

April 8, 2013

To: The Board of Governors of McGill University

CC: The Committee to Advise on Matters of Social Responsibility of McGill University

Dear Members of the Board of Governors,

The PSA represents 350+ undergraduate students registered in Philosophy programs at McGill University. The PSA's role is to advocate for the concerns of its members and to represent their interests to the University at large. We also strive to enhance the educational, cultural, environmental, and social conditions of our members by organizing events relevant to their field of study and their interests.

At our bi-annual General Assembly, members of our Association voted in support of a motion to petition McGill University to divest its holdings in companies engaged in the Canadian Tar Sands or fossil fuel production, and from companies engaged in lobbying for or directly involved in the large-scale development of Northern Quebec, to the express dissent of First Nations communities living in these areas. We stand strong with First Nations communities and believe that no development that risks to negatively impact their un-ceded lands and *to which they do not consent* should be allowed to move forwards. The voices of First Nations communities must be heard on equal footing when discussing development projects which are certain to damage the integrity of their un-ceded lands.

Furthermore, resource extraction industries contribute massively to deforestation, the deterioration of habitats, and use large amounts of freshwater to process crude resources, thereby disturbing waterways and surrounding areas. These activities are linked to high levels of pollution in waterways and high emissions of greenhouse gases, which negatively affect local and global ecosystems and climates necessary for the biological and cultural survival of animal and human communities. These environmental impacts have detrimental effects on local and global communities, human and non-human, most of which are irreversible.

The current rate at which these projects are moving in Canada is unsustainable. Large-scale resource extraction and development projects negatively impact the environment and present an attack to the sovereignty of First Nations' communities over their lands. As such, the PSA asks that McGill University divest its holdings in companies engaged in these projects. McGill is considered Canada's finest institution of higher education and prides itself on its

sustainability initiatives. The University should therefore seek to uphold its own standards by beginning to search for alternatives to investing in corporations whose work contributes to environmental and societal destruction. McGill's pledge to divest will send a strong message to the local and international community – continued investment in fossil fuels is no longer morally permissible. In his groundbreaking ecological book, *A Sand County Almanac*, environmental theorist Aldo Leopold wrote powerful and moving words that still resonate with us today. In his words, then, the PSA urges McGill to “cease being intimidated by the argument that a right action is impossible because it does not yield maximum profits, or that a wrong action is to be condoned because it pays.”

We encourage McGill to take responsibility as an internationally recognized university and divest.

Signed,

McGill Philosophy Students' Association