability Coordinator. For general reviews of the SSMU execs 2012-2013, check out the articles of the Daily <http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2013/04/ssmu-year-in-review/> and Tribune <http://mcgilltribune.com/ssmu-report-cards/> and take both articles with a grain of salt

## **President – Josh Redel**

**Description:** The President has the most pan-portfolio role as it involves integrating the work happening in other portfolios and coordinating big-picture efforts. The President is the official spokesperson for the society, and is responsible for SSMU Council and the General Assemblies, amongst other roles. “Environment” matters are in the presidential portfolio.

**Portfolio Integration:** Josh was a doer. He liked to see and make things happen. He was not an expert in the sustainability realm having been trained briefly on the job by former President, Maggie Knight, and the Sustainability Coordinator, David Gray-Donald. As such he left much of the work in that area up to the relevant staff to take initiative to make changes, supporting them when appropriate and when it was communicated that support was helpful. As with many researchers and administrators at McGill, Josh had partially conceived of sustainability as the ability for an entity, such as a SSMU Club or Service, to exist in perpetuity. His conception of the underlying purpose for talking about sustainability changed over the course of the year through involvement in the Vision 2020 process and the revisions to the SSMU Sustainability Policy.

**Addressing Sustainability:** A number of projects made major progress during Josh’s tenure. The Vision 2020 process had major presence on campus, and support from SSMU, McGill’s Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility met for the first time in several years, the ECOLE project (an experimental sustainability-focused student housing space) lay largely stagnant, the Student-run Café project saw some progress (though behind closed doors due to confidentiality reasons), and the first round of Green Groups GA / Forum events, organized by the Environment Commissioners, were held. Josh expressed interest in seeing how Vision 2020 pans out as a pan-university effort at a place where most things happen at quite a local level. Josh was very aware of how sustainability is becoming more recognized and institutionalized at SSMU and McGill and how that could make it more integrated but also has the potential to silo the work in the formal sustainability offices and jobs.

**Critical Remarks:** Josh was open and wanted to help out, showed leadership on Vision 2020, but otherwise had a disjointed approach to sustainability, maybe owing to some differences of opinion internally as to what sustainability means for SSMU. There was not a lack of good intention, but a lack of communication within SSMU, sometimes due to a lack of tying concepts together, stifled some progress.

**In Summary:** Some progress was made on sustainability at SSMU under Josh’s leadership, but it was not undertaken with a very coordinated approach. This may be attributed to the lack of understanding of the concept, a broader lack of communication at SSMU and with McGill in general, or other factors.

## **VP Clubs & Services (C&S) - Allison Cooper**

**Description:** The VP C&S oversees the financial and organizational wellbeing of over 200 clubs and 23 services. The portfolio, as written, includes managing the SSMU's relationship with all Independent Student Groups, Faculty Associations, and McGill Student Services. Finally, the VP C&S is also co-Building Manager of the Shatner University Centre along with the General Manager.

**Portfolio Integration:** The C&S portfolio is often considered to have one of the largest scopes of work on the executive. The clubs and services are so numerous and autonomous, and the building so large and dynamic, that the C&S is constantly in reactive mode. As co-Building Manager, the C&S's vision sometimes runs up against the realities imposed by McGill University (owner of the building), holding back deep changes to the infrastructure and operations. Not having a lease agreement with McGill for the entire year (and two years previous) added to this dynamic. This year was also complicated by some new revelations from SSMU's lawyers about the legal jurisdiction of SSMU Clubs and Services, with the underlying question being what is SSMU and who acts on whose behalf.

**Addressing Sustainability:** Allison was active and critical regarding sustainability, continually trying to better understand it and bring it up in the Clubs & Services context. Her two main contributions were involvement in Vision 2020 and the introduction of a sustainability checklist for SSMU Building Committee. Changes to the room-booking system, and the introduction of the Electrobac e-waste recycling bin in SSMU were also notable improvements. There was also a lot of work done to make offices of clubs and services safe for humans to be in and fairly allocated between groups. Similar to Josh, Allison had thought of sustainability in part as the ability for entities, such as Clubs and Services, to exist in perpetuity. One synonym brought up was "institutionalized". Allison began to challenge this conception over the course of the year seeing more the underlying purpose of sustainability (human and environmental integrity). Allison was somewhat frustrated that neither she nor more Scums staff were getting continuous trainings on equity and sustainability, and given opportunities to check in on these issues over the course of the year.

**Critical Remarks:** Allison had a knack for seeing sustainability and equity issues. As with most McGill students, she was under-supported in designing and realizing solutions to these problems. While her critical remarks about Vision 2020 were very useful for the process, the lack of resolution of the problems was a challenge, and one where it is hard to determine who the onus is on. At times, a big challenge for Allison was how much she cared about the work and how that contrasted with how little some others cared about the work and the contempt they showed for the problems raised.

**In Summary:** Allison moved forward several conversations about sustainability and equity at SSMU and McGill over the year. The clubs and services administrated by SSMU got lots of help from Allison, though it is hard to say anything about changes to their sustainability performance. There were few changes to the building from a sustainability perspective.

## **VP Finance & Operations (FOPS) - JP Briggs**

**Description:** The VP FOPS is responsible for keeping the SSMU on budget, helping connect groups with their funding, and for overseeing its operations, including Gerts and Mini-Courses.

**Portfolio Integration:** A major focus of JP's this year was to make it easier for people to see how funding at SSMU works, including making the numbers presented in more transparent and consistent ways. There were 300 funding applications in the year, a substantial increase from 2011-2012. SSMU was able to get more funding out there. The sustainability impact of the funding was not measured, nor were the effects of the ~\$40K Green Fund. Some work happened on the student-run café though few tangible results were to be seen. A press release on the café sat in draft form for months and was never released, though students were calling for an update.

**Addressing Sustainability:** Early in the year JP saw something like making accounting paperless as the scope of sustainability in the portfolio, whereas reflecting at the end of the year he saw sustainability encompassing a much larger scope. JP was comfortable with the job the Environment Commissioners and Sustainability Coordinator had done advising on the Green Fund applications. JP saw sustainability as a balancing act. He admitted to taking quite a financial view of the world, and understanding that sometimes brings with it being seen as “the bad guy”. A major accomplishment of the year in the portfolio was divesting financial holdings in companies involved in tar sands extraction. This work was spearheaded by the Financial Ethics Review Commissioner (FERC), Adam Winer, and the rest of the FERC committee. JP saw a need for more training of the SSMU execs on sustainability, and possibly more training within committees such as FERC.

**Critical Remarks:** JP was open to sustainability in conversation but was not proactive in approaching the subject. Gerts, the SSMU bar which is under the VP FOPS portfolio, continued to be a bit of a mystery and had very limited reporting and accountability to students through SSMU. Mini-courses had similar distance and suffered from human resource turnover this year.

**In Summary:** Some progress was made in the VP Finance & Operations portfolio, particularly in the finance and investments part of the job. The operations lagged.

## **VP Internal – Michael Spzejda**

**Description:** The Internal oversees much of the SSMU's communications (including listserv) and events planning, notably Frosh, as well as Four Floors and Faculty Olympics. The Internal facilitates community building and social life for students.

**Portfolio Integration:** Orientation week events did have a more holistic and inclusive approach than previous years (largely due to the hiring and involvement of a McGill Student Life Coordinator, Mitchell Miller), but is still in need of much improvement. After orientation, Michael was not particularly active around SSMU, choosing not to take initiative to make changes around SSMU.

**Addressing Sustainability:** Michael did not show initiative in integrating sustainability into SSMU's major events, though he was receptive to suggestions and collaborations in certain circumstances. Thankfully, some progress had been made on events in the past, such as avoiding disposable drink cups at some events. The Green Events Coordinator was absent for most of the year and there was no one pushing Michael to improve sustainability performance of events. Equity issues were more present in previous years, such as the student who dressed in blackface for 4 Floors Halloween party. This incident was treated as somewhat of a nuisance and was not used as an opportunity for a larger conversation about racism and respect on campus.

**Critical Remarks:** Michael did not integrate sustainability into his work at SSMU, and showed a lack of patience and understanding about bringing an equity perspective to the Internal portfolio. This was symptomatic of a lack of interest in these issues and willingness to prioritize them. The amount of work performed over the year, noticeably less than the other executives, was indicative of a lack of involvement. This mis-allocation of hours worked was not something addressed and rectified by the executives.

**In Summary:** Orientation week events improved somewhat in Michael's time, and there was no other progress in the portfolio from a sustainability perspective. There may well have been negative progress in an equity perspective.

## **VP University Affairs (UA) – Haley Dinell**

**Description:** The VP UA is responsible managing SSMU's policies on McGill policy, for organizing SSMU's presence at McGill Senate, and managing the SSMU's response to campus issues. Many other responsibilities fall under the UA portfolio, including equity

**Portfolio Integration:** Haley admits to not having integrated sustainability much into her work. Part of this is that the university policy work of the University Affairs portfolio is quite specific and it can be hard to maintain a holistic perspective when working on one sentence in a policy seemingly unrelated to sustainability. Haley did not have much sustainability training before the job. This does not mean that the UA does not have agency nor that they have not made big progress in sustainability in previous years.

**Addressing Sustainability:** Haley received the results of the Equity-Sustainability Integration Research that was started under the supervision of her predecessor, Emily Yee Clare. This research had many conclusions. The Equity Commissioners, Environment Commissioners, and Sustainability Coordinator have discussed the research together at a basic level. There seems not to have been much inter-executive conversation on the research, and no conversation convened by execs with all relevant student-staff.

Haley convenes Senate caucus, the group of undergraduates who sit on McGill Senate. Sustainability was raised in a few forms at Senate over the year after students approached Haley with ideas, though Vision 2020's presentation for information was bounced from the agenda multiple times due to time constraints. Haley saw her role as keeping McGill accountable to its policies and its values, and was concerned that there was no way to ensure these policies and values were being upheld.

**Critical Remarks:** Haley readily admitted to not have integrated sustainability much into her projects. Haley sometimes seemed willing to believe and trust McGill administrators whereas many previous executives had not. Haley and the Sustainability Coordinator did not communicate as well as possible as to ongoing conversations and projects with McGill.

**In Summary:** Haley was not very proactive in pursuing sustainability and did not have sustainability on the mind continuously in her work with McGill. Vision 2020, which she participated in at times, had a big year and so sustainability at the university, and hence in the VP UA portfolio, has advanced significantly.

## Representation (including Council and Senate)

- *Committees*<sup>29</sup>: This year saw sustainability more present on some committees of SSMU, though not all as is the goal. Building Committee, Financial Ethics Review Committee, Environment Committee, Funding Committee, and Operations Management Committee had sustainability staff present at committee meetings this year or had advising from such staff on the activities of the committee. Sustainability contributions involved either ad-hoc advising services or helping develop sustainability-minded decision-making frameworks for use by the committee. Committees that lacked such guidance included (with most relevant sustainability staff member noted in brackets): Interest Group Committee (Environment Commissioners), Students' Society Programming Network (Green Events Coordinator), External Affairs Committee (Environment Commissioners / Sustainability Coordinator), Equity Committee (check-ins from Environment Commissioners and Sustainability Coordinator), Finance Committee (Sustainability Coordinator / Environment Commissioners), Nominating Committee (Equity Commissioners / Sustainability Coordinator), Steering Committee (Sustainability Coordinator / Environment Commissioners), Executive Committee (Sustainability Coordinator)
- *Staff*: Staff engagement with sustainability has largely been ad hoc in the past and the 2012-2013 academic year did not have a systematic approach. That did not stop staff from thinking about sustainability and integrating into their projects. As of now sustainability is not part of staff work-plans (which permanent staff review bi-weekly with their supervisor) or performance reviews (twice annual) and the sustainability coordinator is in the process of initiating a training program for permanent staff and student staff.
- *Council*: Councilors to date have not received explicit sustainability training and sustainability is not a discussion item unless a related motion is brought forward or a councilor chooses to ask a related question. It is very hard to judge the decisions of council through a sustainability lens without an agreed upon framework. Perhaps some method of measurement could be developed in the future. The Sustainability Policy adopted by council in April 2013 called for a sustainability strategizing session during an early-fall meeting of council to be organized in part by the Sustainability Coordinator.
- *Senate*: Student sitting on McGill's Senate have to date have not received explicit sustainability training and sustainability is not a discussion item unless a related motion is brought forward or a senator chooses to ask a related question. Sustainability has come up a number of times at Senate in recent years, though there is no framework to measure it and no tracking has been done to date.
- *Sustainability Coordinator notes*: It being the job of the Sustainability Coordinator (and the SSMU President) to see that the Sustainability Policy is being implemented everywhere in the SSMU organization, there are a lot of places to be! It is not possible for one person to be everywhere. Instead, within the SSMU organization it is the role of the Sustainability Coordinator to strategize with the President and General Manager to have

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<sup>29</sup> See a full listing of SSMU committees at <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/ssmu-legislative-council-committee-terms-of-reference.pdf>

appropriate trainings for staff, procedures for committees, and staff with expertise in the right places.

## Reporting and Annual Review

Reporting on sustainability at SSMU was partially inadequate this year. Progress on the sustainability policy was presented once to SSMU council instead of the mandated 3 times. An update on the Sustainability Projects Fund by the Sustainability Projects Fund administrator was made the mandated once per term. Exit reports from several of the “green” SSMU student staff were not yet received at the time of writing this report.

Last year’s annual review (for the 2011-2012 academic year) was not delivered until October<sup>30</sup>. This report is being delivered before the start of the fall term, which is an improvement. The report continues to lack substantial quantitative data relating to operations of the SSMU, and lacks a strong equity perspective.

## Conclusions and Looking Forward

The 2012-2013 academic year saw some major improvements at SSMU from a sustainability perspective but the Society continues to lag in many ways. Some conceptual advances have been made but the physical operations of SSMU are in some cases embarrassing (e.g. Disposable dishware in 2<sup>nd</sup> floor cafeteria). Measurement systems (e.g. flows of physical materials, energy and water, clubs & services sustainability audit, etc.) need to be implemented without adding substantial work in order to track changes and progress in many areas of the Society’s activities.

The next few years present huge opportunities, some of which are noted here:

**Potential with new Principal and Deputy Provost (Student Life & Learning):** Staff all around McGill continually mention that changes in upper admin present opportunities for big changes in how the university functions, in what the norms are. Both incoming administrators appear open to the concept of sustainability as it has been pursued at SSMU, but many ideas and people will be competing for their time and attention.

**Momentum of Vision 2020:** Vision 2020 is a well-recognized name around campus at this time but its content is less well known. There are a lot of exciting goals and actions being taken on by people all over the institution, including champions high up in the academic and administrative community. It has enough buy-in that ideas that align with it are bound to be met with enthusiasm and like-minded people.

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<sup>30</sup> Available at <http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SSMU-Sustainability-Assessment-2011-2012-October-09-2012.pdf>



**Connectedness of sustainability efforts on campus:** There are many sustainability efforts on campus, but few people know about all of them, and often they don't know about each other. Continuing and expanding the ideas behind the Green Groups Forum will be important this year in building an institution-wide student sustainability movement.

**Potential to bridge Equity and Sustainability efforts:** Some conversations started this year to reconcile some gaps between thinking in the environmentally-focused crowd and those doing equity / social justice work. This work is nowhere close to over, and likely never will be. There is a lot of work the enviro-folks can and should do to keep this important and interesting conversation moving.

**Better training within SSMU (especially of "Green" staff) to set tone:** Many of the student staff at SSMU don't have a good sense of what is happening at SSMU, let alone what sustainability work is happening at SSMU. Giving this training early in the fall, including specialized training to "green" staff and equity staff may greatly increase the coordination and effectiveness of work undertaken.

**Knowing place and role and deferring to faculty associations when appropriate:** There is a lot of sustainability work that is not SSMU's to do, and is better taken on by a student faculty or departmental association because the issues are often local in nature.

**Stronger governance of Green Fund, including Terms of Reference updates:** The SSMU Green Fund has a fairly vague set of bylaws governing it and its impact is not reviewed in any way. The Sustainability Projects Fund (SPF) is a model for how a fund can be governed and reviewed. While only 5% as large as the SPF, the Green Fund is in need of closer examination soon.

**SSMU Sustainability Coordinator job description review:** The Sustainability Coordinator job has now existed for 2 years and, in the opinion of the Sustainability Coordinator, the job description and scope is in need of examination. This is especially so based on tensions that have arisen from different interpretations of the job by various community members and in light of the Equity/Sustainability Integration Research.

This could be a really exciting year with some big changes!

## About the Author

The author of this report, SSMU Sustainability Coordinator David Gray-Donald, is an able-bodied white male who went to a private school in Toronto then McGill University for a BA&Sc in Environment with a minor in Biology. His training and experience is mostly in environment-

related issues and he does not have formal education in social justice / equity issues though has been trying to seek out resources on his own in those areas. The author acknowledges that this report has some biases defined by the experiences of the author before and during the last year, his interests, and his beliefs regarding the ideal way to advance the concept of sustainability in higher education.