



McGill University 2022 ESG Report

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A Student Report

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OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

What is ESG?

The term “environmental, social, and governance” (ESG) encompasses a set of non-financial standards used by investors to find companies with values that match their own.¹ In recent years, investors have increasingly relied on ESG metrics to evaluate companies’ material risk, externalities, and corporate social responsibility policies. By looking beyond environmental issues, ESG as an investment framework provides a more holistic assessment of the societal impacts of companies and the ways they can improve.

Environmental	Social	Governance
<p>As climate change worsens and its negative externalities proliferate, accurate accounting of various environmental risks is more necessary than ever before. However, the environmental criteria of ESG extends beyond risk assessment. Whether it be a carbon neutrality commitment or conversion to renewable energy sources, environmentally conscious investors seek out companies that have adopted an ESG framework.²</p>	<p>The social aspect of ESG considers how companies treat internal and external stakeholders.³ By promoting diversity, inclusion, and social justice, companies can create more equitable environments for employees. To accurately gauge a company’s social impact, investors must not merely focus on its internal operations but also its effect on the greater local, national, and global community.</p>	<p>The governance pillar of ESG refers to the standards companies follow to foster fair and equitable business practices.⁴ Companies that prioritize diversity and promote transparency through coherent internal controls signal to potential investors that they are risk-averse and socially conscious.</p>

What ESG McGill Strives to do for the Student Body

- ESG McGill was founded to create an inclusive environment where students can learn about and discuss ESG practices to apply these standards when entering the business world ([Our Mandate](#)). In the interest of promoting inclusivity, ESG McGill welcomes and encourages students from across faculties and disciplines to bring their individual experiences and insights into discussions so that members can gain a more holistic understanding of ESG issues and practices.
- By educating individuals on the importance of ESG, club members improve their financial literacy and understanding of ethical business practices while simultaneously using their knowledge as a form of environmental and social advocacy.

Our Goal with this Report

Since ESG emerged as a sustainable investment framework in the late 2010s, there has lacked consensus regarding a standardized taxonomy of ESG factors. This has undermined the credibility and efficacy of ESG since businesses and institutions benefit from the concept's ambiguity while publicly adopting progressive rhetoric. With this report, ESG McGill intends to evaluate McGill University's ESG goals, initiatives, and overall performance. In consolidating McGill's various initiatives and ESG related data, we intend to highlight areas of strength and weakness to bring awareness to the student body and the McGill administration about the university's ESG performance.

ANALYSIS OF MCGILL'S INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO



Methodology

[Sustainalytics](#) is a leading provider of ESG research and ratings. The company's ESG rating system is based on a proprietary methodology that assesses the sustainability performance of companies, sectors, and countries.⁵

The rating methodology begins by identifying each company's key ESG risks and opportunities. This is done by analyzing various publicly available data sources, including financial statements, regulatory filings, and news articles. Next, Sustainalytics assigns a score to each company based on its performance on a range of ESG indicators. These indicators are grouped into four categories: environment, social, governance, and industry specific.

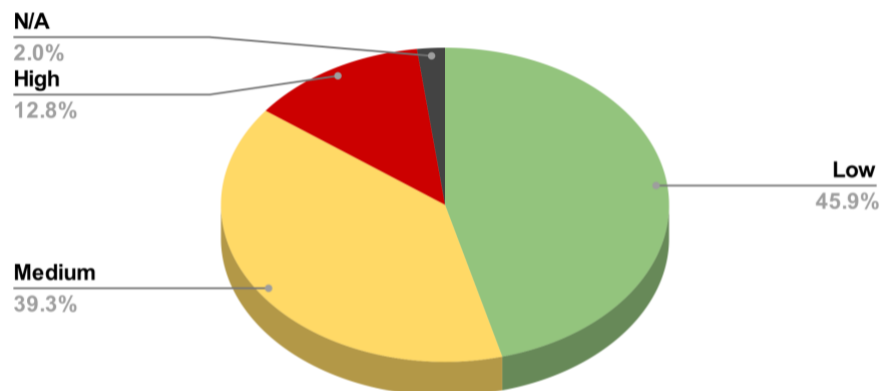
The scores are then used to assign a rating to each company or sector, which reflects its overall sustainability performance. The ratings range from low (0-20), medium (20-30), and high (30+), with higher scores indicating a poor commitment to sustainability and a high-risk exposure to ESG factors. Sustainalytics regularly updates its ratings to reflect changes in a company or a sector's sustainability performance.

Our team analyzed McGill's [Canadian](#)⁶, [American](#)⁷, and [Non-North American](#)⁸ Investment Pool (MIP). Specifically, we provided ESG analysis on Publicly Traded Equities that McGill has invested at least \$500,000 into, totalling \$334,112,460. It is important to note that all dollar amounts are measured in Canadian Dollars throughout the report.

ESG Assessment of McGill's Canadian Investment Portfolio

McGill's Canadian Equities Portfolio has a weighted average ESG rating of 20.6, indicating medium-risk exposure to ESG factors. This rating was calculated using the Sustainalytics ESG rating system for each of McGill's 73 Canadian positions, which total \$154,033,767.⁹

Figure 1: Average ESG Ratings of McGill's Canadian Investment Portfolio



McGill's three most prominent positions, Royal Bank of Canada, Toronto Dominion Bank, and Canadian National Railway, make up 18.32% of their Canadian portfolio. It is worth noting that these three equities have the three highest market caps on the Toronto Stock Exchange (TSX).¹⁰ McGill's Canadian portfolio is invested primarily in Financial Services (ex: [RY](#)), Energy (Ex: [CNQ](#)), Materials (Ex: [ABX](#)), Industry (Ex: [CP](#)) and Utilities (Ex: [BCE](#)).

Within the Canadian portfolio, 13% of investments are classified as having high ESG risk. These positions primarily lie in the Energy and Industrial sectors, with the most significant high-risk investment being in Canadian Natural Resources LTD (CNQ.TO). Canadian Natural Resources makes up 3.67% of McGill's Canadian Equities and is one of Canada's largest oil and gas producers. They are a multinational energy company operating in the Alberta oil sands, the North Sea, and Africa. [Canadian Natural Resources](#) produce an average of 1.16 million barrels of oil daily and are estimated to hold over 11.5 billion barrels of proven crude oil and natural gas reserves.¹¹ In 2020, the firm produced 22.73 million metric tons of scope 1 CO₂ emissions and 3.22 million metric tons of scope 2 CO₂ emissions.¹²

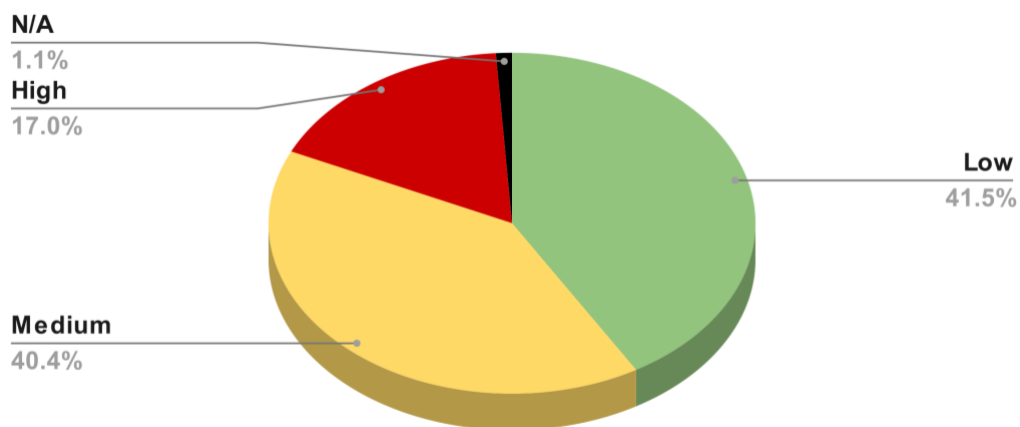
Overall, McGill's Canadian Equities Investment Portfolio is heavily diversified across many sectors in the Canadian economy. Although from an ESG perspective, there is cause for

concern, as McGill has over \$20 million (~12%) invested in Oil & Gas.¹³ Although the TSX is comprised of 17.6% energy sector equities, thus McGill’s Canadian Equities Portfolio has relatively less invested in Oil & Gas than the exchange at large.¹⁴ While we recognize that Oil & Gas continues to play a crucial role in contemporary economic systems, the McGill Office of Investments must continue transition away from these investments. Instead focusing reallocating funds to impact investments, renewable energy and the materials required for the energy transition. It is important to note that McGill is currently in the process of divestment, as it has achieved almost a 53% absolute reduction in the carbon footprint in its \$2 billion endowment portfolio since 2020.¹⁵ Additionally, the university has committed about \$33 million to a global renewable energy fund.¹⁶

ESG Assessment of McGill’s American Investment Portfolio

McGill’s portfolio of US Equities is somewhat concerning, with a weighted average ESG rating of 22.4, which is on the lower end of Sustainalytics medium risk category. Using the same method as for the Canadian and Non-North American Equities, this value was attained by aggregating the 94 positions, which total \$99,555,742, that McGill has currently invested in US companies.¹⁷

Figure 2: Average ESG Ratings of McGill’s American Investment Portfolio



McGill’s diversification strategy spans its holdings across various industries such as Education, Construction, Financial Services and Healthcare. From the 94 companies in which McGill has invested, 39 (41.5%) are considered low risk, 38 (40.4%) are considered medium risk, 16 (17.0%) are considered high risk, and 1 (1.1%) had no available ESG rating. Compared to the

Canadian and the Non-North American Equities, the McGill has more positions in US Equities that are considered high risk.

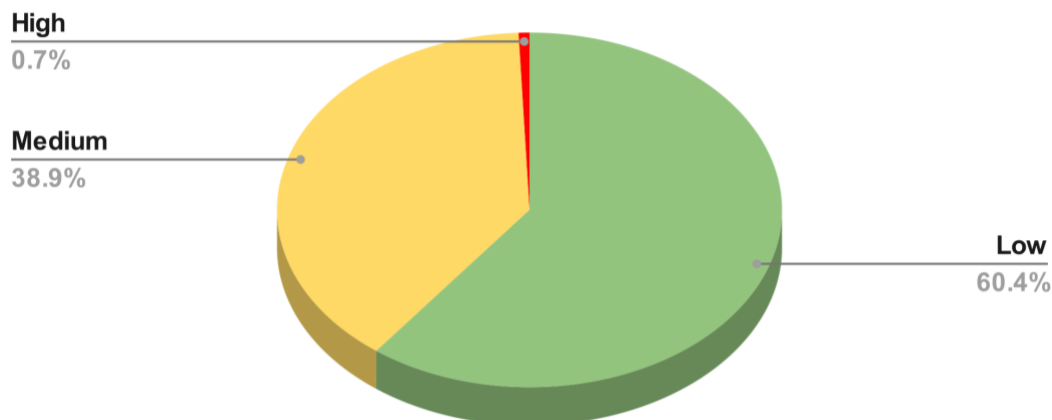
A notable takeaway is the highest-risk investment in the US Equities portfolio, National Fuel Gas Co, with an ESG rating of 43.9, which is considered “severe risk” according to Sustainalytics standards.¹⁸ National Fuel Gas Company is an energy company focused on the following segments: Exploration and Production, Pipeline and Storage, Gathering, Utility, and Energy Marketing. While the company took initiatives to reduce the environmental risk associated with their operations, the inherent nature of a natural gas company is bound to affect the environment and, thus, its ESG rating.¹⁹ McGill has invested \$659,668 in National Fuel Gas, representing 0.66% of its US Equities portfolio.

It is important to note that the total amount invested in US markets by McGill is \$460,409,748, in which the US Equities above \$500k represent only 21.6%. Most of McGill’s investments lie within US Equity Pooled and Exchange Traded Funds, which are passively invested and for which the ESG rating has not been calculated in this analysis. While the current US Equities (above \$500K) are considered a Medium ESG risk, it is important to keep in mind that it shows an important, yet small part of the picture.

ESG Assessment of McGill's Non-North American Investment Portfolio

The weighted average ESG Rating for McGill’s portfolio of Non-North American Equities is 18.92, which is on the upper end of the “Low Risk” category.²⁰ This value was calculated using public data of McGill’s “Non-North American Equities Above \$500,000 Publicly Traded and Held in Segregated Accounts (in Cdn\$).”

Figure 3: Average ESG Ratings of McGill's Non-North American Investment Portfolio



McGill is effectively geographically diversifying their ESG risks by investing in different countries such as Switzerland (ex: [Zurich Insurance Group](#)), France (ex: [Hermès](#)), and Japan (ex: [Tokio Marine Holdings Inc](#)). While some investments are higher risk, these are diversified by comparably sized investments in companies with a much lower risk. For example, McGill has \$913,098 invested in Tokio Marine Holdings, which has a medium risk ESG rating of 25.6, and \$786,331 invested in Hermès, with an ESG rating of 9.4.

As an educational institution, McGill is invested in various research companies, which tend to have a higher ESG ratings. For example, McGill has \$806,857 invested in [Genmab](#), An international biotech company based in Denmark that has a medium ESG rating of 24.7, and \$1,809,724 in [Astrazeneca](#), a UK-based biopharmaceutical company with a medium ESG risk of 22.2.

The only investment with a high-risk ESG rating is [Alpha & Omega Semiconductor LT \(AOS\)](#), which has an ESG rating of 40.1. This very high ESG rating is logical, given that the average semiconductor manufacturing plant uses 2-4 million gallons of water daily.²¹ AOS does have various green commitments and is in accordance with the ISO 14001 worldwide standards.²² This, however, raises questions on whether the current worldwide standards are realistic enough to prompt companies to re-evaluate their impact and invest in environmentally conscious innovation. Though the company has such a high ESG risk, McGill's investment into AOS only makes up 0.70% of its non-North American portfolio.

McGill's Highest Risk and Least Sustainable Investment: Cenovus Energy

Looking at McGill's endowment, the University has invested \$2,481,403 in equities into Cenovus Energy as of September 2022, a company which



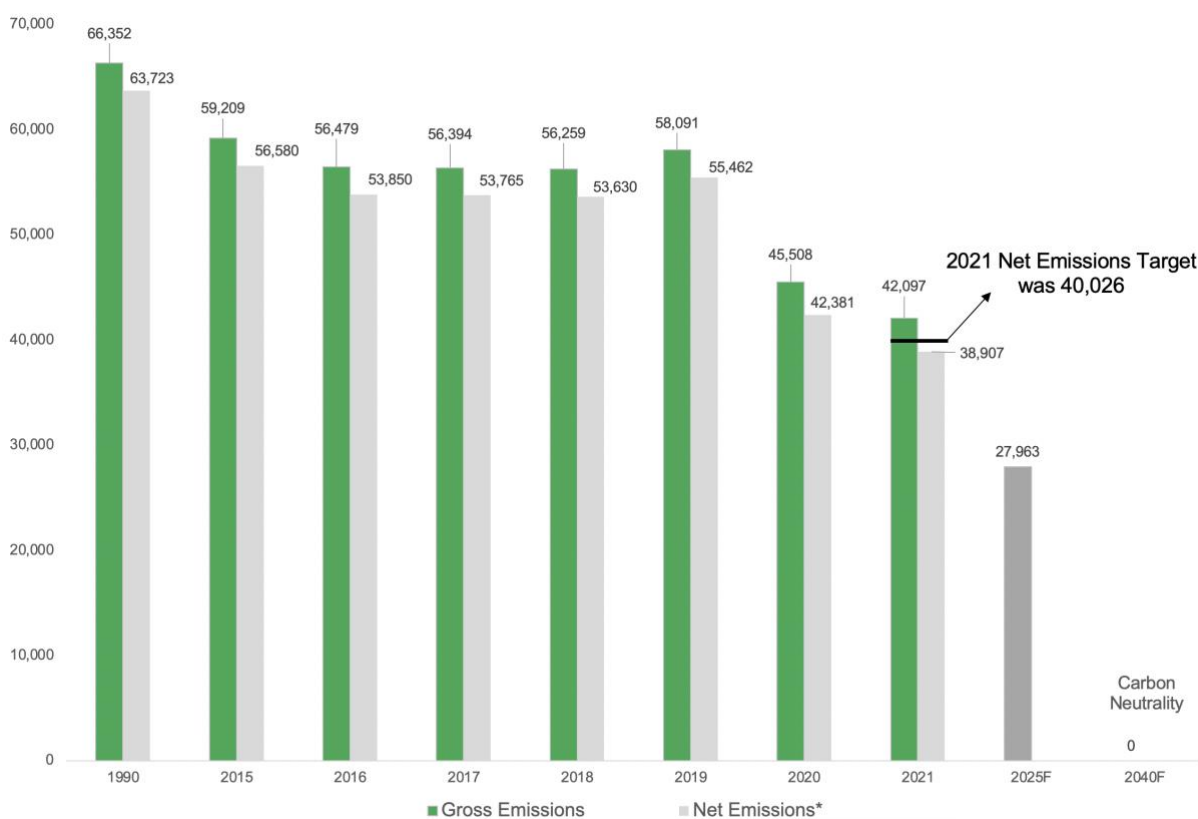
Sustainalytics lists with a 41.3 ESG rating.²³ This score corresponds to “severe risk,” and while it is expected that companies in energy and fossil fuels will generally have higher ratings due to the nature of their work, Cenovus’ is abnormally high. For context, Suncor, another energy company in which McGill invests, comes in with a rating of 32.9.²⁴ Cenovus faces material ESG issues in Corporate Governance, Carbon (Products and Services), Carbon (Own Operations), and Emissions, Effluents, and Waste. The company is classified as high exposure, meaning that these areas pose significant risks. Nonetheless, in April 2022, Cenovus tripled dividends to shareholders after reporting a \$1.6 billion profit.²⁵ Moreover, as of January 27th, 2023, Cenovus’ stock is up 47% over the last year, sitting at a value of \$27.15 per share.²⁶

The company continues to thrive in the oil industry, recently announcing in early December 2022 that it plans to boost oil production in 2023 to meet global demand.²⁷ While Sustainalytics does also classify Cenovus’ ESG management practices as strong, there is clearly a disconnect between the ratings and some of these recent actions that the company has taken. It should also be noted that these Sustainalytics scores were last updated *before* increases in production were announced. It is worth mentioning that McGill has divested about \$800,000 from the company since June 2022, but Cenovus remains one of McGill University’s top 25 largest investments in the Canadian Equities Portfolio.²⁸ If McGill is going to follow through with its Responsible Investing framework, the university should continue to reallocate its money invested in Cenovus elsewhere.²⁹

MCGILL'S CARBON EMISSION TARGETS

McGill has made significant strides since beginning to restructure into a more sustainable institution. Through reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, sequestering carbon, and offsetting unavoidable emissions, McGill has cut net emissions to 38,907 tCO₂e, a reduction of 8% from 2020 and 29% from 2015.³⁰ There is much work to reach carbon neutrality by 2040, but significant progress has been made from the 59,209 tCO₂e of total emissions in 2015.³¹

Figure 4: Annual Gross and Net Green House Gas Emissions (tCO₂e)



* Net Emissions represent the gross emissions (Scope 1,2 & 3), minus carbon sequestered and offset during the year.

McGill has undergone successful sequestration in the forests of the Gault Nature Reserve on Mont-Saint-Hilaire and the Morgan Arboretum in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue. Together, 2,629 tCO₂e is sequestered yearly, representing approximately 6% of total emissions.³² As of 2021, carbon offsets purchased by the McGill-Bayano Reforestation Project, led by Dr. Catherine Potvin and the Office of Sustainability, account for 561 tons of sequestered CO₂e yearly until 2040, which is roughly 1% of total emissions.³³ Since the project's launch in 2020, 44,500 trees have been planted, 1,014 tCO₂e have been sequestered, and 44 local families have joined and contributed.³⁴ Although carbon offsets have helped remove carbon from the atmosphere, there

is ongoing controversy around them as McGill is not actually reducing those emissions, as they are still being released into the air. McGill must continue its current carbon offsetting initiatives, whilst finding ways to cut emissions.

McGill's Energy Transition

McGill's Utilities and Energy Management created a roadmap for the university's energy transition. Currently, McGill's energy usage is the leading GHG polluter at the university. Over 70% of GHG emissions at the school are due to building energy consumption, with natural gas to heat buildings across campus being the main contributor.³⁵ In 2021, scope 1 natural gas consumption fell by (5%) from 2020 levels due to milder weather, smart energy grids becoming active, and increased purchases of renewable natural gas.³⁶

Figure 5: Emissions Breakdown by Key Activity³⁷

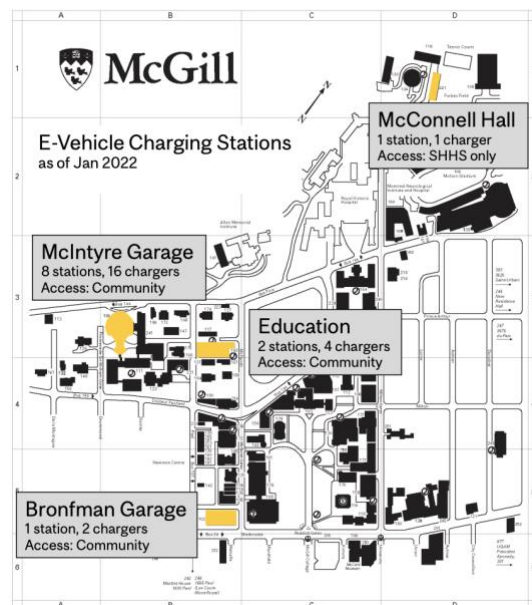


McGill's four-step plan regarding energy management goes as follows: reduce energy use, reuse waste energy, transition energy systems, and procure renewable energy. Actions have been taken on all fronts.³⁸ Energy usage has been reduced through the replacement of outdated HVAC systems in many buildings with new systems that are cleaner and more efficient.³⁹ Further, there is now online monitoring of the energy consumed in 70 buildings on campus, coupled with the installation of motion-activated lighting in all major buildings to help reduce energy use.⁴⁰ Efforts are being made to minimize energy requirements and dependency, so that waste energy can be reused. For instance, smart energy grids have been deployed across McGill's downtown campus.⁴¹ A smart grid is an electricity network that uses digital/other advanced technologies to monitor and manage the transport of electricity from all generation sources to meet the varying electricity demands of end users.⁴² It can optimize

energy efficiency by recovering and exchanging heat between buildings. As an example, the heat generated by the data center in Burnside Hall is deployed to help the Otto Maas Chemistry building meet 20-25% of its heating needs.⁴³ Converting heat production systems to electricity is at the core of the energy system transition strategy.

McGill is also initiating activities outside its four-step plan, most notably working with Hydro Québec and decarbonizing its vehicle fleet. McGill has enrolled in Hydro Québec’s Peak Demand Management program, which consists of transferring several of the downtown campus buildings to the energy delivered by the University’s generators during extreme weather events when the power demand in Québec is peaking.⁴⁴ This helps reduce power demand and the strain on the province’s power infrastructure, contributing to a more efficient allocation of hydroelectricity in Québec. In recent years, McGill Facilities Management and Ancillary Services has acquired several EVs, and currently, 10.5% of the fleet on the downtown campus are electric or hybrid.⁴⁵ Charging stations are continuously being integrated into parking garages for students. There are 23 charging stations on the downtown and McDonald campus as of Fall 2022, with 41 more planned.⁴⁶

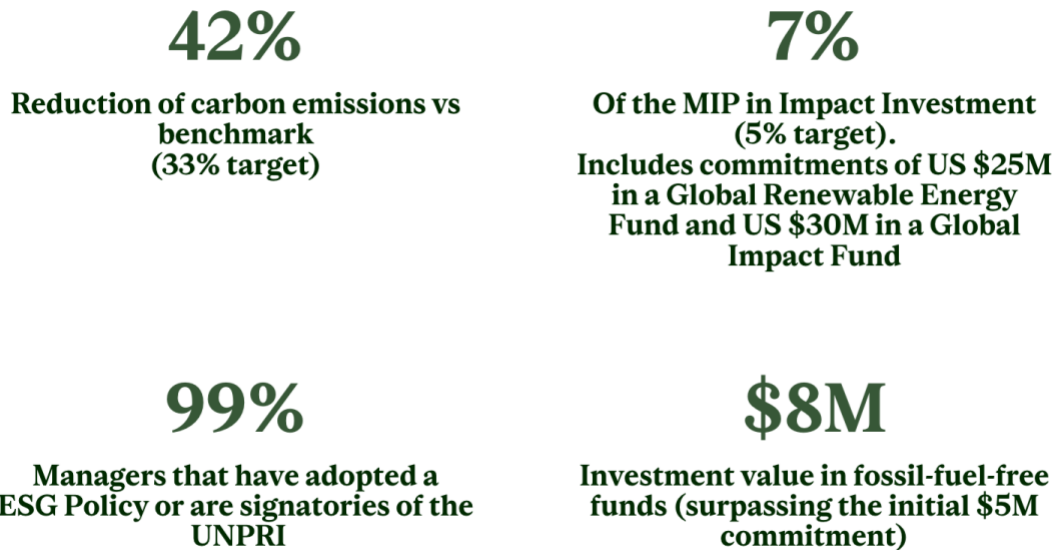
Figure 6: Map of EV Charging Stations on Downtown Campus⁴⁷



McGill Sustainable Investing

In May 2021, McGill’s Investment Committee published its first Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) progress report.⁴⁸ Some of the highlights as of June 30, 2022, include:

Figure 7: Highlights from McGill SRI Progress Report⁴⁹



The status of McGill's eight-step plan on sustainable investing goes as follows:⁵⁰

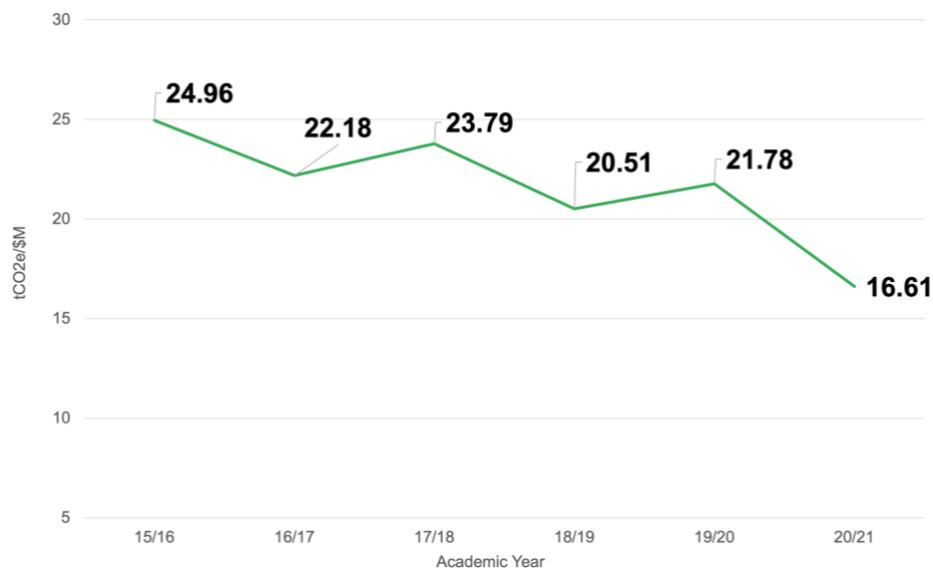
Recommendation	Status (As of June 30, 2022)	
1. Reduce carbon emissions	On Track	
2. Invest in low-carbon funds		Completed
3. Increase investments in fossil-fuel-free funds	On Track	
4. Active investor engagement.	On Track	
5. Review the Statement of Investment policy.		Completed
6. Present and publish a report on socially responsible investing.		Completed
7. Review socially responsible investing practices on a five-year	On Track	
8. Evaluate and promote socially responsible investing policies.	On Track	

In the 2020 Greenhouse Gas Inventory report, McGill outlined the future emission reduction initiatives but needs to follow up on any of their statuses in the 2021 report. This is a strong plan with a strong start, but there is a need for increased transparency, so the public knows these goals are being prioritized and progress is being made. McGill's eight step plan will lead

to the removal of investments from highly carbon-intensive companies, such as those in the fossil fuel, cement and steel industry, and coal and gas-fired power plants.⁵¹ Investing in low-carbon funds is “completed,” which has a goal to increase impact investing by committing over \$75M to low-carbon funds and funds that contribute to decarbonization (~5% of the MIP’s current assets) by 2025.⁵² Increasing investments in the fossil-fuel-free fund is “on track,” although little information is provided about what this really means. Active investor engagement is also “on track,” and McGill continues to increase the number of university fund managers who adhere to ESG policy and are signatories of the UNPRI.

In addition, the [2021 Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report](#) presented three crucial key performance indicators that McGill reports to the Ministry of Education.⁵³ Figure 8 depicts McGill’s Emissions/Endowment data from 2015-2021, which was acquired from this report. The document highlighted Between 2019 and 2021, there was a 10% reduction in emissions per student enrolment, a -7.3% change in emissions per gross area, and a -25.8% change in emissions per endowment (measured in \$ millions).⁵⁴ However, it is worth noting these figures only include building-related Scope 1 and 2 energy emissions.

Figure 8: McGill Endowment Emissions from 2015-2021(tCO₂e /\$M)⁵⁵



In December 2020, McGill announced that [99% of the McGill Investment Pool's](#) investment managers had an ESG policy or were signatories of the United Nations’ Principles for

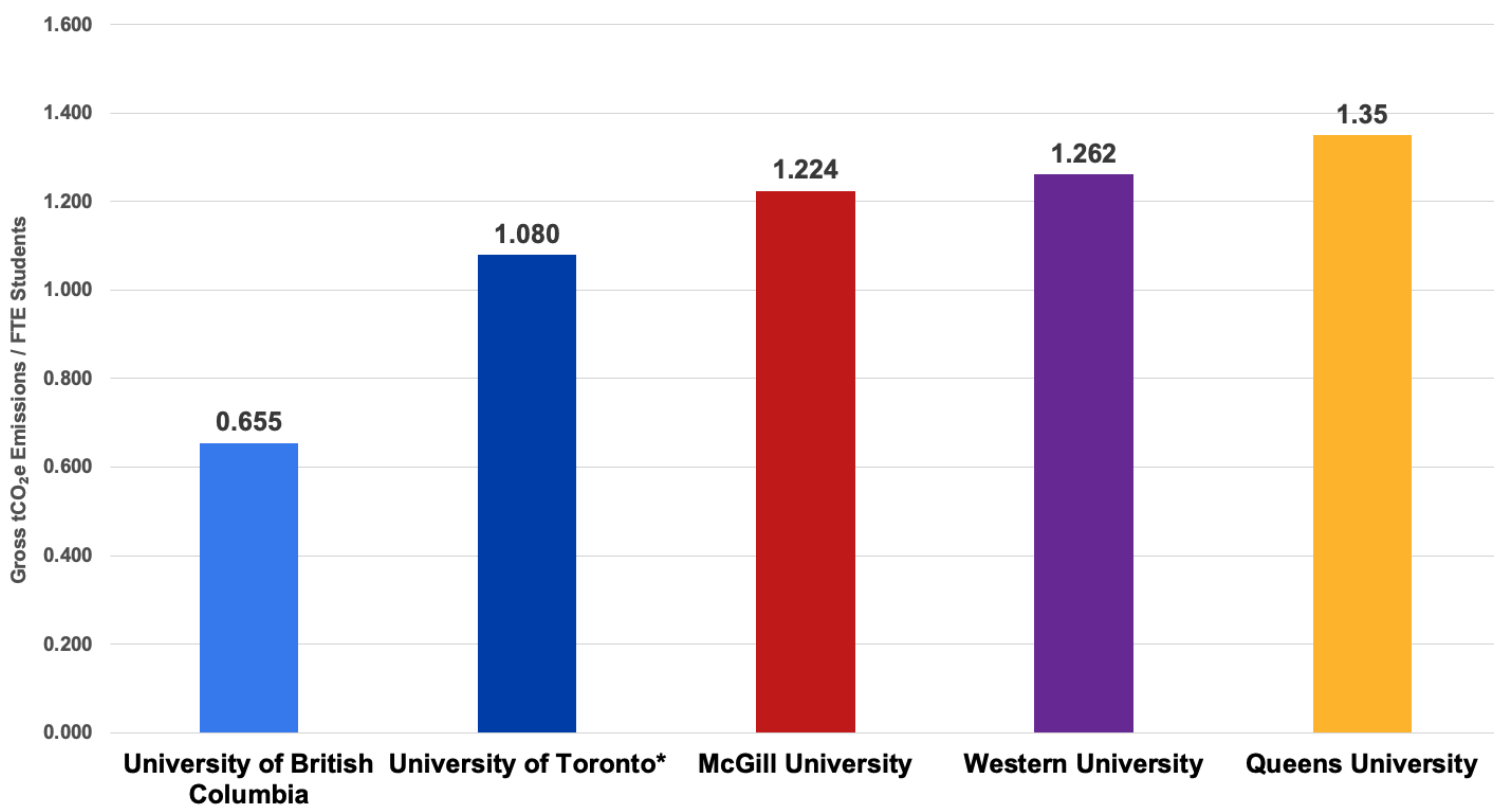
Responsible Investment (UNPRI) criteria, a significant increase from ~70% in 2016.⁵⁶ The UNPRI is centered around 6 principles:⁵⁷

- i. Organizations will incorporate ESG issues into investment analysis and decision-making processes.
- ii. Organizations will be active owners and incorporate ESG issues into our ownership policies and practices.
- iii. We will seek appropriate disclosure on ESG issues by the entities in which we invest.
- iv. Organizations will promote acceptance and implementation of the principles within the investment industry.
- v. Organizations will work together to enhance our effectiveness in implementing the principles.
- vi. Organizations will each report on our activities and progress towards implementing the principles.

McGill and Canadian Universities Emissions

A [McGill Reporter Staff article](#) on May 10, 2022, titled “McGill’s carbon reduction strategy yields outstanding results,”⁵⁸ outlines the great progress the school has made on emission reduction. The article argues that “by taking a holistic approach that looks beyond the traditional carbon-intensive energy sector, the University has achieved a nearly 53% absolute reduction in the carbon footprint of its \$2B endowment portfolio in just two years.”⁵⁹ The University’s “bold strategy has reduced the carbon emissions of its endowment investments by 78,000 tons annually, which is equivalent to taking approximately 16,800 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles off the road.”⁶⁰ This approach to decarbonizing investments yields results that are “about four times more than what could have been accomplished by divesting from top oil and gas reserve owners alone.”⁶¹ It will be interesting to monitor the progress of McGill’s ventures upon the release of its 2022 report.

Figure 9: Emissions Per Student 2021 (Gross tCO₂e / Full Time Enrolled Students)



*University of Toronto's Emissions data is from 2020

Figure 9 displays the emissions per student across some of the largest Canadian universities. The values were determined by dividing the university’s total emissions (tCO₂e) by the full-time

student population. The per-student values of each university were calculated using the respective 2021 Greenhouse Gas Emissions inventory reports including [McGill's report](#),⁶² [University of British Columbia's \(UBC\) report](#),⁶³ [Queen's report](#),⁶⁴ [U of T's report](#),⁶⁵ and [emission data on Western University](#).⁶⁶ McGill placed in the middle with the measured universities, with 1.224 tCO₂e per full-time enrolled student (using 2021 values).⁶⁷ It will be interesting to see if universities such as UBC use their low emissions as a marketing technique to create and develop a competitive edge relative to Canadian universities, especially as ESG concerns are becoming increasingly more important across the country.

In addition to having the lowest gross emission per student in 2021, the University of British Columbia Board of Governors approved its [Climate Action Plan 2030](#),⁶⁸ setting some of the most aggressive GHG reduction targets among Canadian universities. This plan creates a course for UBC to reduce 85% of campus emissions by 2030 and reach net zero emissions in its campus operations by 2035. Ahead of [McGill](#)⁶⁹ and [Queen's University's](#)⁷⁰ goal of net zero by 2040. The CAP 2030 plan is also being implemented in tandem with UBC's wider [Climate Emergency Response](#),⁷¹ which includes nine priority areas, including accelerating emission reductions, expanding climate research, and strengthening climate education opportunities.

The University of Toronto has been a prominent performer in ESG for some time and has received great public recognition for it. Since 2018, U of T's Asset Management Corporation has released a [Responsible Investment Report](#) considering the potential ESG impact of every investment decision they make.⁷² McGill followed suit in 2021, when it published its first [Socially Responsible Investing Report](#).⁷³

FUNDS, INITIATIVES, AND PROGRAMS

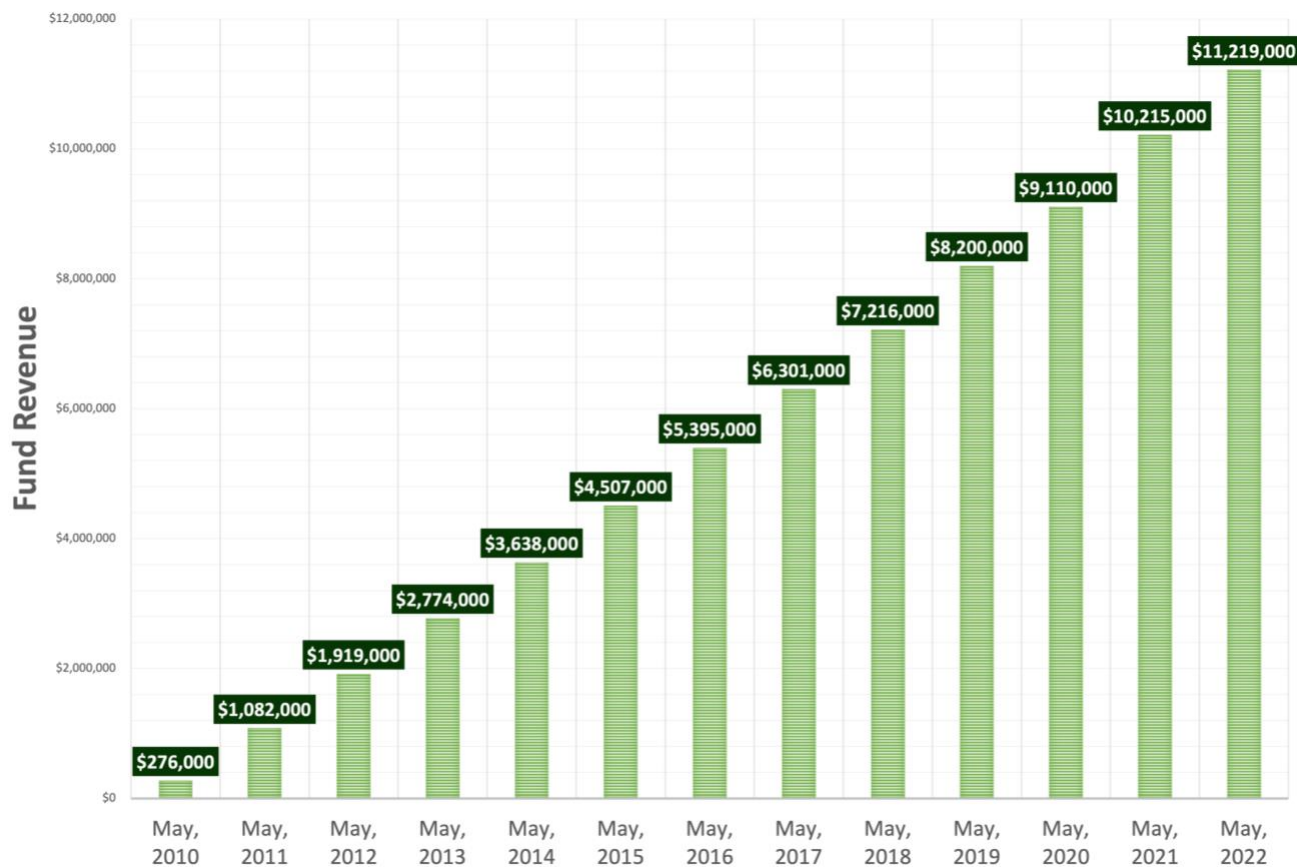


SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS FUND (SPF)

In 2009, the [SPF](#) was established at McGill University to provide development assistance and seed funding for sustainability initiatives and interdisciplinary projects led by members of the McGill community.⁷⁴ It actively engages in sustainability projects and seeks to build a culture of sustainability on campus by empowering individuals to become agents of change in their academic and work environments, which simultaneously contributes to the implementation of McGill University's Climate & Sustainability Strategy.

The SPF is supported by a student fee of \$0.55 per credit, which is collected from each Students' Society of McGill University (SSMU), Macdonald Campus Students Society (MCSS), and Post-Graduates Students' Society (PGSS) student, and is matched dollar-to-dollar by the University. Projects are categorized into four different streams: Tiny Stream Projects, which typically receive less than \$300, Projects under \$5000, Projects over \$5000, and Big Wave projects, which receive between \$100,000 and \$400,000 in funding.⁷⁵ Valued at more than \$1 million annually, the SPF is currently the largest fund of its kind in Canada. It is uniquely committed to collaboration between students and staff in its financing, decision-making, and project leadership.

Since 2010, the SPF has approved 294 projects out of 546 applications (54% approval rate) – involving more than 5,200 volunteers, to which it has allocated more than \$10,800,000 in funding, yielding significant improvements to the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of McGill University's sustainable performance.⁷⁶

Figure 10: Cumulative McGill SPF Revenue (2010-2022)

To be eligible for SPF financing, projects must be action-oriented and led by McGill students or staff on campus while also being sustainability-oriented and in need of seed funding.⁷⁷ Applicants must ensure to manage their projects sustainably, involve and benefit the McGill community and have a reasonable budget that reflects the project's scope and the number of people it will affect. This means that the SPF cannot support all sustainability-focused projects on campus. Research, one-off events, and projects benefiting individuals rather than the community are typically rejected. The SPF Governance Council is the body that determines which projects receive funding. Comprised of eight voting members – of which four are students, and four are McGill staff – and two non-voting members, the Governance Council also ensures the fulfillment of the SPF's mandate to build a culture of sustainability on McGill campuses. Members of the Governance Council are selected based on their level of engagement with the McGill community and their sustainability knowledge and experience. They meet once each month during the academic year.

Sustainability Initiatives Funded Through the SPF

- (1) Since 2016, the SPF has tracked numerous performance indicators for governance and administrative activities relating to SPF-funded projects. According to data from 15 reports received in FY2022, such projects have helped recycle 4.5L of helium per day, have raised an additional \$160,000 from other funding sources, and have generated an additional 3,000kg of produce from MacDonald Campus that is served to the McGill community.⁷⁸ The Big Wave Helium Recovery Project (SPO242) is an interesting example of one of the many successful SPF-backed projects. After receiving \$221,000 from the SPF in March 2020, Robin Stien, Tara Sprules, Dmitrii Perepichka, Tony Mittermaier, Rick Rossi and Weihua Wang purchased and installed a system for recovering and recycling helium - a finite, non-renewable and energy-intensive resource - that is generally obtained as a by-product of natural gas extraction and is intensively used in the McGill Magnetic Resonance Facilities (MMRF) for nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR).⁷⁹ The team collaborated with students enrolled in CHEM 429 (Chemistry of Energy, Storage and Utilization), CHEM 462 (Green Chemistry) and CHEM 493 (Physical Chemistry). The initiative ultimately recovered approximately 4.5L of helium per day, which accounts for about 50% of the helium used in the MMRF. The team continues to work on optimizing the system to further reduce energy consumption and improve recycling yields.
- (2) In March 2022, the McGill Clothing Swap (SP0291), a Tiny Stream Project aimed at creating more circular patterns of consumption in the McGill community, was approved.⁸⁰ The project aims to educate community stakeholders about the SPF and McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS), while clarifying the principles of a gift economy and the impacts of fast fashion on the environment. The project's annual event takes place in April and allows students and staff to bring clothing or accessory items and then shop for other items to take home. Leftover clothes at the end of the event are donated to local shelters and thrift stores to diminish the environmental impact of clothing consumption.

Sustainability and Social Justice Programs Offered by McGill

Social and Environmental responsibility is relevant and applicable in all aspects of our lives. Therefore, it is crucial that university studies reflect this. Below are a few programs from various McGill faculties that have a focus on environmental and/or social responsibility.

Sustainability, Science & Society (SSS) - Interfaculty Arts and Science Program

- This program represents the 3 pillars of sustainability – (1) Science and Technology, (2) Economics, Policy, and Governance, and (3) Ethics, Equity, and Justice. Graduate will develop the necessary skills to approach the interconnected nature of sustainability issues.⁸¹

Gender, Sexuality, Feminist and Social Justice Program - Faculty of Arts

- The study of the intersectionality of gender, sexuality, feminism, and social justice from a historical and modern lens.⁸²

Managing for Sustainability - Faculty of Management

- Analyzes the interconnected nature of Social, Economic, and Ecological factors in business contexts.⁸³

Environmental Engineering - Faculty of Engineering

- Offered as a minor under the Civil Engineering Major, a specialization in the environment; Providing a built environment that considers environmental and ecological impact.⁸⁴

Renewable Resource Management - Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

- Analyzes the role of humans in preserving ecosystems and sustainability through our use of Earth's resources.⁸⁵

Global Food Security - Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

- Examines the issue of food security in a global context, focusing on developing countries. The program is a mix of required courses, internships, and study abroad to learn more about the issues discussed firsthand.⁸⁶

Education in Global Contexts - Faculty of Education

- Analyzes the role of non-traditional educators and their importance in enacting social change. Learn to apply the concepts of teaching and learning in non-scholastic contexts such as: Non-profits, governments, businesses, and other job markets.⁸⁷

Internal Environmental Initiatives

McGill University has three long-term targets as part of its Climate and Sustainability Strategy for 2020-2025.⁸⁸

- (1)** The first target is attaining STARS ratings certified Platinum rating by 2030. The Sustainability Tracking Assessment & Rating System was developed by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in higher Education, and covers Academics, Engagement, Operations, and Planning & Administration. Currently, McGill holds a Gold Score of 76.69, meaning it is 8.31 points away from Platinum.⁸⁹
- (2)** Secondly, McGill intends to become zero waste by 2035, which means an annual waste diversion rate of at least 90%. A waste diversion rate is the proportion by weight of all material diverted from disposal (e.g., landfill or incineration) to the total mass of all waste material generated, expressed as a percentage.⁹⁰ McGill started its zero-waste path following the adoption of the McGill Waste Reduction and Diversion Strategy in 2018.⁹¹ For reference, in 2016, the waste diversion rate was 15%.⁹² Initiatives contributing towards the goal include the student-run SSMU Plate Club, which offers reusable dishes, glasses, and utensils without charge to the McGill community during campus events and in the SSMU cafeteria. Moreover, the IT Asset Management Regulation, led by Procurement Services, handles the disposal and/or reuse of McGill-owned IT equipment, which allows for better management of the product's lifecycle, longevity, and optimization, to ensure proper disposal and reuse through distribution across departments before the equipment becomes obsolete.
- (3)** Third, McGill intends to become carbon neutral by 2040. The university aims to do this by completing a series of key actions including largescale energy transformations, electrification of the University vehicle fleet, and offsetting a portion of air travel emissions.⁹³

Problematic ESG-Related Initiative: The New Vic Project

McGill has recently begun renovating the old site of the Royal Victoria Hospital, which stands unoccupied on Mount Royal.⁹⁴ The "New Vic Project," launched in January 2021, aims to create a space for research and development of sustainability initiatives within this site. The building designated for The New Vic will open its doors in 2028, and will include multidisciplinary research laboratories, teaching, learning and recreational spaces, and green spaces and features that will connect the mountain to downtown.⁹⁵

Figure 11: A Rendering of the New Vic Project.



However, the repurposing of the Royal Victoria Hospital has spurred controversy and debate. The Indigenous elder group called the Kanien'kehá:ka kahnistensera (Mohawk Mothers), have alleged the bodies of Indigenous patients of the Allan Memorial Institute and the Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) are buried at the site scheduled to be redeveloped.⁹⁶ A 2016 archeological report prepared by McGill also suggested "Mount Royal was used as an Indigenous burial site before the arrival of Europeans."⁹⁷

In March 2022, the Mohawk Mothers filed a civil suit demanding the suspension of McGill's redevelopment plans and called on the grounds to be investigated immediately.⁹⁸ They also demanded proper measures be taken, including the presence of approved Indigenous observers during excavations, and proper care of forensic evidence.⁹⁹

On October 27th, 2022, the group obtained a temporary, emergency injunction from a Quebec Superior Court judge, effectively halting all archeological work for three to four months.¹⁰⁰ The ruling concluded it was urgent to respond to the plaintiffs' "legitimate concerns" about unmarked graves. The injunction put a pause on Arkéos's underground investigation of the RVG site, the private archeological firm hired by McGill and the Société québécoise des infrastructures (SQI),¹⁰¹ which had started two weeks prior.

Kimberly Murray, a federally appointed third-party special interlocutor, said this decision set an important precedent in Canada and was "a very significant case for the entire country."¹⁰² Murray's "affidavit provided the court with recommendations on best practices for undertaking a search for unmarked graves."¹⁰³ In addition, the judge directed that deep dialogue occurs outside the court and as part of the case management process.

Katherine Gombay, a McGill spokesperson, said in an e-mail, the university will engage in a conversation with the Indigenous plaintiffs "with humility and in good faith."¹⁰⁴ McGill's next steps to restart construction remain unclear.

ACCESSIBILITY AND EQUITY AT MCGILL

McGill has made efforts to establish a detailed plan relating to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The university identifies its main objectives in its [Strategic Academic Plan 2017-2022](#)¹⁰⁵ which include:

- “Maintain international undergraduate student enrollment at 25-30%”
- “Aims to increase the proportion of women at the rank of full professor by 25% in five years and the proportion of all tenured and tenure-track staff self-identifying as members of all other equity groups to 20%”
- “Goal of increasing Indigenous student enrolment to 1000 University-wide”
- “Aim to increase application and yield rates from Quebec CEGEPs... will focus in particular on the French language CEGEP system, with a target of increasing new registrations from that system by 15% over five years”

While the University has other goals, these are its current focus. Further expanded upon in their published report titled [McGill University Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#), the plan assigns responsibility for each evaluation and the development of initiatives to attain EDI goals to various Senate groups.¹⁰⁶ Assigning responsibility is essential when setting targets and goals because it allows for accountability in evaluations. However, despite their well-structured plan, it lacks detail regarding when and how the statistics are gathered and published. While annual reports are essential, greater communication with student body, would help create a more dynamic approach to EDI initiatives.

The most recent report on current progress towards EDI objectives was in the [Enrolment Report to Senate Academic Year 2021-2022](#), published on February 16, 2022.¹⁰⁷ The percentage of registrants of students from francophone CEGEPs and colleges has remained [goal of increasing the number of domestic francophone students](#). Additionally, the school has yet to make large strides in increasing the number of Indigenous students, [with about](#) [university wide](#)¹⁰⁸

The report indicates that McGill has remained consistent with its enrolment portfolio, demonstrating the need to invest more heavily in implementing the plans outlined within its [EDI Strategic Plan 2020-2025](#).¹⁰⁹ If improvements cannot be easily tracked or identified over the

next two years (the remaining years of the current EDI Plan), new initiatives will need to be created to work towards these targets. The university does not benefit from established targets if they are not met. Having the Senate committees responsible for the certain targets interact more with the student body could help in understanding why current initiatives may not be working and what new initiatives could look like. Students are a significant resource of the university that should be consulted to better understand how the establishment could and should be improved.

Overall, it is challenging to find concrete information about McGill's EDI statistics and progress through its website. Consolidating information and improving transparency with regards to EDI statistics by publishing methodologies for data collection and overall statistics more frequently will allow for better evaluation of the efficacy of current EDI initiatives. This might make it easier to identify the key problem areas needing improvement and perhaps provide a better understanding of the trends seen in current student body portfolios.

LOOKING AHEAD

Like any large institution, McGill has flaws relating to ESG factors, but through our research, it is evident that they are trying to address them. At ESG McGill, we feel as though the university should focus its efforts on these overarching pillars to ensure responsible ESG management over the coming years.

- (1)** McGill needs to continue its results-orientated strategy to decarbonize all its investments. Divestment could be done by transitioning fossil fuel-intensive energy and industrial investments to responsibly managed firms specializing in renewable energy or providing the necessary minerals needed for the energy transition.
- (2)** Continue to publish an annual Progress Report that transparently grades McGill's efforts in ESG initiatives, including building a socially responsible investment portfolio in line with the UNPRI framework, reductions in on-campus fossil fuel emissions, and the development of the university's carbon offset program.
- (3)** Notify the student body when carbon reduction or EDI targets are met or missed and providing an explanation as to why.
- (4)** Always include and respect the appropriate Indigenous stakeholders in future construction decisions.
- (5)** Continue the expansion of smart grid infrastructure on campus to ensure efficient management of McGill's energy usage.
- (6)** Implement more stringent regulation using motion activated light systems to ensure lights are only on when necessary.
- (7)** Improve the clarity of how EDI statistics are collected and measured by providing a detailed methodology. This will allow for a better evaluation of the efficacy of current EDI targets, which are of value and interest to the student population.

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ENDNOTES

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