



Report of the Ad-hoc Sustainability Committee to Legislative Council

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Councilor Ibrahim
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Students' Society of McGill University

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Table of Contents

Section I: Mandate	3
Section II: Research & Consultation	
II. A) Research on Universities	5
II. B) Individual Student Consultation	7
II. C) Group-Based Online Consultation	8
Section III: Conclusions & Recommendations	13
Appendix A: Student Consultation Survey	14



Section I: Mandate

In Fall 2013, the SSMU Legislative Council struck an Ad-hoc committee on Sustainability at SSMU during the Fall of 2013, charged with making a recommendation on the future institutionalization of SSMU sustainability and channels through which this recommendation can be recognized. On February 5th, 2014, the Ad-Hoc Committee on Sustainability was tasked with submitting a recommendation to Council by the end of Winter 2014 following the adoption of the following motion:

Motion Regarding Sustainability at the SSMU

Whereas, Sustainability at SSMU is codified in the SSMU Sustainability Policy;

Whereas, Until the Fall of 2013, the SSMU had a full-time Sustainability Coordinator position that was created through a motion of Council in 2011;

Whereas, The SSMU currently has two Environment Commissioners, one Green Events Coordinator, and one Green Building Coordinator who work under the President to further the SSMU's role as a leader in sustainability efforts on campus;

Whereas, In addition to Environmental Sustainability, the SSMU also works toward Social and Economic Sustainability;

Whereas, The SSMU Legislative Council struck an Ad-hoc committee on Sustainability at SSMU during the Fall of 2013, charged with making a recommendation on the future institutionalization of SSMU sustainability and channels through which this recommendation can be recognized;

Resolved, The Ad-hoc Committee on Sustainability, in consultation with various sustainability stakeholders at McGill, make an actionable recommendation on the future of institutional sustainability to Council by the end of the Winter 2014 term;

Resolved, The President, along with the Executive Committee will undertake the



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necessary work to explore the feasibility of the recommendation and the steps for implementation;

Resolved, The 2014-2015 SSMU Executive Committee gives an updated report to the Fall 2014 General Assembly on the progress of the Winter 2013 recommendation and the projected outcomes of the review.

Throughout the 2013-2014 academic year, the Ad-Hoc Committee on Sustainability undertook: i) research on sustainability practices in the student unions of peer institutions; ii) consultation with individual students via in-person surveying; and iii) consultation with students and sustainability-focused campus groups via online surveying. The following report outlines the committee's findings and recommendations following from the fulfilment of these tasks.



Section II: Research & Consultation

II. A) Research on Universities

Councilor Southey

The student unions of the universities were examined using the following criteria: whether or not there an institutionalized policy and approach to sustainability; sustainability initiatives that have been undertaken; presence of an office, staff or committee on sustainability. Their approach and definition was also examined to see if their policies/initiatives covered a broad definition of social, economic and environmental sustainability. Whether or not there was an office for sustainability under the administration of the university was also examined. The following universities were examined:

University of Toronto

- The University of Toronto Student Union (UTSU) has a sustainability commission
- commissions: "Commissions are general members' meetings that operate under the principles of direct democracy -- each of our members has a vote! All decisions about campaigns and events are made through Commissions".
- Sustainability is not mentioned as part of their mission statement, however they do state that the attempt to bring up issues involving students at a municipal provincial and national level, and "to encourage social action programs involving volunteer student resources" which could fall under sustainability
- in terms of programs and initiatives on sustainability, focused on the limited definition of environmental sustainability
- Sustainability commission runs campaigns, the three listed on their website are:
 - In 2011 ending bottled water on campus
 - Pushing for divestment from fossil fuels for public institutions and UofT
 - More affordable sustainable food on campus
- As a university, U of T also has a sustainability office, similar to MOOS

Overall UTSU has no comprehensive or even cohesive approach to sustainability, aim to improve their example not emulate

Dalhousie

- Had the first college (department) of sustainability in Canada
- Also has large office of sustainability under the university
- Under the Dalhousie Student Union have the Dalhousie Student Union Sustainability office: <http://dsusustainabilityoffice.ca/>
- DSUOS has their own office in the DSU building



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- Mandate: “strives to create a culture of sustainability on campus” :
 - Implement sustainable everyday practices eg minimize consumption water, energy
 - Promote sustainability partnerships on campus, internal and external
 - Enhance information exchange regarding sustainability
 - Change approach to decision making incorporates consideration sustainability
- Has a board of directors of 6 Dalhousie students, as well as 3 commissioners and an executive directors (not paid)
- Has funding for student sustainability project
- Organizes events around sustainability, including week of events called “Green Week”

Impressive approach to sustainability! Definitely should try to incorporate parts of their structure (I would recommend checking out the DSUSO website). Different challenges we face at McGill is much larger campus with less of a focus on sustainability (sustainability in terms of amount of people who study it and overall culture is huge at Dal).

Queen's

- Also has sustainability office under the university
- Residence also has sustainability office
- Queen's Students' Union has an environment and sustainability policy:
<http://www.qubsu.org/media/Media,424694,en.pdf>
 - requires society to provide environmental awareness, reduce harmful environmental effects, recycle, require suppliers to maintain good environmental practices, encourage and improve university efforts in sustainability
 - policy focuses on environmental sustainability, little comprehensive overall view of sustainability
- Found little other initiatives regarding sustainability by the QSU

Little can be taken from Queen's approach.

The three universities looked at approached sustainability in very different ways. The existence of a sustainability commission (or council) under the University of Toronto Student Union could be a good way to engage students, although their initiatives seem limited to an environmental definition of sustainability. The approach to sustainability by the Dalhousie Union is very impressive: the existence of a separate office with their own council and a different website entirely focused on sustainability allows a very comprehensive approach. The policy and mandate of this sustainability office is clearly outlined, and includes financial,



social and environmental sustainability. Dalhousie's approach to sustainability should be investigated further as it could possibly be used as a model for SSMU. Queen's has no committee, club or council that focuses on sustainability under its student union. The sustainability policy that they passed focuses solely on environmental sustainability.

II. B) Individual Student Consultation

Councilor Ibrahim, Councilor Stewart-Kanigan, President Larson

A survey was developed to canvas students in person for feedback on sustainability [Appendix A]. Students were able to engage in a conversation with the surveyor, and their responses were recorded and are reflected below. The sample size was small due to the limited time that was spent on the consultation.

Number of Respondents: 15

Faculty Distribution: 1 Law, 2 Agricultural Science (Mac Campus), 6 Arts, 1 Engineering, 2 Arts + Science, 2 Management, 1 Science

Most Commonly Listed Resources:

Environment Committee: 1; Organic Campus: 6; Plate Club: 1; E-Waste: 1; The Flat: 1; The Nest: 1; Sustainability Projects Fund: 1; MUS Environmental Consultants: 1; MUS Sustainability Network: 1; Midnight Kitchen: 4; Sustainable Engineering at McGill (SEAM): 2; CKUT's Under the Weather Show: 2;

Zero: 7

SSMU Support for Sustainability Work:

Space: 1

Conferences: 1

Funding:

Workshops: 3

Awareness: 9

Other Suggestions for SSMU:

- Workshop series on sustainability in student living (i.e. what can and can't be recycled; sustainable eating on the cheap)
- Unified social media voice for sustainability at SSMU
- More information up in the SSMU building/from McGill
- Promotion amongst students



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- Including a sustainability mandate for all clubs
- Integrate sustainability training into Rez Project

McGill Support for Sustainability Work:

Sustainability Content in Classes: 5

Sustainability Program/Degree Option: 1

Funding: 2

Professors In Sustainability Fields: 2

Space: 1

Internships: 3

Talks/Conferences: 1

Publication Opportunities: 1

Research Opportunities: 5

Awareness: 5

Other Suggestions for McGill:

- McGill needs to be doing more especially in curriculum
- Sustainability as a component of all programs
- More hands on sustainability classes
- Emphasizing food security into curriculum
- Compost on campus accessible for students

Who should be responsible for sustainability at SSMU?

VP Sustainability: 6

Sustainability Coordinator: 2

Other:

- VP Sustainability can only work if you have a staff working under them and things are implemented (2)

II. C) Group-Based Online Consultation

Environment Commissioner Perry, Environment Commissioner Marling, Beatrice Yeung

A survey was sent out on the Environment Committee listserv, and most of the 22 respondents were active parts of environmental groups on campus. The following charts detail their familiarity with a series of resources that are available to them through SSMU, including their awareness or use of the given resources. Students were also asked what



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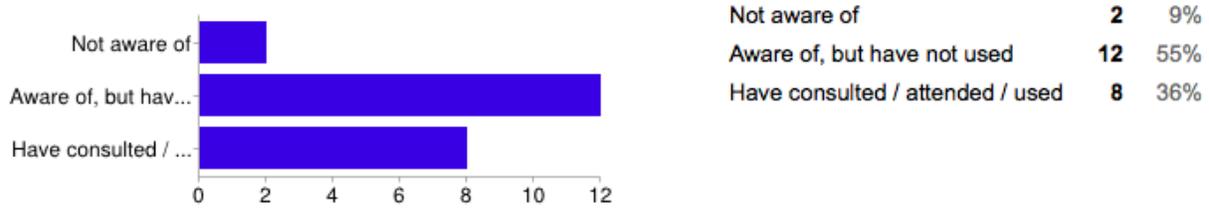
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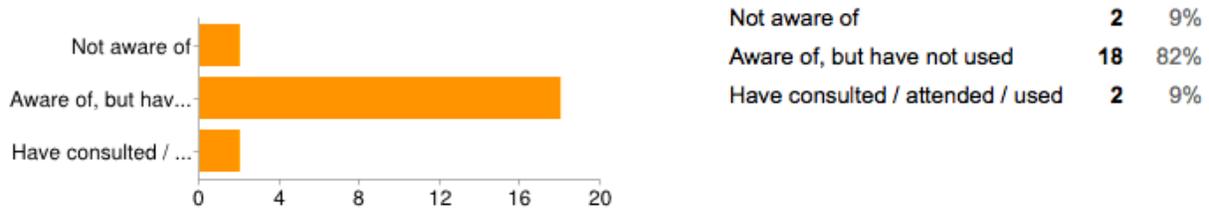
they most need in terms of support from SSMU for their sustainability work, and selected responses are quoted or summarized in this section.

What is your familiarity with the following resources?

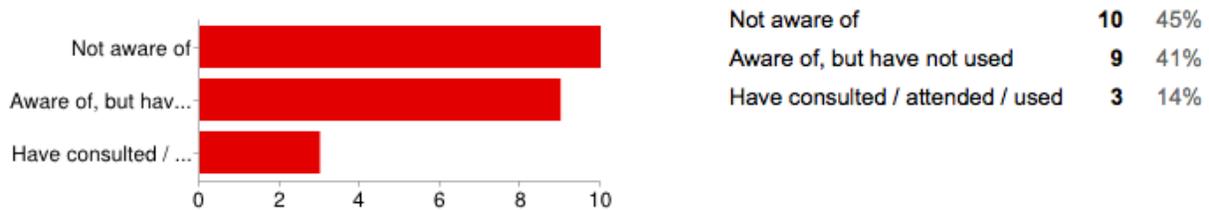
Environment Committee / Commissioners [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



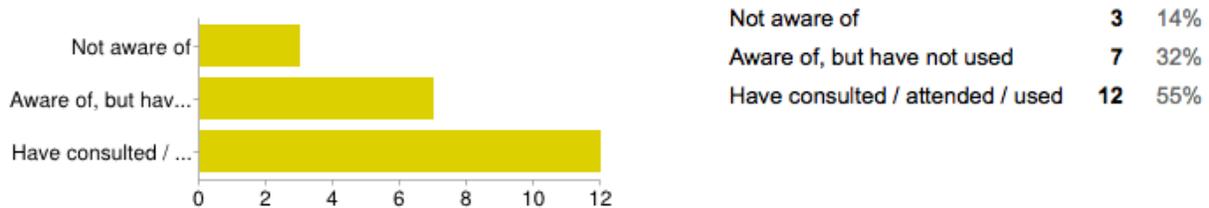
Equity Committee / Commissioners [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



Green Events Coordinator [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]

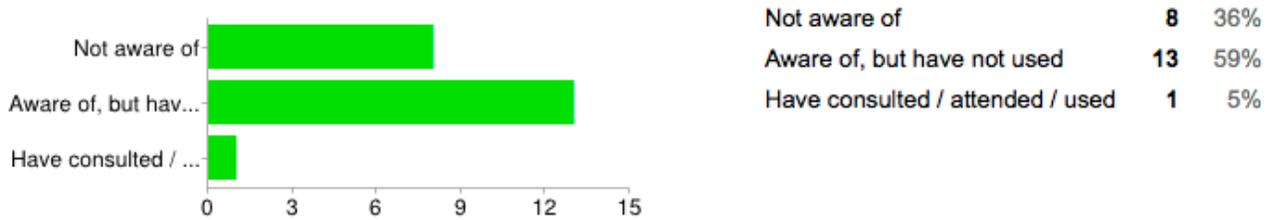


SPOKES (Sustainability Conference) [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]

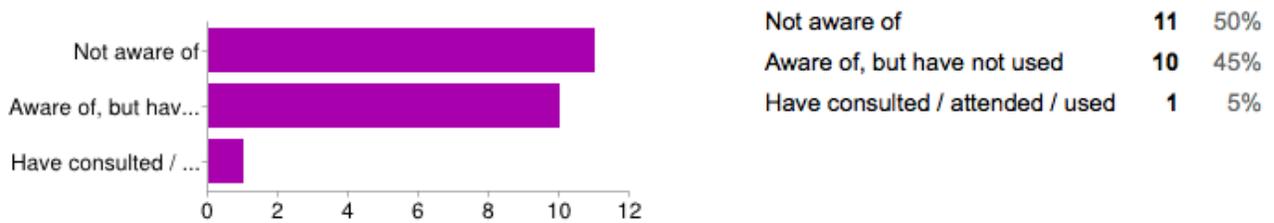




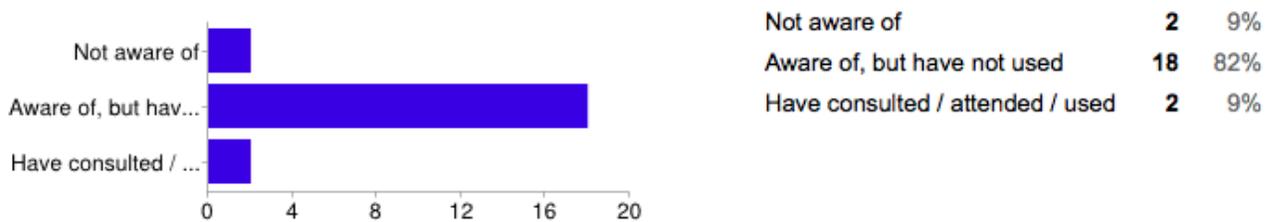
Sustainability Policy [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



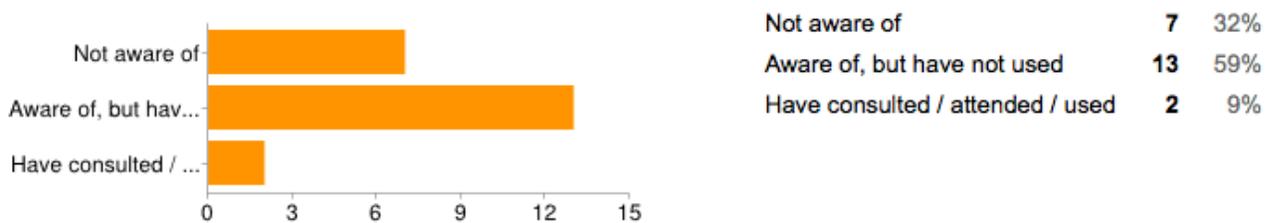
Green Events Guide / Checklist [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



Green Fund [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



Equity Fund [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



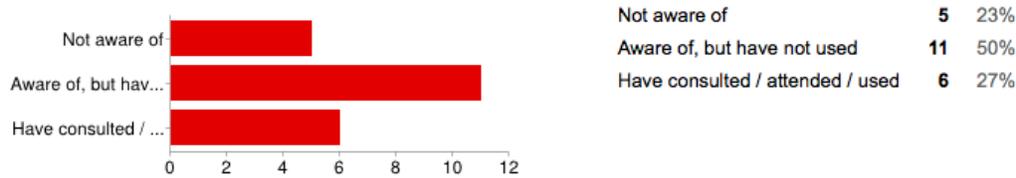


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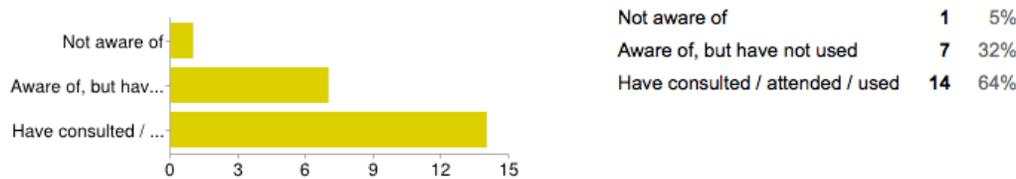
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Other SSMU Funds (Club, Ambassador, Campus Life, Space, Charity) [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



Rooms in the SSMU building [What is your familiarity with the following resources?]



What do you most need from SSMU to support your sustainability work?

- Environment Committee working as an umbrella group
 - Publicizing and promoting the work done by student groups, as well as other campus-based sustainability initiatives
 - Facilitating more collaboration and better communication between green groups and across faculties, as well as with McGill staff, faculty and administration
 - Providing educational workshops about sustainability in general
- Provision of more tangible resources
 - Funding for events and projects
 - Office and meeting space
 - Expansion of SSMU services, including compost, Plate Club, web design and translation services
- Expertise, advice and support from people with experience and formal knowledge of sustainability and McGill
 - Consultative services and advice on actualizing ideas
 - *“A central liaison - preferably a single person who's full-time, multi-term job is to create and maintain relationships with interested and involved students in the realm of sustainability within (and beyond) McGill”*
 - *“a full-time staff member(s) who is/are knowledgeable about McGill resources/structure and sustainability, and willing to help guide strategy, plan initiatives [...] and do across-board work with groups outside of SSMU.”*

Any additional thoughts?

- Sustainability needs to be integrated into all aspects of SSMU, and should be interdisciplinary and comprehensive



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- SSMU could benefit from engaging more with the McGill administration and community beyond just SSMU
- Communication, transparency and inclusive governance are integral parts of sustainability
- Both operational sustainability and initiatives or services need to be considered
- It would be positive to help undergraduates get involved in sustainability initiatives both within and without SSMU
- Creation of a centralized platform for sustainability would be helpful
 - SPOKES was really fantastic, and more cohesive events like these in the future would be wonderful





III. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions from Students:

- We need more connections between existing groups and to make resources and this network visible and accessible to students. For students not involved in a sustainability group, more awareness was the improvement they desired most.
- Student groups look to SSMU for tangible resources such as space and funding.
- A central liaison, with extensive experience and knowledge of McGill sustainability, SSMU sustainability, McGill structure, and SSMU's structure, is especially desired by student groups.
- Students want to hear about sustainability from both McGill and SSMU, and don't necessarily differentiate.
- Students are interested in how McGill could be incorporating sustainability into the curriculum more broadly.

Recommendations from the Committee:

- Continue holding SPOKES (sustainability conferences) every semester, to help strengthen the connections between existing sustainability initiatives
 - Provide a sustainability workshop (ie. recycling, sustainable eating) series
- SSMU, in particular Environment Committee, should work to promote the available resources to green groups and students who could benefit from their use
- Strike ad-hoc committee in Fall 2014 to continue research, working in collaboration with the SSMU Environment Committee
 - Conduct more verbal/canvassing-style surveys of students in Fall 2014
 - Develop local inter-university research and collaborations
- SSMU Executive and President should evaluate the feasibility of different models for institutionalized sustainability staff positions at the SSMU (VP Sustainability, Sustainability Coordinator, evolving other positions etc.)
- Lobby McGill to effectively advance the 14 priority actions and 23 long-term goals set out in the [Vision 2020 Sustainability Strategy](#), particularly with regards to provision of sustainability curricula



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Appendix A

1. What sustainability resources are you familiar with on campus? Used?

Sustainability Policy	McGill Office of Sustainability
SSMU Environment Committee	Sustainability Projects Fund
SSMU Equity Committee	First Peoples' House
SSMU Financial Ethics Research Committee	Social Equity and Diversity Education Office
SSMU Green Fund	Indigenous Access McGill
SSMU Ambassador Fund	Student Sustainability Ambassador Board
SSMU Clubs Fund	ECOLE
SSMU Equity Fund	Faculty/Departmental
SSMU Charity Fund	Arts Internship Awards
SSMU Campus Life	AUS Equity Committee
SSMU Space Fund	AUS Environment Committee
SSMU Sustainability Case Competition	SUS Environment Committee
Green Events Guide	International Student Services
Green Events/Building Coord	EUS Sustainable Engineering Practice
SPOKES	EUS Equity Committee
MUS Environmental Consultants	MUS Sustainability Network
Trottier Institute for Sustainability in Engineering and Design (TISED)	MCSS Equity Committee
CERES	QPIRG



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CKUT		Midnight Kitchen	
SACOMSS		Queer McGill	
Union for Gender Empowerment		SSMU Daycare	

2. What do you most need/want from SSMU to support sustainability work? (ex: funding, space, expertise)

space	
funding	
expertise/consultation	
conferences	
workshops	
VP Sustainability	



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3. What do you most need/want from McGill to support sustainability work? (ex: funding, space, expertise)

sustainability content in classes	
sustainability program/degree options	
funding	
professors in sustainability fields	
space	
internships	
talks/conferences	
publication opportunities	
research opportunities	

4. Who should be responsible for sustainability at SSMU? (i.e. VP Sustainability, Sustainability Coordinator...)