



Association étudiante de l'Université McGill

Située sur les territoires traditionnels des collectivités Haudenosaunee et Anishinaabe.

Students' Society of McGill University

Located on Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe, traditional territories.

(514) 398-6800 | ssmu.ca | 3600 rue McTavish, Suite 1200, Montréal, QC, H3A 0G3

DIVEST FOR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

Presented at General Assembly: 2021/02/16

Adopted by Legislative Council: 2021/02/27

Ratified by Board of Directors: 2021/07/22

Expires: 2026/01/01

[Adopted Motion](#) (Link)

1. Scope

This Policy will apply to Officers of the Society for the duration of their terms. It will be used as a guide for decision-making and a plan for advocacy concerning the divestment of McGill University from corporations and institutions implicated in human rights abuses and other harmful practices.

2. Interpretation

The spirit and the content of this Policy concern the harmful behaviour of McGill University, corporations and state institutions in Turtle Island (Canada) and abroad. This Policy will not be used as a basis or justification for racism or xenophobia of any kind, including but not limited to anti-Asian racism, Sinophobia or anti-Semitism.

3. Background and Context

The SSMU Constitution states that “the SSMU commits to demonstrating leadership in matters of human rights [and] social justice.”¹ McGill students have, further, historically campaigned against investments in companies that demonstrate a lack of accountability, ethicality, and respect for the rights and dignity of others.²

Throughout its history, McGill University has divested for moral and political (as opposed to purely financial) reasons multiple times since the 1980s, including from companies doing business in apartheid South Africa, from corporations doing business in Myanmar under military rule, and from

¹ [The Constitution of the Students' Society of McGill University](#), 2017, p. 5

² [Divest McGill celebrates second anniversary of petition submission](#)



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tobacco firms.³

At the time of this Policy's inception, McGill University's current investment portfolio,⁴ however, includes investments in companies which enable and profit from multiple forms of systemic violence, including settler-colonial land theft, environmental destruction, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. As such, any advocacy or political action undertaken under this Policy will include the following companies, corporations, and institutions outlined below.

3.1. TC Energy Corporation and Coastal GasLink Pipeline

McGill University invests \$4,770,450 in TC Energy Corporation, the owner of the Coastal GasLink pipeline, whose construction has provoked the invasion, colonization and destruction of the lands of the Wet'suwet'en Nation. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, pipeline construction is currently ongoing, while the Canadian government continues to militarize Wet'suwet'en territory, and the expansion of man-camps for pipeline workers continues to exacerbate violence against Indigenous women, children and two-spirited people, as well as the risks of COVID-19 outbreaks within Wet'suwet'en communities.⁵ TC Energy has displayed a similar disregard for Indigenous rights in Mexico.⁶

3.2. Weapons, War Crimes, and Crimes Against Humanity

3.2.2. Lockheed Martin

\$224,019.33 of McGill's endowment fund is generated by Lockheed Martin, the developer of weapons such as the Black Hawk helicopter⁷ and the F-35 fighter jet that have been used in violent conflicts around the world;⁸ Sikorsky, a Lockheed Martin subsidiary provides military and rotary-wing aircraft to all five branches of the US armed forces, and provides military services in 40 nations.⁹

In 2018, a Lockheed-made GBU-12 Paveway II bomb was dropped by Saudi forces on a school bus in Yemen, killing 40 children.¹⁰ As of November 2018, 6,872 civilians in Yemen had been killed and 10,768 wounded, the majority by Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes supported by the US, UK and Canada, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).¹¹

³ [Motion Regarding Divestment from Fossil Fuel, September 12, 2018](#)

⁴ [McGill Investment Holdings](#)

⁵ [Coastal GasLink broke B.C. pipeline rules more than 50 times](#)

⁶ [How TC Energy \(TransCanada\) treated Indigenous rights in its Mexico projects](#)

⁷ [Seven human rights violators buying Canadian military goods](#)

⁸ [Sikorsky Signs 5-year, \\$3.8 Billion Black Hawk Deal With U.S. Army](#)

⁹ [Lockheed Martin | About US](#)

¹⁰ [US supplied bomb that killed 40 children on Yemen school bus](#)

¹¹ [Human Rights Watch: Yemen Events of 2018](#)



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3.2.3. Re/Max

McGill University invests \$824,761 in [Re/Max](#), which sells real estate in illegal Israeli settlements on stolen Palestinian land,¹² thereby facilitating and profiting¹³ from the transfer of Israeli settlers into occupied Palestinian territory by the Israeli government, in violation of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention¹⁴ ¹⁵. Prohibited under international law,¹⁶ Israeli settlement policies in militarily occupied territory¹⁷ exacerbate the systematic violence inflicted on indigenous Palestinians by Israeli settlers and soldiers.¹⁸

3.2.4. Oshkosh Corporation

McGill University invests \$500,706 in [Oshkosh Corporation](#), an industrial truck company that provides vehicles to over 20 militaries around the world,¹⁹ thereby playing an active role in the global military industrial complex and fueling violent militarism around the world. In particular, Oshkosh Corporation provided vehicles to the U.S. military for its invasion and occupation of Iraq,²⁰ as well as for the Saudi military's war in Yemen.²¹ ²² Oshkosh Corporation's vehicles are also used to transport the soldiers and weapons of the Israeli military,²³ which has killed over 11,000 Palestinians since 1987,²⁴ and has committed an alarming number of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the past decades, including widespread torture²⁵ of Palestinian adult and child prisoners,²⁶ mass forced displacement of Palestinian communities,²⁷ the deliberate targeting of civilians during the 2014 attack on the Gaza Strip,²⁸ the massacre of over 190 unarmed civilians during the 2018-2019 Gaza protests,²⁹ ³⁰ and the enforcement of an apartheid regime throughout the occupied Palestinian territories.³¹ ³² ³³

¹² [UN rights office issues report on business activities related to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory](#)

¹³ [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967: Focus on RE/Max and Dexia](#)

¹⁴ [Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949](#)

¹⁵ [Chapter 3: Israeli Settlements and International Law](#)

¹⁶ [United Nations Security Council, 7853rd Meeting](#)

¹⁷ [Amnesty International: Israel and occupied Palestinian territories](#)

¹⁸ [UN update on Settler Violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#)

¹⁹ [Oshkosh Defense Customers](#)

²⁰ [Oshkosh Truck Receives \\$49.4 Million Contract to Remanufacture Defense Trucks Returning from War in Iraq](#)

²¹ [Oshkosh, Saudi Arabia's Al Tadrea launch joint venture to make armored vehicles](#)

²² [Yemen rebels captured Oshkosh M-ATV of Saudi Arabian Army](#)

²³ [Oshkosh Provides Israel with Modified Military Vehicles](#)

²⁴ [Visualizing Palestine: 101](#)

²⁵ [Israel/OPT: Legally-sanctioned torture of Palestinian detainee left him in critical condition](#)

²⁶ [Defenceless: The impact of the Israeli military detention system on Palestinian children](#)

²⁷ [UN OCHA: West Bank demolitions and displacement | December 2020](#)

²⁸ [Israeli soldier testimony: 'Most of our shooting was random... we didn't think about civilian casualties'](#)

²⁹ [Human Rights Watch: Apparent War Crimes in Gaza](#)

³⁰ [Gaza border protests: 190 killed and 28,000 injured in a year of bloodshed](#)

³¹ [B'Tselem report: This is apartheid](#)

³² [Israel imposes 'apartheid regime' on Palestinians: U.N. report](#)

³³ [The Inside Story on Our UN Report Calling Israel an Apartheid State](#)



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3.3. Forced Labour and Genocide

McGill University invests \$665,281 in [Puma](#), and also maintains investments of below \$500,000 in [Foot Locker](#), [Nordstrom](#), and [Kohl's](#), all four of which are complicit in the use of Uyghur forced labour.^{34 35} Since 2017, the government of the People's Republic of China has operated “an intense and unparalleled carceral regime” in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), consisting of over 380 political indoctrination camps for Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities.³⁶

After reviewing testimony and briefs detailing mass detentions³⁷, forced labour, pervasive state surveillance³⁸ and population control,³⁹ the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Government of Canada affirmed that the persecution of Uyghurs in East Turkestan (Xinjiang) meets the definition of genocide as outlined in Article II of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.⁴⁰

4. Mandates

4.1. External Advocacy

The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs), in concert with student activist organizations on campus, will mobilize a campaign of students and McGill community members.

This campaign will advocate for McGill University to divest from, refrain from investing in, or terminate any other relationships with companies or other institutions listed within this Policy.

At the discretion of the Vice-President (External Affairs), in consultation with relevant stakeholders, this campaign will include, but is not limited to:

- a) Meeting with stakeholder student associations;
- b) Holding protests, demonstrations, and other events around campus; and
- c) Making use of the Society's social media platforms and communication channels to promote divestment.

³⁴ [Uyghurs for sale](#)

³⁵ [End Uyghur Forced Labour - Brands](#)

³⁶ [There is now more evidence than ever that China is imprisoning Uighurs](#)

³⁷ [“Eradicating Ideological Viruses” China's Campaign of Repression Against Xinjiang's Muslims](#)

³⁸ [How Mass Surveillance Works in Xinjiang](#)

³⁹ [Chinese government forces birth control on Uighurs and other minority Muslims to suppress population](#)

⁴⁰ [Committee News Release - October 21, 2020 - SDIR \(43-2\)](#)



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4.2. University Advocacy

4.2.1. Senate

The Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President will advocate for McGill University to divest from, refrain from investing in, or terminate any other relationships with companies or other institutions listed within this Policy.

In doing so, the Offices of the Vice-President (University Affairs) and President will, among other actions, make use of:

- a) Meetings with faculty, staff, and alumni;
- b) Institutional access to committees and governing bodies;
- c) Senate motions, questions, and policy revisions;
- d) Reviewing relevant documents made available to the Senate, and requesting documents from the Secretariat as necessary.

The Office of the Vice-President (University Affairs) will inform the Senate Caucus of the contents of this Policy and, specifically, the Society's position on Divestment from the companies outlined in this Policy.

4.2.2. Board of Governors

The Society, through the Offices of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and Vice-President (University Affairs), will advocate to the Board of Governors on the issue of divesting from or otherwise terminating relationships with the aforementioned companies.

This advocacy will include, but is not limited to:

- a) The submission of an Expression of Concern to the Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility of the Board of Governors; and
- b) Meetings with members of the Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility of the Board of Governors and of the Board of Governors, at large.

4.3. Outreach

The Society will strive to conduct outreach and educate members of the McGill community on the contents of this Policy and its stance on divestment from companies complicit in the aforementioned



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instances of social harm.

4.3.1. To that effect, the Offices of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and Vice-President (University Affairs) will promote the advocacy undertaken under this Policy and regularly update members on the progress of McGill's divestment from institutions listed within this Policy;

4.3.2. These promotions and updates will be consistent in form with those of the 'Know Your Rights' campaign and the various political campaigns undertaken by the Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) and will make use of the Society's communications channels, as necessary.

5. Accountability

The Office of the Vice-President (External Affairs) will be charged with monitoring and overseeing compliance with this Policy and reporting on its implementation to the Legislative Council.

5.1. To that effect, the Vice-President (External Affairs) will consult regularly with the Officers mandated under this Policy on the implementation of their mandates.

5.2. The consultations will inform a Report, presented twice annually to the Legislative Council by the Vice-President (External Affairs).

5.3. The Accountability Committee will be notified should an Officer fail to promptly report on their mandate and will investigate such infractions in line with the Committee's Terms of References.