



Policy Number: E-2
Title: Environment & Climate Change Advocacy

Passed: August 1, 2018
Expires:

Summary:

Outlines the AMS stance on environmental and climate issues, including Climate Change Advocacy, UBC Divestment from Fossil Fuels, and Zero Waste Advocacy.

Number & Title:

E-2: Environment & Climate Change Advocacy

Effective Date:

August 1, 2018

Approval Date:

August 1, 2018

Policy Type:

External Policy

Review Date:

This policy shall be reviewed every three (3) years.

Responsible Body:

AMS Advocacy Committee

Authority:

AMS Code of Procedure Section II, Article 11 (1)

"Council may create external and internal policies as well as combined policies."

Purpose and Goals:

Ecological sustainability and the wellbeing of human and non-human communities are and will remain a priority for the AMS. The AMS recognizes our collective responsibility to reduce and eliminate negative social and ecological impacts, as well as our responsibility to actively improve the integrity and resilience of social and ecological systems at UBC and beyond. The AMS will exhibit meaningful leadership in environmental sustainability, and do so by working independently and in collaboration with significant stakeholders on UBC campus.

The AMS intends to convey the urgency and severity of the global climate crisis to the UBC community and engage students in envisioning and developing solutions. The AMS will hold UBC accountable for its sustainability commitments and will advance student concerns for environmental and climate justice. We will seek to accomplish this by working with the university administration to ensure meaningful sustainability leadership that creates long-lasting, institutional change. This policy, guided by the

Student Driven Sustainability Strategy and previous related policies, will serve to inform our stance on various environmental efforts and issues including three key areas.

1. *Climate Change Advocacy*: designed to pressure UBC to expand its efforts to combat climate change through research, teaching and engagement with the broader community, and to advocate against climate change at local, regional, provincial and federal levels.
2. *UBC Divestment from Fossil Fuels*: designed to pressure UBC to take all possible measures to forego future investments in fossil fuel companies and oil and gas infrastructure, and divest from all existing fossil fuel holdings.
3. *Zero Waste Advocacy*: designed to pressure the university to expand its efforts in zero waste and waste reduction through the ban of single use plastics as well as promoting zero waste culture by adopting circular economy models.

Applicability:

This policy is applicable to the AMS's stance towards the University's investment in fossil fuels, the University's efforts related to climate change and zero waste, and to the advocacy of the AMS Academic and University Affairs office.

Exclusions:

There are no exclusions for this policy.

Definitions:

There are no definitions for this policy.

Policy:

Climate Change Advocacy

Whereas:

- Climate change is among the most urgent issues that our species faces, with potentially catastrophic consequences for the health of humanity and the planet;^{1/2/3}
- Whereas climate change is an issue of great concern to a large number of students on campus, many of whom have been actively involved in mitigating this crisis, considering that young people will bear the greatest burden of climate impacts;
- Whereas the extraction and transmission of fossil fuels is extremely damaging to the environment and adversely affects climate change;⁴
- Whereas climate change is both an issue of justice and human rights, considering it has a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities and social groups, including low income people, women, people of color, and Indigenous peoples;
- Wealthy countries, including Canada, bear a great responsibility to address climate change and support countries of the global South in adaptation and mitigation efforts, as the global North has most substantially contributed to the problem.

¹<http://www.who.int/globalchange/global-campaign/cop21/en/>

²<https://www.nature.com/news/three-years-to-safeguard-our-climate-1.22201#auth-1>

³<http://www.ipcc.ch/index.htm>

⁴<https://www.ucsusa.org/clean-energy/coal-and-other-fossil-fuels/hidden-cost-of-fossils#bf-toc-1>

Therefore:

- Be it resolved that the AMS advocate for UBC and local, regional, provincial and federal governments to fulfill emissions reductions consistent with the Paris Agreement's goal of keeping the rise in global temperature below two degrees Celsius through a rapid transition to renewable energy sources;⁵
- Be it further resolved that the AMS urge UBC and local, regional, provincial and federal governments to consider climate issues in projects and decisions that have climate impacts, including the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized communities, and a commit to a just transition that provides people employed in the non-renewable energy sector with high quality job opportunities expanding renewable energy production;
- Be it further resolved that the AMS urge UBC to intensify its commitment to combat climate change by expanding research, teaching and engagement with the broader community;
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to partner and collaborate with other institutions to promote a rapid transition to renewable energy sources, and invest in research and education towards that end, including by emphasizing environmental sustainability in university curriculum;
- Be it further resolved that the AMS support the student-led creation of a UBC Climate Hub, which will serve as a campus-wide centre for research, mentoring and advocacy around climate issues; and
- Be it further resolved that the AMS will (a) advocate for leaving at least three-quarters of all known fossil fuel reserves in the ground (as suggested by the essential elements of the Paris Agreement),⁶ and (b) oppose fossil fuel extraction or distribution projects in Canada that are proposed or approved without the free, prior, and informed consent of the Indigenous peoples whose lands would be affected.

UBC Divestment from Fossil Fuels

Whereas:

- 76.9% of voters (6786 students) answered “yes” to the following referendum question in 2014: “Do you call on the Alma Mater Society to make all reasonable efforts to urge UBC to divest from fossil fuels?”;
- Whereas AMS's Office of the VP Academic and University Affairs provided a briefing note⁷ summarizing the main arguments in favour of divestment and providing recommendations to Council;
- Whereas precedent was set for divestment for ethical reasons in 1986 when the UBC Board of Governors adopted a selective divestment strategy in opposition to South Africa's apartheid policies;
- Whereas the University committed to a long-term framework for sustainability in planning and activities through the 20-Year Sustainability Strategy,⁸ and has highlighted itself as a leader in sustainability and has committed to sustainability in the 2018–2028 Strategic Plan;⁹ and

⁵https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁶ <https://globalchallenges.org/en/our-work/earth-statement-2015/statement>

⁷ <http://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/Divest-Briefing-Note.pdf>

⁸ https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/sustain.ubc.ca/files/uploads/CampusSustainability/CS_PDFs/PlansReports/Plans/20-Year-Sustainability-Strategy-UBC.pdf

⁹ https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018_UBC_Strategic_Plan_Full-20180425.pdf

- Whereas in 2014/15 the AMS submitted to UBC a fossil fuel divestment proposal,¹⁰ which had little impact on the investment holdings as the university failed to respond favourably.

Therefore:

- Be it resolved that the AMS officially adopt the stance that UBC should take all possible measures to forgo future investments in fossil fuel companies and oil and gas infrastructure, divest from all existing fossil fuel holdings, and adhere to their own Responsible Investment Policy, including for all of the university's endowments and pension funds;¹¹
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to improve transparency in UBC's fossil fuel investments by annually publishing a list of its holdings in fossil fuels, including oil and gas infrastructure, in a format that is accessible to the public; and

Zero Waste Advocacy

Whereas:

- Over four-thousand UBC students have signed a student-led petition that aims to ban single use plastics such as plastic straws, bags, cutlery, coffee cups, and water bottles at UBC;¹²
- Whereas single use plastics, which are thought to take up to thousands of years to decompose,¹³ have numerous adverse effects such as contaminating soil and water, and posing significant ingestion, choking and entanglement hazards to wildlife on land and in the ocean as demonstrated by the gruesome deaths of marine and land animals;¹⁴
- Whereas a global movement towards zero waste is currently in progress, as exemplified by France banning plastic products starting in 2020,¹⁵ and by Germany enacting a reusable coffee cup program to be utilized across the country; and¹⁶
- Whereas UBC Campus and Community Planning has created the UBC Vancouver Campus Zero Waste Action Plan,¹⁷ indicating that UBC is well positioned to implement this plan in its entirety while simultaneously promoting zero waste culture on UBC Campus;

Therefore:

- Be it resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to ban the sale of single-use plastic coffee cups, straws, bags, cutlery, and water bottles, and reduce the sale of other single use beverage containers from all UBC Food Services outlets;
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to educate students on how to create zero waste (such as buying second hand or using reusable food/beverage containers) and advertise zero waste initiatives;
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the UBC Bookstore to sell zero waste products and to replace their cashier plastic bags with a sustainable alternative;

¹⁰<https://vpfo.ubc.ca/ubc-endowment/divestment-proposals/>

¹¹<https://vpfo.ubc.ca/files/2016/08/ubc-endowment-responsible-investment-policy-apr2014.pdf>

¹²<https://www.change.org/p/university-of-british-columbia-ban-single-use-plastics-on-ubc-s-campus>

¹³https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/25496/singleUsePlastic_sustainability.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁴<http://www.marinesafe.org/the-problem/single-use-plastic/>

¹⁵http://www.climateactionprogramme.org/news/france_ban_plastic_plates_and_cutlery

¹⁶<https://en.reset.org/blog/recup-coffee-cup-share-system-set-take-over-berlin-08102017>

¹⁷https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/sustain.ubc.ca/files/uploads/CampusSustainability/CS_PDFs/RecyclingWaste/Zero_Waste_Action_Plan%202014%2010%2003%20final.pdf

- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to adopt circular economy models¹⁸ and support sustainable proposals such as the Mug-Share project¹⁹ and the Mindful-Move-out initiative;²⁰
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for the university to enact stricter policies on waste reduction for the institution, including for businesses operating on UBC's campuses; and
- Be it further resolved that the AMS advocate for an increase in financial and operational transparency and accountability in waste management at UBC as well as increased auditing and public reporting of waste diversion data in buildings and trucks on UBC Vancouver campus.

Consultations:

The following groups underwent consultation during the development of this policy: AMS Sustainability, AMS VP External, AMS VP Academic and University Affairs, AMS Policy Advisor, Sustainability Collective, Student Environment Centre, AMS Advocacy Committee

History:

The AMS has made several external policies that relate to sustainability at UBC Campus. Most notable for the purposes of this document is the now-expired UBC Divestment from Fossil Fuels policy, which has been updated and combined into the Environment & Climate Change Advocacy Policy. The UBC Divestment section of this policy is the result of a student referendum.

Related Policies:

The AMS has an internal policy on Sustainability²¹ and operates under the AMS Student Driven Sustainability Strategy. UBC elaborates its commitment to sustainability in Policy 5, "Sustainable Development,"²² and in an assortment of other sustainability strategies,²³ including sections of the 2018-2028 Strategic Plan.²⁴ UBC's Endowment Responsible Investment Policy outlines the requirements for any divestment proposal being submitted from the UBC community,²⁵ which relates to the divestment from fossil fuels component of this policy.

¹⁸<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/overview/concept>

¹⁹<http://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Mugshare-UBC.pdf>

²⁰<http://vancouver.housing.ubc.ca/residence-life/moving-out/>

²¹<http://www.ams.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/AMS-Environmental-Sustainability-Strategy.pdf>

²²<http://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2010/08/policy5.pdf>

²³<https://sustain.ubc.ca/our-commitment/strategic-plans-policies-reports/sustainability-plans>

²⁴<https://strategicplan.ubc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/2018-UBC-Strategic-Plan-Full-20180425.pdf>

²⁵<http://treasury.ubc.ca/files/2014/04/ubc-endowment-responsible-investment-policy-apr2014.pdf>