

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY
MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY SENATE

February 8, 2022, 4:00pm
via Microsoft Teams

Present via remote connection: N. Anthonisen, K. Bell, A. Beverley, B. Blakney, J-P. Boudreau (Chair), C. Burke, B. Clayton, A. Comfort, H. Crouse, G. Desmarais, T-A. Dixon, B. Evans, A. Fancy, S. Fanning, N. Farooqi, D. Fleming, D. Hamilton, L-D. Hamilton, J. Hennessy (Vice-Chair), R. Inglis, C. Ionescu, K. Johnston, J. Kalyn, S. Keller, L. Kern, A. Koval, A. Kreuger, L. Landon, R. Lapp, A. Lepage, M. Levesque, D. Lieske, M. Litvak, C. Lovekin, G. MacLean-de Stecher, R. Majithia, C. Major, V. Meli, M-E. Messinger, N. Milliea, R. Minocha-McKenney, R. Moser (Secretary), J. Mullen, C. Pringle-Carver, B. Robertson, S. Runge, E. Steuter, V. St. Pierre, K. Stentafor, J. Tomes, N. Vogan, W. Wilson

Observers: L. Dillman, L. Hawthorne, R. Hiscock, A. Jardine, M. Maston, N. Nauss, E. Penton, A. Robben, G. Sandala, A. Wilson, X. Yao

Regrets: L. Garnett

01.02.08 Land Acknowledgement

J-P. Boudreau welcomed everyone to the sixth Senate meeting of the academic year. He said Mount Allison stands proud with all First Nations communities of this province and this territory, and he knows we all strive, in the 23rd month of this pandemic, to embody Indigenous principles of knowing and doing.

02.02.08 Approval of agenda

Motion (V. St. Pierre / N. Farooqi): that Senate adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried

03.02.08 Approval of the minutes (11 January, 2022)

Motion (J. Hennessy / N. Farooqi): that Senate adopt the minutes of the meeting of 11 January, 2022 as presented.

Motion carried

04.02.08 Business arising from the minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

05.02.08 Chair's remarks

We're in the midst of a cold New Brunswick winter the like of which the Chair remembers from his childhood. The Chair offered a shout out to Mt.A's amazing grounds crew for their working keeping the campus safe and cleared of snow. Special thanks to Neil MacEachern, and to Robert Hiscock, C. Pringle-Carver, and the MarCom team for timely communications keeping the community updated about storm protocols across campus.

COVID-19

The 'Tuesday Touchpoint' communication for this week has been sent out today. Presently Mount Allison has 6 active cases of COVID-19: 5 cases off-campus, 1 case in residence. Since January 3rd, 92 cases are reported recovered. Presently the case count is low and the recovery rate is high. Student presence on campus is gradually increasing after the fully-online start, with 589 currently in residence. (824 was the expected target.) 183 shots were given at the most recent booster clinic. The Chair thanked A. Comfort and Matt Maston for coordinating and operating the clinic during a snowstorm. The local Guardian and Jean Coutu pharmacies each are available to administer the shots as well.

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response

The Chair signaled a recently-launched confidential online reporting platform (the REES community) for instances of sexual violence. He thanked the SVPR team and the broader university community for implementing this important platform. He thanked Dr. Tasia Alexopolous and A. Comfort for all their initiatives.

Convocation

There will be an in-person Convocation unless Omicron or some other variant changes the situation dramatically. We are tracking toward an in-person Convocation for 2022, including a 'walk the stage' experience for members of the graduating classes of 2020 and 2021. Further bulletins as events warrant.

Divestment

The Chair read a prepared statement. The statement was not available by the time these minutes were circulated.

06.02.08 Report from Academic Matters, Curriculum and Academic

Motion (N. Farooqi / V. St. Pierre): That Senate approve for the 2022-23 Academic Calendar the proposed changes to MUSC, including course deletions, course additions, course titles and descriptions, course prerequisites and corequisites, program description and requirements for the Minor, Major, and Honours in Music.

Motion carried

Motion (N. Farooqi / V. St. Pierre): That Senate approve for the 2022-23 Academic Calendar the proposed new certificate in Music Education.

Motion carried

The Chair and N. Farooqi each thanked members of the Music department for their work on these changes. N. Vogan commented that the certificate in music education looks excellent.

07.02.08 Report from University Planning Committee

J. Hennessy indicated that the report consists of the motion on the new Strategic Academic Plan. He noted a couple of relatively minor changes to the Plan before making the motion: (i) under the items concerning decolonization the Provost adds 'Elder in residence' as an active and ongoing consultant; (ii) under some items concerning graduate studies (§5, §13) the Graduate Studies Committee is added as being involved in development of graduate studies, and language is added indicating commitment to secure website presence and graduate student support.

Motion (J. Hennessy / R. Minocha-McKenney): that Senate approve the Strategic Academic Plan "Liberal Arts for the 21st Century: 2022-2025" as discussed at Senate, February 8, 2022.

Motion carried

Noting that the Strategic Academic Plan should guide the academic mission of the university, the Chair opened discussion of the motion.

The Provost thanked all the many committee members who worked to prepare this Plan, with special thanks to Lacey Decker Hawthorne. He said the Plan was built on the principle of collegial governance and it was truly a collegial effort, with people around the university working together for common and special goods.

R. Minocha-McKenney commented that the Plan is great and comprehensive. He expressed appreciation that there was lots of student consultation, noting that many student-led ideas run through the Plan. The Chair echoed this appreciation of student involvement.

A. Fancy congratulated the Provost and committees specifically on the 2-week intensive plan ('A-term'). This is a great initiative that provides focus for learners and teachers.

V. St. Pierre said the Faculty of Arts is very pleased with the Plan itself. She is pleased especially with the consultative nature of the Plan and is grateful that the Provost takes a consultative approach to the work.

N. Farooqi echoed V. St. Pierre, noting that there was a high level of engagement with faculty throughout the design, and as a result he thinks implementation will get a lot of traction.

J. Tomes echoed others, expressing appreciation of the Provost and committees for their willingness to receive feedback. She noted that the Faculty of Science and Graduate Studies had given formal feedback, and appreciated how that was sought out, pleased with how it was received.

A. Fancy asked what provisions have been made for review of the Plan, wanting to know how it will be reviewed going forward.

The Provost thanked everyone for their comments and addressed A. Fancy's question. A number of items in the Plan have stated timelines for completion. Some other items are open-ended, and one likely possibility is that as the work begins on these, specific timelines will be set along with criteria to measure stepwise progress. L. Decker Hawthorne has been a tremendous help tabulating and tracking these items. The Provost said he is confident that all 66 recommendations are achievable in the 2022-2025 timeframe. The trick now will be prioritizing.

The Provost asked to make one final comment. He sincerely believes this is a special community to achieve this Plan in so short a time during pandemic conditions. He commended the spirit he found in each committee—no one came in trying to protect or to defend, and everyone seemed to be wondering what we could achieve. The Provost feels fortunate to be here, and believes there is much to look forward to.

The Chair thanked the Provost and committees for their work, and thanked everyone for discussion. He noted that the Strategic Academic Plan is a living document, meant to evolve and serve the community even as it is implemented.

08.02.08 Motion on divestment

Motion (B. Clayton / A. Krueger): That Senate advises the Board of Regents to commit immediately to divestment of the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies from the endowment fund, with the goal of achieving full fossil fuel divestment within the next five fiscal years.

**Motion carried
(4 opposed)**

B. Clayton read a prepared statement as follows:

I am very pleased to have been asked to present this motion on behalf of Divest MTA.

Given the recent parallel motion passed with a strong majority at Faculty Council, as well as two previous motions by Faculty council in support of Divest & action on the climate emergency, and similar endorsements by MAFA & MASU's Student Administrative Council, my sense is that I do not need to say too much in favour of the current motion before Senate, which states simply that Senate "advises the Board of Regents to divest from the top 200 fossil fuel companies with the goal of achieving full fossil fuel divestment within the next five years."

However, I would like to take the opportunity to *highlight* aspects of the rationale behind this motion and reasoning for divestment which may be important for those who might be still hesitant to endorse it.

First, we should make clear that it *is* within the purview of Senate to make such a motion. Senate may make recommendations to the Board on “any matters of interest to the University” (according to the Mount Allison University Act). Since climate change is now recognized as the single biggest threat to humankind, and has been declared a “code red” for humanity in the most recent report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it is abundantly clear that climate change and the solutions to it, such as supporting the societal shift away from a fossil-fuel based economy, certainly represent an important “interest” of the University.

As pointed out in the rationale, the mission of this University commits MTA “to the development of the next generation of researchers, creative artists, and leaders.” Because climate change represents the greatest known danger to the wellbeing of that next generation, MTA must take into account this risk to itself and its students, and do what it can to fight climate change if it is to fulfill its own mission. Divestment—withdrawing financial support for fossil fuel companies—is an important part of what MTA can do to fulfill this mission.

Secondly, what is perhaps become only recently clear is that on-going investment in the fossil fuel economy is not only environmentally irresponsible and therefore morally hazardous, it is also becoming financially irresponsible. Based on studies by major investment firms such as Blackrock and Marketa, and MSCI (a leading stock market index company) there is emerging consensus that when done prudently, fossil free funds outperform their non-divested counterparts. This has led to the concept of the “Divestment Investment” and indicates that past arguments against divestment based on financial reasons can no longer be upheld.

Therefore, in this motion we are advising that the Board of Regents of the University withdraw investments in the fossil fuel industry within the next five years. I applaud the students of Divest who have put years of effort and research into understanding the importance and complexities of divestment, and urge my fellow Senators to support those students and their cause by voting in favour of this motion.

Furthermore, I would like to add that I hope that Board’s action on divestment are conducted in a manner that includes input from and reflects accountability to the students of MTA and especially Divest, and that this will be part of a larger move on the part of the University to make concrete plans to address climate change and transition to net-zero, in line with IPCC targets. I thus appreciate the President’s statement today to review the University’s operations to ensure they align with environmental sustainability.

I know there are members of Divest here today—Helen Yao and Nick Nauss—who can speak further to the rationale for this motion, and I hope the Chair will give them the opportunity to do so.

Thank-you. *[End of statement]*

A. Krueger endorses the motion as a MASU Senator and not uniquely as a member of Divest MtA. She noted that Divest MtA has strengthened with a growing alumni network which believes that divestment is in the best interests of future students. The need to divest is especially evident these days. Krueger expressed gratitude for Divest's work since its inception.

B. Evans indicated that he is completely sympathetic to the spirit of the motion: climate change is an urgent matter we need to address. He cannot support the motion as written. It would make more sense to him if MtA owned fossil fuel stock, but MtA owns 'funds of funds' which packages aren't neatly disassembled from specific investments in specific fossil fuel companies as per the language of the motion. The language is so specific as to be a mistake—if it were written differently, Evans could support it; but this can't work.

H. Crouse asked what an acceptably amended motion would look like.

B. Evans pointed to the President's statement on divestment read during the Chair's remarks. Climate change is the problem, fossil fuels are the biggest contributor to the problem, so we move to make our investments ethical. The logistics of current investments makes it complicated. We have to ensure we're not working against our stated purpose. The President's statement reflects what the university should do.

B. Clayton wondered if there could be a minor amendment that would mitigate this problem. It seems to her that Evans is saying because it's complex to divest that Senate shouldn't ask the Board of Governors to do it. But other universities have done it, and have been in the same situation (i.e., 'investments in investments'). So complexity shouldn't block the motion.

B. Evans said he doesn't know what the other universities have done, but any Board could say they'll commit to the process of divestment. That's easy to say. Then the Board would have to figure out how to do this. B. Evans stressed again he is in favour of the aspiration here, but he can't recommend an action to Board because he doesn't see how they can do this as described.

R. Inglis said the President has encouraged the investment committee to commit to the process of divestment, and they, along with other universities, have to figure out how to do it. Inglis also doesn't know the specifics of what other universities have done. He pointed out that what people think will happen or has happened simply isn't what happens—an unnamed university said they will divest of fossil fuel stock, but Inglis doesn't think they did this. He noted that disagreement about what fiduciary duty prescribes is an ongoing matter of interpretation. But, he stressed, any motion that Senate recommends to the Board, Inglis will bring it to the Board as moved.

J-P. Boudreau added his hope that in his own comments and in R. Inglis's comments Senators would notice a divestment-positive signal different from what has gone before. The Chair interpreted Inglis as saying: while there are lots of headlines about universities divesting, they do not reveal details of how divestment occurs, and it is crucial to get it right.

K. Johnston said she thinks the motion as stated is specific enough to be actionable. It reflects careful research over a decade by students of Divest Mt.A. It specifies divestment from the top

200 fossil fuel companies over 5 years. It is open enough to allow the Board to decide how to do this. K. Johnston would now very much like to hear from the students of Divest Mt.A. who has amassed a lot of knowledge about this. The Chair invited Xinyu (Helen) Yao to speak to the motion.

X. Yao said she is aware Senate isn't the forum to craft a 10-step plan for divestment. But this is an actionable motion that is neither merely aspirational nor a vague platitude. There is a very limited window to make positive change in the climate crisis and this motion is a necessary next step. In the past, Mt.A. has divested from tobacco, which was a strategy for putting pressure on an industry that causes social harm. The fossil fuel companies counted here are complicit in widespread misinformation and human rights violations all of which obviously go against the values of the Mount Allison community, and it is time to take necessary steps. As for implementation, there are ways—exit strategies for pool funds exist and our fund managers are in a position to pull out of the investments in question. Mt.A. is no longer even a leader in this: Harvard University and the University of Toronto, to name two major institutions, and Lakehead University to name a small one, have all divested. It has taken 8 years so far since Divest Mt.A began and there is not time for another 8—it has to happen now. This isn't the forum for discussing implementation, and Divest Mt.A can even work with administration on details of how to implement divestment. This is the forum to decide whether to advise the Board to divest the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies from the university's endowments. The fact that we will commit now to making this recommendation to the Board shows at the very least that we will do something instead of being complicit in inaction. If the Senate does not pass this motion recommending divestment today we're saying we won't take steps to change.

09.02.08 Discover Mt.A

J-P. Boudreau invited Senators to share anything noteworthy for the community.

J. Tomes congratulated Dr. Glen Briand on securing a grant for a study on the production of biodiesel.

V. St. Pierre signaled a number of events: (i) the English Department's 7th annual McKiel Lecture to be delivered by Mt.A. student Kathryn Ashfield on March 30th; (ii) the upcoming Tintamarre bilingual dramatic comedy 'Mascarade' to be held in the Motyer-Fancy Theatre from March 16th through 19th; (iii) the Philosophy Department's Phoenix Colloquium on February 18th with a talk by McCain Postdoctoral Fellow Dr. Emily Bingeman; (iv) upcoming events with the Bragg Artist in Residence, collaborative pianist Graham Johnson, from March 8th through 11th.

N. Farooqi congratulated Dr. Dave Lieske, and former Mt.A. student Connor Nickel, on completion of a study on highway fencing and reduction of elk mortality to appear in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. Farooqi also announced the upcoming annual Social Science teaching award for non-tenured members of the Social Science faculty.

B. Robertson expressed that he is delighted to have resumed in-person classes.

10.02.08 Other business

There was no other business.

11.02.08 Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Robbie Moser
Secretary