

Fall 2014

SSMU Sustainability

Assessment

October 23rd, 2014

*Authored by Kristen Perry & Keelin Elwood
SSMU Environment Commissioners*

This assessment acknowledges that SSMU and McGill are located on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka traditional territory.

Cette évaluation reconnaît que AÉUM et McGill sont situées sur le territoire traditionnel non cédé Kanien'kehá:ka.

Before you Proceed:

Over the 2011-2013 period, the annual Sustainability Assessment was written by the full-time Sustainability Coordinator. With the sudden departure of the Sustainability Coordinator, no assessment was written during the 2013-2014 academic year. Due to the delayed nature of this report, as well as the new authors (the two Environment Commissioners - both part-time student staff), this assessment was conducted differently than previous ones, and the report is thus also presented in a new format. Information presented in this report is the result of the authors' knowledge, verbal or written interviews of relevant individuals, and reviews of related documents. Efforts have been made to clarify contributing sources at the beginning of each section. More information on what this report strives to encompass can be found in the *Introduction* section of this report.

About the Authors:

The authors of this report, Kristen Perry and Keelin Elwood, are the two Environment Commissioners for SSMU. Perry, a U3 Environmental Science Student, joined SSMU Environment Committee in 2011, and has been a SSMU Environment Commissioner for the last three years. During this period she has gained knowledge and retained a certain level of institutional memory regarding sustainability at SSMU and on campus. She is also involved in other sustainability initiatives at McGill including Divest McGill, ECOLE and the Student Sustainability Ambassador Board. It is Elwood's first year as SSMU Environment Commissioner and second year on Environment Committee. Elwood, a U3 Environment student, interns at the McGill Office of Sustainability, allowing her to become more familiar with the broad spectrum of sustainability initiatives across campus. The authors are conscious that their background is primarily rooted in environmental sustainability, but they have and will continue to make concerted efforts to acknowledge and learn about social and economic sustainability in order to more completely integrate it into their practices and actions.

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1. Introduction

1.1. This Assessment

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

This annual assessment aims to provide an overview of SSMU's role in promoting sustainability, as defined below, internally and externally to the society. To do this, the knowledge and experience of past and present executives, staff and students will be drawn upon. It enumerates many of the sustainability-related events and initiatives that have occurred (or are ongoing) over the past academic year, as well as provide context regarding the McGill setting. The report provides a reflection on the society's progress in the realm of sustainability work, as well as recommendations for moving forward. Furthermore, in conjunction with previous assessments, it will help serve as a source of institutional memory and a resource for anyone hoping to gain a better understanding of the evolution of sustainability work at SSMU.

1.2. Understanding Sustainability at SSMU

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

Defining sustainability can be difficult, since the word itself has evolved and been adopted by many individuals and groups, particularly in recent history. This elasticity allows the concept to be adapted to a multiplicity of purposes, while the ambiguity can sometimes act as a challenge that must be overcome in pursuit of attaining whatever we term "sustainability". Developing a common language is essential for establishing common goals. In an organization with a large and varied constituency such as SSMU's, this is especially important. Happily, our diversity is also well suited to catalyzing rich and ongoing conversations that can result in a meaningful, flexible and widely applicable concept of what sustainability means to us. Below are a few of the basics upon which we can build that dialogue.

The Brundtland Commission's interpretation of sustainability, as written in the Brundtland Report *Our Common Future*, is one of the most commonly cited definitions:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts:

- the concept of needs, in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and
- the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs."

This definition was intended to be used for the long-term management of the global human community, and is thus both large in scale and human-focused. In the context of SSMU, it means that we must meet the needs of present and future contingents of students equitably, with the environmental, human and financial capital available to us. At the same time, it is

valuable to keep the world, beyond the SSMU/McGill microcosm and human-centered paradigm, in mind.

There are two models of sustainability currently in widespread usage; the three-pillar model and the embedded model. Both include three dimensions of sustainability: environmental, social and economic. The three-pillar model can be visualized as a three-lobed Venn diagram, with each circle representing one of the dimensions of sustainability. It is sometimes considered “weak sustainability”, since it could be interpreted as defining economy, society and environment as separate and equal entities, or implying that they are interchangeable. “Sustainability” sits at the junction of all three spheres, where each dimension is present and interacting with the others. One advantage to this model is its functional similarity to an organization like SSMU, where environmental, social and economic sustainability are often managed separately (ex: Environment Committee, Equity Committee, Finance Committee). To expedite the accomplishment of our goals, more beneficial interactions between groups and individuals working on each dimension can be pursued. Additionally, every decision and action made should involve the consideration of a holistic sustainability, so that is better integrated throughout the society.

The embedded model can be visualized as three concentric circles of varying sizes, with each circle representing one of the dimensions of sustainability. It can be considered “strong sustainability”, since it better illustrates dependencies- such as by the economy on society and environment, and society on the environment. For SSMU, where funding is largely derived from student contributions, its financial health is strongly tied to the strength of the society- the students who comprise SSMU’s membership. SSMU deals primarily in providing services that support and enrich the well-being of its members. One of its largest material assets is the William Shatner building, which must be managed efficiently to provide maximum service and space for student use, all while minimizing operational costs and environmental impact. Especially for an organization comprised primarily of youth, ensuring environmental regeneration, or at minimum environmental protection, is of paramount importance for our future. Thus, initiatives that are able to support the health of the environment while also supporting the needs of students should be prioritized.

Every action that we take changes the world around us. To make progress in improving the sustainability of our practices and operations, we must aim to simultaneously minimize our negative impact while maximizing our positive impact. Ideally, we will eventually be contributing more than we are taking, all while still meeting the needs of students now and in the future, and promoting efficient, healthy and thriving human and ecological communities within and beyond SSMU.

2. Representation and Leadership of Sustainability within SSMU

2.1. Executive Reviews

Contributing Writers: Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews conducted by Courtney Ayukawa (President)

2.1.1. President, Courtney Ayukawa

To the President of SSMU, sustainability is the process of working towards making things possible and present in the long-term. It is a mindset where people consider the various ripple effects upon themselves, the people around them, and all other entities from their great-great-grandchildren to the surrounding environment, when acting. It is also important to the President that all three of sustainability's different pillars are equally recognized (social, environment, economic). For Ayukawa, it's not just all environmental. The President has observed though, that environmental sustainability has been a gateway for people to be introduced to greater issues of sustainability. Ayukawa has reviewed the sustainability policy around 3 or 4 times, the last being in August 2014. Sustainability has also been integrated into her portfolio in many different ways:

- Sustainability to a certain extent was brought in by the president, therefore sustainability is somewhat thought of as the president's responsibility.
- As President all of the SSMU green staff (environmental sustainability) fall under her portfolio. This includes the two Environment Commissioners, who chair the SSMU Environment Committee, the Green Events Coordinator, and the Green Building Coordinator.
- The President strives towards sustainability in a sense that she tries to take into account all environmental and social considerations when sitting on and participating in different committees.
- It is Ayukawa's responsibility for supervising the staff and ensuring they proceed in their jobs as sustainably as possible.
- As President she is mostly responsible for the governance of SSMU. Ayukawa is working with by-law committee to ensure the by-laws allow for sustainable governance. An example of said by-laws is the equity training now required for all councillors as of last November.
- There is lots of HR in her portfolio. The president is working closely with Marie-Élaine Reid, the HR advisor, to bring in a mental health policy for permanent staff. This policy is being implemented this semester.
- The President also takes sustainability into account when decision making. Sustainable considerations used to be something Ayukawa had to actively consider, but now is just ingrained in her decision making process.
- She is the only undergraduate student to sit on McGill's BOG (Board of Governors). At these meetings she tries to be a strong student voice so students can have power in the upper levels of the university, which is important for students in the long run.

- The President was also responsible for giving the new student-staff orientation on Sustainability in Fall of 2014.

2.1.2. Vice-President of University Affairs, Claire Stewart-Kanigan

For the Vice-President of University Affairs, sustainability is inclusive of all three pillars of sustainability (economic sustainability, social sustainability and environmental sustainability) and is something that aims to support the most people it possibly can. She views it as being comfortable with each other and having sufficient access to support, land, food, etc. Basically it is to have one's needs met, but not necessarily maintaining a standard. When the sustainability policy was brought to council in 2013 it was read by the Vice-President of University Affairs, Claire Stewart-Kanigan, and was again reviewed in May of 2014. Sustainability has been integrated into the university affairs portfolio through several different channels:

- Exploring opportunities for a Vice-President of social sustainability.
- Initiatives to destress things and increase the accessibility to current resources to improve mental health.
- In regards to equity, the Vice-President of University Affairs intends to increase accessibility of equity policy while supporting the people who need equity and/or assisting those that are doing equity related work (eg. aiding them in navigating the administration).
- Indigenizing the academy. The Vice-President of University Affairs has previously aided in providing indigenous students' access to university spaces, supporting funding for things such as indigenous access to McGill, participated in indigenous awareness week and speaker series (partnering with SEDE), and formed a subcommittee on first peoples and the aboriginal affairs working groups. Said subcommittee has also worked on the traditional territory acknowledgement protocol.
- The Vice-President of University Affairs has been supporting the work of demilitarize mcgill and is on a working group to review the regulations regarding research conduct.
- The sexual assault policy; the Vice-President of University Affairs has aided in making it clear for students what resources are available and where they can go to access these resources. She has been supporting accessible and confidential resources as well as pushing for university accountability (which was promised last November). This would include a forum on consent, a week on safe space and a position of harm reduction liaison.
- The Vice-President of University Affairs has an invested interest in updating the sustainability policy. Such an update would increase accountability of SSMU, make the policy more accessible to the student body and be up to date in regards to HR changes (specifically the loss of the Sustainability Coordinator position).

2.1.3. Vice-President of Clubs and Services, Stefan Joel Fong

The sustainability work of Stefan Joel Fong, the Vice-President of Clubs and Services, was a lot more environmentally focused until last year. To the Vice-President of Clubs and

Services sustainability means a harmonious system which can withstand stress well. Meaning that in a sustainable practice, there would ideally be buffers present against things going wrong. A sustainable system is a resilient one and flexible to change. An example of this flexibility was the change in Activities Night flow, changing to a path system. With the new path system, more groups were seen and it was safer, the tradeoff being that it took longer. The new system is also flexible enough that if needed, could be changed for winter activities night. The Vice-President of Clubs and Services, had the chance to read the sustainability policy back in 2013. He also has sustainability integrated into his executive portfolio through an array of projects and policies.

- The Vice-President of Clubs and Services supports sustainability at SSMU by developing administrative structures which support sustainability work and those who carry out those tasks.
- In regards to the SSMU building itself, the sustainable maintenance of the building is long term, but the people working on the changes and policies (the Vice-President of Clubs and Services and the Green Buildings Coordinator) are short term. This makes institutional memory difficult to maintain in regards to the sustainable development of the SSMU building. The Vice-President of Clubs and Services did not see much of the Green Buildings Coordinator's work from last year, but is determined to collaborate more this year. Potential projects to be explored are the SSMU building lighting system and a more efficient HVAC system with less waste energy that can operate at a higher capacity.
- The Vice-President of Clubs and Services recognizes that club offices are not as sustainable as they could be since they are constantly redistributed semesterly and not kept in good condition. The overall distribution and use of space can also be improved upon.
- Last year a green ecoscore was implemented in the club audit. When club auditing is done, they are scored as to how financially responsible they are and what items they are buying/how sustainable those products are (eg. use of paper plates bought at walmart). Unfortunately this initiative did not work because of the immense workload accounting already has. For this project to be a success it would require someone with accounting and sustainability knowledge. Sophie, the Green Events Coordinator from 2013/2014, made many suggestions regarding the failure including shifting sustainability scoring to the funding side.
- Club funding is changing to a structure that will be more transparent. Money will be given in installments over time upon receiving receipts demonstrating responsible previous spending, instead of the current audit system at the end.
- Workflows and systems are being improved to ensure that the process involving various clubs or committees run smoothly. These changes and improvements will be made carefully, and taking other structures into consideration, to reduce confusion and harm to structures that already exist and work well.
- Improved 'leaks' in the system. For example reusing activities night passes instead of them being taken (lost only 200 last year versus 800 in the past).

2.1.4. Vice-President of Finance and Operations, Kathleen Bradley

The Vice-President of Finance and Operations describes sustainability as a systematic understanding of the intricate nature as to how humans interact with the social, political, and environmental atmospheres. It is appreciating and recognizing the value and importance of these environments and engaging in practices which preserve all social, political, environmental atmospheres over the long term. Kathleen Bradley, the Vice-President of Finance and Operations, has read the sustainability policy once while first campaigning, then a second time in May 2014. She has integrated the vision of said policy into her portfolio in several different ways:

- The Vice-President of Finance and Operations intends to develop long term financial sustainability for SSMU and assesses the organizations needs according to the constitution. She is also further working on the investment portfolio, the Capital Expenditures Reserve Fund (CERF), and working with the Financial Ethics Research Committee.
- She is working with the Student Run Cafe ensuring the operations manager understands sustainability and how it can be properly implemented into the business model of the SRC. The Vice-President of Finance and Operations supports the training of student staff and the education of customers as to the presence of sustainability in regards to the SRC. She also trained the Operations Manager on how sustainability is present at the Student Run Cafe and will work with him throughout the entire process.
- The Vice-President of Finance and Operations ensures that the majority of SSMU and services' purchases are in line with ethical and sustainable practises. She also has accounts open with ethical suppliers to facilitate SSMU services working with them.

2.1.5. Vice-President of Internal Affairs - J. Daniel Chaim

To the Vice-President of Internal Affairs, Daniel Chaim, sustainability has three criteria that should be upheld and continue to be upheld for the continuation of the activity at hand. These three criteria are the three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental and economic). Having studied economics and financial sustainability, Chaim understands that if one of these pillars falls, the other two will as well. He acknowledges that most people only care about environmental sustainability, because that is generally the pillar that is mostly overlooked, while people are more okay with the maintaining the status quo of the other two pillars. Although Chaim has not read the policy, he does have sustainability integrated in his portfolio:

- For Frosh, Chaim integrated all three pillars of sustainability into the event whenever possible. On the environmental side of things, reusable water bottles were encouraged, and there was composting and recycling of the event materials used. In regards to the social pillar, (social sustainability) community relations were a main initiative. Street teams circulated the Milton-Park neighbourhood with lists of where students would be, working a grid system to reduce the student partying and presence on the street, mitigating risk. This also helped reduce the time students spent between events. Harm reduction teams, chill zones, MSERT and McGill admin were all present at Orientation to help minimize risk and increase social sustainability.

All Coordinators, Leaders, and O-Staff underwent equity, consent, sexual assault, peer pressure, alcohol, and active listening training. Frosh was also a break even event, meaning it did not profit but also does not use student fees, except for staff resources (accounting, o-staff, etc). Frosh can be used as a big learning experience for other large events to be hosted this year.

- Chaim thinks that SSMU currently has a pretty good grasp on social and financial sustainability, but is lacking in the environmental department. As Vice-President of Internal Affairs he realizes that the person who holds this position must have previous experience and knowledge of how to effectively integrate and improve sustainability for large events.
- The publications on which Chaim worked on were already pretty sustainable.

2.1.6. Vice-President of External Affairs - Amina Moustaqim-Barrette

For the Vice-President of External Affairs, to be sustainable is to be just, and to have the opportunity to live in a just world. It is to have equity and equality amongst all things on the planet with a future where no being (people, environment, etc.) benefits or is hurt by the indiscriminate actions of others. Moustaqim-Barrette read the sustainability policy back in May 2013 and has prevalent sustainability-oriented actions in her portfolio:

- The Vice-President external participates in many external campaigns and is especially involved in political issues. At McGill University we have an obligation to advocate for social and environmental justice, therefore it is the Vice-President of External Affairs' responsibility to advocate and campaign for a more sustainable future. Some examples of initiatives are climate actions campaigns, university sustainability policy, and actions and having a socially sustainable relationship with the community (workshops, etc).
- Moustaqim-Barrette also participates in climate justice campaigns. For example divest McGill will eventually be shifting to a larger climate change campaign, including integrating climate change work into SSMU policy and a long term plan. This includes a large action to happen in the spring around climate change. The goals in regards to the administration are, in the short term, to have administration look into the logistics of Divestment and to get it as an option on the table, and, in the long term, for the administration to commit to divestment from all fossil fuels.
- In regards to social justice campaigns the Vice-President of External Affairs works on indigenous representation and anti-military research at McGill
- She also works to improve shared spaces on campus, like all of the green space and on bike issues.
- Moustaqim-Barrette also tries to better integrate McGill into the wider Quebec community, collaborates with and supports other universities with their campaigns and projects, and establishes concrete relationships with other Quebec Universities. These connections have allowed for student mobilization and the creation of a lobby group made up of various Montreal Student associations.

2.2. Legislative Council

Contributing Writers: Courtney Ayukawa (President)

Legislative Council passed a number of motions supporting various sustainability initiatives in the 2013-2014 year. These can be found here:

<http://ssmu.mcgill.ca/representation/ssmu-legislative-council/council-documents-2013-2014/>

4/ A quick list of some of these motions are:

- A commitment to mental health and awareness was made
- A mental health committee was struck, met, and produced a policy
- A stance against the proposed QC charter of values / Bill 60
- An endorsement of anti-oppression training in Residences
- A motion supporting accessibility to executive positions for international students
- An ad hoc committee for sustainability was struck, met, and produced a report
- Motions supporting flying the Hiawatha Belt Flag and moving the Hochelaga rock
- ISG status was granted to the Market Cooperative
- All councillors also mandated themselves, and other SSMU leaders to receive safer space and consent trainings

2.3. Role of Environment Committee in Sustainability

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

Note: The content in this section refers primarily to the 2013-2014 academic year.

2.3.1. Overview

The SSMU Environment Committee (EnviroComm) is an open committee that meets weekly, and anybody passionate about sustainability can sit in to voice their opinion, share their ideas and help coordinate their activities. The committee and executive team are comprised primarily of volunteers, who are enthusiastic and passionate about their work and bring a lot of heart to our projects and events. They hold a multiplicity of events and work on several initiatives each semester, all with the aim of enriching the knowledge, experience and connectivity of SSMU members on the topic of sustainability.

Last year's EnviroComm has made great strides in working with and supporting more green groups, such as ECOLE and Greening McGill. The executives of the committee were very organized and committed to their mandates, consistently going above and beyond both requirements and expectations. Events were creative and successful, with notable turnouts. The Committee has fully integrated all SSMU green staff (the 2 Environment Commissioners who chair the Committee, as well as the Green Events Coordinator and Green Building Coordinator), creating a more cohesive and diverse committee. Some of the past year's events and initiatives are reported in more detail below, as they pertain to SSMU's mandates for *coordination, facilitation, awareness and outreach* efforts in sustainability work.

2.3.2. Coordination & Facilitation

First semester's conference for Students Pursuing Opportunities and Knowledge in Environment and Sustainability (SPOKES) brought together over 60 existing and potential

McGill sustainability champions in a collaborative environment. They presented and learned about ongoing projects and resources available to them, networked, contributed their ideas for sustainability at McGill and participated in discussion groups to coordinate possible future initiatives. This conference was key in developing relationships between all of the green groups working on sustainability initiatives across campus, as well as empowering students to get involved and access the many collective resources and knowledge provided by the community.

Held in second semester, SPOKES II took a different format than SPOKES I, with a shift in intended audience from students already doing sustainability work to the wider student population. This conference was essentially a series of 4 workshops; EnviroComm brought different groups together to run a diversity of collaborative workshops on topics of mutual interest. The primary positive outcome of this conference was engaged green groups that resulted in concrete partnerships being built. For example, after presenting a workshop together, team Montreal for the Solar Decathlon is now working with the McGill Outdoors Club to investigate and implement sustainable building improvements to the MOC House. The conference was smaller, with around 20 people participating in various presentations and activities throughout the day, and each person who participated came away with new knowledge on issues surrounding green living.

2.3.3. Awareness

EnviroComm held many other workshops and events throughout the year. The Sustainability Ambassador Coordinators work with other student groups to create and present free Sustainable Lifestyle workshops in order to educate students on how to engage with sustainability in their personal lifestyles. They have coordinated one on DIY Upcycled Halloween Costumes, and also held a CHOPPED Seasonal Food Cooking Challenge. EnviroComm supported Greening McGill as a working group when they held Zero Waste Week, and has also collaborated with PGSS EnviroComm to co-host 6 monthly Green Drinks events, which are open to the community, and entail themed presentations in various forms (such as film screenings, panels and lectures) followed by lively discussions on the topic of the event. These usually have around 30 participants each, including members from the wider Montreal community, so it is a great way for ideas and knowledge to be shared.

Furthermore, the Montreal Sustainable Lifestyle bloggers host a blog. “EnviroCommPosts” aims to educate readers about personal experiences with sustainability and how to incorporate it into their lives. For example, past posts have included information on buying healthy food, thrift shopping, winterizing your home and recycling bottles, with encouragement for students to take action on each of these.

2.3.4. Outreach

The Website Designer has been hard at work developing a new website for EnviroComm. Now that the framework has been designed, the committee is working on writing content. The goal is to create a functional and informative website which includes information for individuals, student leaders and groups on campus.

The Intercampus Outreach Coordinator has attended a few meetings with members of other Montreal sustainability groups, in order to connect us to wider Montreal community initiatives. The Environment Commissioners send out weekly listserv emails that notify students and groups about sustainable events, lectures, and opportunities such as jobs and internships. These listserv emails, containing 15-25 announcements each, are sent out to a list of over 900 people that have opted-in. We also have an EnviroComm Facebook page and Twitter account to extend our outreach further.

2.4. Role of Equity Committee in Sustainability

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

With Information From: Exit reports of Shaina Agbayani (former Equity Commissioner) and Justin Koh (former Equity Commissioner) and SSMU Council documents

Note: The content in this section refers primarily to the 2013-2014 academic year.

2.4.1. Overview

“All Students’ Society endeavours shall be undertaken with full respect for human dignity and without discrimination on the basis of irrelevant personal characteristics that include but are not limited to race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, gender identification, age, mental or physical disability, language, sexual orientation or social class.”

–Preamble of the SSMU Constitution

The SSMU Equity Committee is dedicated to fostering an understanding of equity as “an active process through which individuals, institutions and cultures recognize historical and current bias and oppression, deconstruct this bias and oppression, and take pro-active steps to challenge privileged actions, attitudes and assumptions” ([Guide to SSMU Equity](#)). Their weekly meetings are to assist students going through conflicts regarding inequality (by reviewing equity complaints), to ensure that all SSMU funded and affiliated activities and organizations are accountable to SSMU and operate equitably, and to plan outreach . These meetings are open only to members who have gone through an application process, due to the nature and confidentiality of the complaints and issues they address.

2.4.2. Awareness

SSMU Equity Committee has dedicated itself to hosting annual conferences surrounding Equity. The conference provides students with the opportunity to engage in discussions with their peers, present their primary research, and answer questions. The conference is not just limited to student work though, professors, researches, and activists all had the opportunity to present their work on topics pertaining to disparities in health outcomes and access to healthcare. The [2014 Equity Conference](#) was hosted on March 13th and the topic was Equity and Health.

The Equity Committee is working towards updating their website in order to make the SSMU Equity Policy more visible and accessible to students. This includes translating the policy in to French.

2.4.3. Upholding Equity

The dedication of SSMU to operating equitably has been seen over the past year in several motions presented to council. The first motion, [Guarantee of Freedom of Dress in the SSMU Building](#), was approved at the General Assembly and resolved that freedom of dress shall not be infringed upon or denied on the SSMU grounds under reasonable circumstances. The second motion, [Support for the Social Equity and Diversity Office \(SEDE\)](#), was approved by council and resolved that the SSMU affirm SEDE as a valuable and integral organization on campus. This motion resolved that SSMU call upon McGill University to continue to maintain financial support for SEDE's ongoing work, and to provide permanent funding for SEDE's future endeavours.

Along with the motions regarding Equity that were approved in the 2013-2014 school year, SSMU also commissioned three research projects to be conducted that pertain to equity. These projects will compare SSMU's work in equity and social justice to other educational institutions in North America with a focus on finances, policy-making, and governance structure.

Last years' Equity Commissioners pioneered the creation of the SSMU Equity Fund, now available for projects that work toward ending discrimination and increasing accessibility and inclusivity on campus. Moving forward, there are plans to disseminate information on the Equity Fund and its purpose to all SSMU members.

3. Internal Practices of SSMU

3.1. Operations:

Contributing Writers: Alessandro Sangiovanni (Gerts Administration Manager), Alexandra Heim (Green Building Coordinator), Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner), and Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

When considering internal operations like Gerts and The Nest, many different decision impact the sustainability of these endeavours. For this particular assessment the reports received were mostly pertaining to the suppliers of these operations, along with a few suggestions for the future. It is recognized that the supplies for these operations are an important part of their overall sustainability, but do not encompass all aspects which need to be taken into consideration.

3.1.1. *Gerts Student Bar*

- **Summit Foods** - Assortment of food products as well as general supplies such as cleaning supplies etc. they are a Colabor member and always encourage local first. <http://summit.colabor.com/?lang=en>
- **Sleemans** - Canadian based company, promotes social responsibility as per government regulations also has internal procedures to reduce waste. <http://www.sleeman.ca/en/about> ; / <http://www.canadianpackaging.com/automation/reasons-to-cheer-3241/>
- **McAusland** - Quebec based company situated in Montreal, promotes social responsibility as per government regulations also has internal procedures to reduce waste. They are also one of the few smaller micro-breweries that have a bottle cleaning and recycling system on site. <http://mcauslan.com/en/>
- **Multiplus DM** - Assortment of food products as well as general supplies such as cleaning supplies etc. We are attempting to reduce the need for this supplier by replacing it with Summit Foods as a better option. <http://www.multiplusdm.com/en>
- **Hector Larivee** - Quebec-based produce supplier. They offer local produce whenever possible. <http://www.hectorlarivee.com/>
- **SAQ** - The SAQ has been concerned about sustainable development for a long time. Even before it launched its dedicated Sustainable Development Department in 2007. They have Social, Environmental and Economical. <http://www.saq.com/content/SAQ/en/a-propos/responsabilite-societale/developpement-durable.html>
- In terms or alternatives, there are not many. Governmental regulations insist we use the SAQ for alcohol, in terms or Breweries the present two are some of the local leaders for environmental and social responsibility. In the case of suppliers such as Summit or Multiplus; items such as cleaning products and dry good, locating and ordering from multiple suppliers would increase purchase prices of the final product creating very high “break even” margins on our products for students.

- Events like FROSH and CARNIVAL that create such a high volume and demand cause the consumption of plastic cups to be extreme. At present we are looking into creating a program that would allow the client to opt for a reusable cup for event like this. However there are many logistical items to be taken into consideration when dealing with days and weeks of this magnitude. We began looking into this in late February of 2014 and will still need time before some type of proposal or presentation can be made.

3.1.2. The Nest

- **Hector Larivee** for produce: They are a medium-sized, Quebec-owned produce supplier. We have a note on our account to always choose the local product when they're is a choice, and they were incredibly cooperative and helpful to this end; <http://www.hectorlarivee.com/>
- **GFS** for dry goods: really nothing special here. They are a huge food distributor. I would like to move away from relying on their products, as there is nothing particularly sustainable about their business. But they are inexpensive, and have a wide variety of food products; <https://www.gfscanada.com/>
- **Voltigeurs** for meat: family owned (in Quebec), they produce free-range, grain-fed chickens that are organic and antibiotic free; <http://www.ferme-des-voltigeurs.ca/en-CA/a-family-company/farm-history>
- **Les Aliments Horium** for tofu: family owned (in Quebec), they grow and make their own organic tofu, and it is AMAZING ;<http://www.horium.com/>
- **Ferme les Petits Ecores** for honey: vendor at the McGill Farmers' Market, they make local, organic honey; <http://www.fermelpe.com/>
- **Santropol** for coffee: locally roasted in Montreal, Santropol is Small Producers Certified, which is a fair trade certification that ensures fair pricing for small scale farmers set by the farmers on a collective, cooperative basis. The certification process, in cooperation with Santropol's founder, work towards helping the farmers introduce environmentally friendly farming practices, and work to build collectives that help small scale farmers compete with large plantations. They are seriously amazing people (who make amazing coffee) who are committed to environmental and social sustainability here in Canada and in the countries where they grow and purchase coffee; <http://www.santropol.com/pages/bblends.html>
- **Camellia Sinensis** for tea: tea store in downtown Montreal, they don't have the resources to become Fair Trade certified in word (many of the farmers they work with live in countries that don't recognize Fair Trade certification, so there is little incentive for them to certify), but certainly meet many of the requirements in spirit. Started by two brothers, they periodically visit and help pick (literally) the tea they bring back from the farmers, and pay fair trade wages; <http://camellia-sinensis.com/en/>

3.1.3. William Shatner Building

Currently, HVAC and composting are two most pressing building issues at SSMU. First, the HVAC system is completely out of date with modern building standards. The system is

very large and is posing a lot of issues such as uncomfortable air quality, expensive energy outputs, and large repair costs. The system must be replaced soon for it cannot last much longer. SSMU has been attempting to put pressure on McGill so that the deadlines can be met and a new system installed as soon as possible. Second, composting at SSMU has come to a current halt. Although a system has been implemented, current composting must be put on hold due to the fact that many students lack the knowledge of what can and cannot be composted. To combat this problem, building committee is working on getting better signage to indicate what should and should not go into the compost receptacles and Environment Committee will be collaborating on an education campaign.

3.2. Human Resources

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner), Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner), and Marie-Élaine Reid (HR Advisor)

3.2.1. Student Staff Training

The SEDE office provided a 3 hour basic equity workshop to all regular and student staff members last year. This year, it has been suggested that two levels of equity workshop could be provided; one for students who have never taken a training before and one for those who have a foundational understanding of basic equity principles already through previous trainings or other experience. This would allow for the further professional development of members, based on their previous knowledge of equity. For further equity training, HR, in the future, would like to direct Student Staff to the SEDE office website for more advanced/continuing workshops.

SSMU also provided student staff training in the field of HR, Office, IT and Sustainability in the fall of 2014. These workshops were well organized, through a doodle poll, to best accommodate everyone participating. The HR and Office training were essential for conveying how to properly conduct yourself in the SSMU office in a respectful way and clearly illustrated how to address and problem solve in different confrontational scenarios. The HR orientation was particularly useful as it covered SSMU's harassment and sexual harassment policies. The orientation was a wonderful tool to teach the student staff how to properly address difficult situations and the appropriate conflict resolution paths to take. The sustainability training was an extremely useful tool for informing staff on the sustainability resources and initiatives at SSMU. It was also a great introduction to the three pillars of sustainability. Considering an alternative training for those more advanced in sustainability may be something to look into for the future.

3.2.2. Initiatives

The HR compensation was completed structure for regular staff members to make sure we have an equitable system to determine salaries. This project was completed by an external consulting firm specialized in small and medium sized organizations. SSMU received a grant from the government to help us financially in that process. The compensation structure takes in consideration our group benefits and ensures at the same time that we are competitive with the job market to retain regular staff. Regarding Executives, Marie-Élaine

created discussion groups on SSMU Executive's Transition Training to address the challenges that the organization faces in training incoming executives. An Executive Transition Training Program was developed to prepare incoming executives, outgoing executives and regular staff members in the integration process. Feedback on how to improve the program again next year is ongoing.

3.2.3. Challenges

Turnover at the SSMU is part of HR challenges every year because it involves a lot recruitment efforts and training. SSMU tries to select student candidates that will work more than one year with the SSMU and it is not always possible. When we select candidates for regular positions, we also verify that their career objectives are in line with the job they seek as well as with our organization. Also, the SSMU's volume of activities has increased over the last year with the addition of the Nest which had an impact on our overall structure. Financially, budget constraints with the lease limited two of our regular staff position for an unknown period of time. Moreover, the fact that the building fee initially didn't pass restricted HR related planning due to limited financial resources. From a structural standpoint, from one year to another, the relationship between elected executives and SSMU's administration staff can be more difficult when making decisions that have an impact on the Society as a whole. The reason is because elected executives will have a tendency to represent students during their one year mandate from a short-term standpoint with less perspective of the long-term financial stability of the SSMU. The General Manager was given the responsibility of long-term financial stability of the SSMU and is a non-voting member of the Executive Committee where decisions are made - occupying more of an advisory role to the Committee. Overall, last year, the organization faced challenges involving and impacting Human Resources. Those challenges are addressed this year while providing best services to McGill undergraduates.

3.3. Finances

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner), Kathleen Bradley (VP Finance and Operations), and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

3.3.1. Budgeting

SSMU has two long-term financial instruments that ensure this; the Investment Portfolio and our Capital Expenditure Reserve Fund. This is a restricted fund that SSMU contributes to annually, that is used for long-term capital asset purchases like databases, stoves and kitchen equipment when the Nest opened last year, and the Gerts renovations that happened two years ago. We can't function and provide the services we do to students in the future if we don't plan accordingly.

The Financial Ethics Research Committee (FERC) was the body responsible for SSMU's divestment between 2011 and 2013. Since SSMU has reached a pretty stable position as far as divestment goes, FERC this year is working on an Ethical Purchasing Database, which will be a list of all of the suppliers SSMU and SSMU services uses, ranked based on a set of ethical and

sustainable metrics. There will be a 'preferred' suppliers list that students and staff can consult to determine the most ethical supplier of a goods/service.

3.3.2. Funding Committee

There are currently 8 SSMU funds available for student groups to apply to, including the Ambassador Fund, Campus Life Fund, Club Fund, Green Fund, Space Fund, Charity Fund, Equity Fund and the new First Year Fund. These are disbursed by the Funding Committee, which is chaired by the Funding Coordinator (under the VP Finance and Operations' portfolio) and made up of students representing various groups or interests, including but not limited to Councillors, Student Staff and Members-At-Large. Each fund is supported by an opt-outable fee levy through SSMU, and anyone who has paid the fee to a fund is eligible to apply to that fund. These funds are integral in supporting sustainability initiatives by student groups, and also just providing a sustainable source of funding to support student-led projects in general. Furthermore, the Green Fund in particular is intended to further sustainability at SSMU with regards to internal practices and building operations.

4. 2013-2014 Significant Events

4.1. New Principal and Deputy Provost of Student Life and Learning

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Claire Stewart-Kanigan (Vice-President of University Affairs)

The new Principal, Susan Fortier, and Deputy Provost of Student Life and Learning, Ollivier Dyens, do not seem to have sustainability high on their priority list. Ollivier Dyens has not been supportive in regards to indigenous resources and projects on campus, putting up a lot of roadblocks for said projects. That being said, the Deputy Provost did push to switch from Aramark to Bon Appetit, which aims to serve more local and sustainable foods, though with Premiere Moisson the ideas of financial accessibility we're not take into account. In regards to the Principal's actions involving sustainability, Principal Fortier has also not been explicitly supportive of mental health and she has continuously demonstrated her interest in collaborating with industry. Although Principal Fortier has spoken about the importance of community engagement and acknowledged that sustainability is a priority for McGill in her letter of acknowledgement and welcome to McGill's new Vision 2020 Sustainability Strategy, there has been little material show of support.

4.2 Milton Bike Gates

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Amina Moustaqim-Barrette (Vice President of External Affairs)

The bike gates were installed at the Milton gates to try to deter cyclists from cycling onto campus. This was initiated by Robert Couvrette, the Associate Vice President of University Services. In September 2013, SSMU adopted a [motion to oppose the gates](#) and support the exploration of alternatives in supporting bikes on campus. Amina Moustaqim-Barrette, SSMU's Vice President of External Affairs, is currently sitting on the Senate Committee for physical space on campus (SPCD). This committee is chaired by Robert Couvrette and looks at what we do with outside space on campus. Currently, they are working on outreach to find out what people on campus want. This outreach is a retroactive action to the backlash of the bike gates, since the gates themselves were put up with no student consultation. Resulting from this, the SPCD is determined that as they move forward to have students at the table to see what they want. For example Amina Moustaqim-Barrette submitted a [plebiscite question](#) for the fall SSMU referendum about allowing bikes on lower campus, and whether SSMU should lobby administration to allow bikes on campus. Along with the plebiscite question, Robert Couvrette has commissioned Velo Quebec to do [a study](#) in regards to cycling on campus after an internal cycling report, submitted at the end of August, was not well received.

4.3 Sexual Assault and Harm Reduction

Contributing Writers: Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Claire Stewart-Kanigan (Vice-President of University Affairs)

Following the sexual assault incident there has not yet been a policy put in place, but there has been talks of trying to develop one. A working group, that is very much student led, is trying to commit the university to a policy. The Student-led policy is being drafted by a working group that includes members from UGE, SACOMSS and SSMU. The working group is in negotiations with the Dean of Students. The policy will hopefully be brought to senate this year with the goal being that senate will be more proactive about their strategy to creating a culture of consent and will allocate resources to workshops.

As a response to the incident Athletics revised their code of conduct for varsity sports, though these revisions did not explicitly deal with issues of sexual assault or consent. Athletics has not addressed the tolerance of sexual violence and seem to be distancing themselves from the problem and therefore there really have not been any new commitments from athletics on how to proactively combat the that culture.

McGill did take the initiative to hire a Harm Reduction Coordinator, Bianca Tétrault, but only on a year-long contract. SSMU and McGill organized a forum on Consent, with a decent amount of attendees coming out to the event. The Harm Reduction Coordinator is also hosting McGill's first consent campaign, [Consent week](#), to be held from October 20th-24th at the downtown campus and October 22nd to 24th at McGill's Macdonald campus. Another project being taken on by the Harm Reduction Coordinator is the testing of new bystander intervention training, though there is a lack of willingness to look at targeted training throughout the University. Unfortunately, the Shag Shop lost its location and McGill did not find an alternative space for it, resulting in its closure at the end of the 2013-2014 year.

SSMU made strides forward by taking initiative to organize mandatory equity trainings for their elected representatives (Councillors, Senators, Executives), all staff, and all leaders involved with Orientation week (coordinators, leaders, and o-staff). Those involved with the August 2014 Orientation week also undertook an additional consent training.

4.4. Loss of Sustainability Staff

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

For a myriad of reasons, there was a sort of mass exodus by staff members dedicated to working on sustainability over the past year. After the SSMU Sustainability Coordinator departed, there was no renewal of funding for the position, and thus the position has been indefinitely suspended. Funding for the PGSS Sustainability Coordinator was similarly cut and the position vacated. Additionally, many staff from the McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS) departed, including the Sustainability Officer, the Director of Sustainability and two Vision 2020 Coordinators, leaving them with only three permanent staff.

This represents an incredible loss to both institutional memory and support for sustainability. Both student societies have responded by transferring the essential responsibilities of the Sustainability Coordinators; SSMU to the President and part-time Environment Commissioners and PGSS to the [newly-formed Sustainability Committee](#). SSMU has also formed an [Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability](#) to review how sustainability at SSMU can be most effectively institutionalized given current circumstances.

4.5. Mental Health

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Claire Stewart-Kanigan (Vice-President of University Affairs)

In November 2013 there was a joint board senate and committee meeting on mental health. It was to discuss mental health with the stakeholders at the university, the meeting included a follow up report on what happened at the meeting and initiatives that came from it. Basically, in the end though, the report was unsuccessful. The initiatives that were to come out of it were unclear and it was difficult to gauge the amount of follow up done by the Deputy Provost. In response to the lack of such a report a separate working group was formed which may help in creating a movement towards a university-wide strategy for mental health.

SSMU has already developed and [approved](#) its own mental health policy and 5 year plan for mental health. SSMU has participated in advocacy, research and anti-stigma campaigns. As well, SSMU puts on mental health week and has a new staff position dedicated to mental health, the Mental Health Coordinator. The Mental Health Coordinator also chairs the Mental Health Committee and is encouraging collaboration between student groups and student services. A mental health listserv is to be launched and senate caucus is working to create accommodating policies for students surrounding exams. Along with all of the work SSMU has done, student Services also received a grant from Bell to develop a mental health website.

4.6. SSMU Lease Negotiations and Building Fee

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Claire Stewart-Kanigan (Vice-President of University Affairs)

After four years of negotiating a lease with the University, SSMU and McGill signed a 10 year lease agreement for the University Centre space. This lease incurs significantly larger costs for the SSMU in terms of increased rent and SSMU taking on part of the costs of utilities. Legislative Council approved a motion from the executives to run a University Centre Building Fee Levy in the Winter 2014 referendum. A Yes Vote was also endorsed by Council for the fee. Even so, the fee levy did not pass. The executives and council as a whole were highly criticized by the student body, since there was not any Yes Committee formally campaigning for students to vote in favour of the fee. They were also criticized for the lack of information made available concerning the fee, with the negative repercussions implicitly stated in a whereas clause. Some students linked these criticisms to the larger issue of lack of communication and general disconnection between SSMU and the greater student body.

4.7. Quebec Charter of Values and Provincial Election

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

Interviews with: Amina Moustaqim-Barrette (Vice President of External Affairs)

The Quebec Charter of Values, introduced by the Parti Quebecois in 2013, sparked much controversy and debate until it died out in the 2014 provincial election. SSMU adopted an [official stance of opposition](#) in October 2013. With the new Liberal Party government, the Quebec Charter of Values is no longer on the table. This is not to say though that the new government will not have an impact on students. McGill itself is facing 21\$ million in budget cuts, and if the University does not break even, could be subject to even further budget cuts in the following years. The massive hits the education sector, along with other public sectors are taking, is due to the government's want to reduce provincial debt without increasing corporate tax. Different student unions are talking about putting on actions, protests and even a possibly striking to combat the budget cuts that will most definitely impact the Quebecois schools.

5. **2014-2015 Initiatives**

5.1. **Vision 2020 Sustainability Strategy**

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

[Vision 2020](#) was an initiative coordinated by the McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS), but including many additional stakeholders, that involved extensive consultation with the McGill community to develop an [official Sustainability Strategy](#) for the university. There were many varied and creative consultation events that occurred throughout the V2020 process. These were held in an effort to bring the community into the crafting of the sustainability strategy. Since sustainability initiatives have and will continue to be championed by community members, MOOS recognized the importance of the strategy being built through ongoing dialogue.

The initial strategy was rejected by the McGill Board of Governors, essentially for being too ambitious. After MOOS then worked to narrow the focus down to 14 priority action items, it was formally adopted by McGill in March 2014 to guide our efforts to institutionalize sustainability throughout our university until 2016. Key institutional partners have been [formally identified](#) for each action, with MOOS working to facilitate the connection of the relevant departments and individuals in pursuit of these actions. Many of the actions also involve further consultation and involvement by the wider McGill community. A public launch was held in October 2014 to further share the new Sustainability Strategy with the community. While the governing bodies of McGill could have been more supportive of the original more ambitious proposed strategy, the fact that a Sustainability Strategy has been passed is certainly a movement in the right direction.

There is already lots of wonderful work being done by various student groups and individuals on campus, but these have often been conducted in a certain degree of isolation from each other, so the Vision 2020 Sustainability Strategy serves to create some overarching goals and help to bring people together around specific actions. It also goes a long way in getting higher-level buy-in so that these initiatives can be more supported by McGill as an institution. Grassroots sustainability initiatives will continue to drive forward positive changes at McGill, and may now gain additional support from various departments and offices across the university.

5.2. **Divest McGill, Étudiant(e)s Contre les Oléoducs (ÉCO) and Demilitarize McGill**

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

In fall 2014, SSMU Council voted to [reaffirm SSMU's commitment](#) to support climate justice, including Divest McGill's efforts to lobby McGill to divest its endowment from fossil fuels. Two motions regarding [action on climate change](#) and [opposing military research](#) at McGill are being brought forward to the October SSMU GA to determine whether SSMU should support anti-pipeline action and the demilitarization of McGill's research. If these are passed, follow-up actions include joining ÉCO, developing a policy on climate action, organizing open forums to collect additional feedback from SSMU members, and providing support to

campaigns such as those led by ÉCO and Demilitarize McGill as deemed necessary. The VP External and VP University Affairs would primarily be responsible for coordinating this.

5.3. ECOLE

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner)

[ECOLE](#) is a physical space and a project that aims to be a hub for collective living, learning and community building. The concept for ECOLE was generated a few years ago, but the project has been developed since then and only materialized physically at the beginning of this academic year. Eight facilitators are currently living and researching in the house, which is also open for community use and events. ECOLE continues to develop programming and relationships with the community, and is exploring options for a sustainable source of funding.

5.4. Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability

Contributing Writers: Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

In September 2014 a [motion to create an Ad-Hoc Sustainability Committee](#) was brought forward by President Ayukawa and approved. The committee is comprised of The President, three Councillors, four Members at Large, one Environment Commissioner, the Green Buildings Coordinator, the Green Events Coordinator, one Equity Commissioner, and the Financial Ethics and Research Coordinator. The purpose of the Ad Hoc Sustainability Committee is to consult students on campus, research sustainable structures at comparable student societies, and report actionable recommendations for the future institutionalization of SSMU sustainability at the end of the 2014-2015 school year.

5.5. SSAB

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

The [Student Sustainability Advisory Board](#) finalized its provisional framework in April 2014. Its mandate is as follows, “The Student Sustainability Ambassadors Board (SSAB) has a mandate to act as an intermediary body between students, the McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS), campus sustainability groups, projects, and initiatives. It aims to function as the central and primary hub and resource intended to provide education, networks, and opportunities, and other resources to students interested or involved in sustainability initiatives at McGill.” As of the beginning of the 2014 the SSAB is in the midst of a restructuring period. With the original goals and mandate in mind, the SSAB aspires to be fully operational by winter 2015 semester.

5.6. SPOKES Sustainability Conference

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

In 2013-2014 the first two SPOKES (one fall semester and one winter semester) were held, with much success. This year [SPOKES, Students Pursuing Opportunities & Knowledge in Environment & Sustainability](#), is expanding in size and scope and will be held in the SSMU ballroom on November 2nd. SPOKES is a SSMU EnviroComm-led conference intended to initiate

and facilitate collaboration and discussion between sustainability-related groups across campus. This free conference strives to bring together existing and potential sustainability champions in a collaborative environment. Though it was created with McGill students in mind, all community members are welcome to attend in the spirit of building the in-person connections necessary to developing sustainability at and beyond SSMU.

6. Conclusions

Contributing Writers: Kristen Perry (Environment Commissioner) and Keelin Elwood (Environment Commissioner)

At SSMU and across campus, things are coming together to coordinate and support sustainability efforts. Even with the loss of dedicated sustainability staff, there is more wide-spectrum administrative buy-in with regards to sustainability. This, along with new initiatives, including SSMU's Ad Hoc Committee on Sustainability, will ensure that the ongoing shift towards more sustainable practices and operations does not lose traction this upcoming year. The new initiatives at McGill and SSMU for the 2014-2015 academic year will contribute to a paradigm shift that will catalyze the building of momentum, thus propelling sustainability at McGill forward. It is crucial that SSMU recognizes and supports these initiatives, particularly the student-led ones. Additionally, SSMU needs to actively work to incorporate the principles of sustainability into its decisions through regular reflection, and by developing and seeking out the appropriate expertise, partnerships and material resources to do so effectively.