

December 4, 2009

Memo to the Executive Committee of Bishop's University

From the Bishop's Sustainable Development and Land Use Committee

At Talloires, France, in October 1990, a conference of university leaders, held under the auspices of Tufts University of the United States, issued a declaration of environmental commitment signed by 22 university presidents, rectors and vice-chancellors from every continent, and invited university presidents everywhere to join them. This was the first declaration of this type in the world. By 1992, there were more than a hundred signatories, by 2003 more than 300, and at present there are more than 350 signatories to this declaration. 33 Canadian colleges and universities, including McGill and Concordia, are now among the signatories.

In Halifax NS in 1991 a similar conference added its voice to this movement of concern about the continuing widespread degradation of the Earth's environment, the pervasive influence of poverty on the process, and the unsustainable environmental practices now so widespread.

The premise of these conferences was that the special educational, research, and public service roles of Universities enable them to be competent, effective contributors to the major attitudinal and policy changes necessary for a sustainable future.

The Halifax conference concluded by enjoining all universities to dedicate themselves to:

1. ensuring that the voice of the University be clear and uncompromising in its ongoing commitment to the principle and practice of sustainable development, both within and without the university at the local, national and global levels;
2. utilizing the intellectual resources of the University to encourage a better understanding on the part of society of the inter-related physical, biological and social dangers facing the planet Earth;
3. emphasizing the ethical obligation of the present generation to overcome those current malpractices of resource utilization and those widespread circumstances of intolerable human disparity which lie at the root of environmental unsustainability;
4. enhancing the capacity of the University to practise and teach sustainable development principles;
5. enhancing the capacity of the University to increase environmental literacy and an understanding of environmental ethics among its faculty, students, staff, and the public at large;
6. cooperating with one another and with all segments of society in the pursuit of practical capacity-building and policy measures to achieve the effective revision and reversal of those current practices which contribute to environmental degradation, to South-North disparities and to inter-generational inequity; and to
7. communicating these undertakings to colleagues, governments and the public at large.

The Halifax Declaration was simply a reformulation of the original Talloires declaration which had spoken of the many anthropogenic environmental insults that now threaten the survival of humans and thousands of other living species, the integrity of the earth and its biodiversity, the security of nations, and the heritage of future generations. ‘Talloires’ said that urgent actions are needed to create an equitable and sustainable future for all humankind in harmony with nature. It insisted that the University has a major role to play in the education, research, policy formation, and information exchange necessary to make the realization of these goals possible. It was unequivocal in stating that university leaders must mobilize both internal and external resources so that their institutions respond effectively to this urgent challenge.

More specifically, the Talloires declaration proposed that signatory universities commit to using the powers at their command to:

1. **Increase awareness of sustainable development**, both within their institution and in society at large;
2. **Create an institutional culture of sustainability** in academia and in society at large;
3. **Educate students for environmental literacy and environmentally responsible citizenship**;
4. **Practice institutional ecology**, including waste reduction, ecological waste management, resource conservation, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and environmentally sound operations;
5. **Involve all stakeholders** both within their institutions and in society at large in collaboratively finding and implementing solutions to environmental problems;
6. **Collaborate in interdisciplinary approaches** to curricula, research initiatives, operations, and outreach activities that support an environmentally sustainable future;
7. **Assist primary and secondary school systems** to enhance their capacity to teach about population, environment and sustainable development;
8. **Broaden service and outreach** nationally and internationally to promote a worldwide university effort toward a sustainable future; and to
9. **‘Maintain the movement’** by institutionalizing this vision within their institutions, keeping each other informed, and supporting each other’s efforts in carrying out this declaration.

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Bishop’s University is already well involved in this effort to create a more sustainable future. We have re-oriented our former Environment and Land Use Committee of Corporation (ELU) toward long-term Sustainable Development (SDLU) and mandated it to develop Sustainable Development policy for the University, a Sustainable Development action plan for the University with specific targets, and a Campus Development Plan incorporating principles of long-term sustainability. Our SDLU committee, through its multi-stakeholder Sustainable Development Action Group, encourages students, staff and faculty to initiate projects that will add to the sustainability of Bishop’s operations and/or enhance a culture of sustainability at Bishop’s. Thanks to

the family of Elizabeth Harvey, we have a permanently funded Sustainable Development Student Intern assisting our Director of Facilities, the SDLU and the SDAG in their sustainable development mandate. Academically, our department of Environmental Studies, and many environment and sustainability-oriented courses in a variety of other disciplines, as well as our MUSCLE research group of faculty researchers, are already dedicated to spreading awareness of the nature and importance of sustainable development.

What Bishop's needs now is a clear statement from the senior management and governing body of the University that we are on the right track and that we are serious about making Sustainable Development a priority in all aspects of University life as we go forward into the 21st century. To this end, we recommend that the Executive Committee pass a resolution such as the following:

Whereas local, regional, and global air, soil, and water pollution; accumulation and distribution of toxic wastes; destruction and depletion of forests, soil, water and other natural capital; depletion of the ozone layer, and emission of 'green house' gases all threaten the survival of humans and thousands of other living species, as well as the integrity of the earth and its biodiversity, the security of nations, and the heritage of future generations, and

Whereas Bishop's University has already committed in practice to a vision of sustainable development through its Facilities department, its Sustainable Development Action Plan, its Sustainable Development and Land Use committee, its encouragement of student groups, and activities such as recycling, composting, and funding of student initiatives,

Therefore be it resolved that:

Bishop's University wishes to declare publicly its commitment to help reverse the trends toward environmental destruction and unsustainability, by becoming a champion for sustainable development and a leader and exemplar in moving all aspects of its campus operations toward sustainable development, encouraging society at large to move toward sustainable development, and encouraging the advancement of sustainable development through its teaching and scholarship; and

The Executive Committee of Bishop's University hereby authorizes its Principal, Mr. Michael Goldbloom, to sign on to the Talloires Declaration on behalf of Bishop's University; and further

The Executive Committee of Bishop's University encourages the SDLU and the University Senate to lead Bishop's University in its efforts to be faithful to, and to implement, the vision of the Talloires Declaration.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Hugh Scott, chair

Sustainable Development and Land Use Committee of Bishop's University

http://www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires.html