**Divestment:**

**A proposed approach to the issues**

I am very supportive of the student initiative to reexamine the University's investment strategies and explore ways of bringing this into alignment with our institutional commitments to sustainability and to reducing the impact of man-made climate change. However, I do not believe that formation of a new committee is the best way to proceed. The option I am offering is for the Senate to use existing mechanisms to advance the discussion of these issues. My reasons are as follows:

1. **Problems with new committees**.

* In general there is the matter of staffing any committee, standing or *ad hoc*.  The Senate has a long history of preparing a slate of candidates for standing committees: this history demonstrates that it is a challenging task, even when the committee is one with a long history and a well-defined charter. Finding people willing to serve on a new committee of the Senate is unlikely to be any easier and much less for a committee, that as some EC members remarked, should have a broad representation, including those that may be adversely affected by the actions being taken.
* In a case like this, we are not looking at a standing committee. Therefore, we would be proposing the creation of an *ad hoc* committee or a task force.
* While such groups can be effective, in order to be effective, it is essential that the committee be formed by and report to the agency that actually has the power to effect change. In this case, that would have to be the President of the University.
* At most, the Senate can ask that such a committee formed. While the President might ask for the Senate's help in populating the committee's membership, the ultimate decisions on this, and on the manner in which the agenda is pursed will not be in our hands.

1. **Senate oversight.**

* If we want the Senate to have a role in ensuring a meaningful discussion of the issues, and in providing some assurance that the substance of this discussion reaches the highest levels of the administration, our best option is to use an existing Senate committee.  As a Senate committee, we can help set the agenda, and through reports to the Senate, we can follow the progress and offer suggestions to the committee on how to keep moving forward.
* The only missing piece is getting the information to the appropriate level of university administration. Luckily, we have a committee that is positioned to do just this. The newly constituted Senate Advisory Committee for University Strategic Planning (SACUSP) is perfectly positioned to do this. It was developed in consultation with the president, and is constituted in a way that will give it direct access to the president. At the same time, it is a senate committee, so we can help set its agenda, and request progress reports on the issue of divestment. By design this committee has very brood representation and as any Senate committee has the power to ask for additional faculty and student representation when additional expertise may be needed.