

# Taking Action on Climate Change

## 2015 Vestry Motion - Background

The fifth Mark of Mission and the Baptismal Covenant call us to “strive to safeguard the integrity of creation” and “sustain and renew the life of the earth” Scientific consensus holds that more than 2°C of average global warming above the pre-industrial level would constitute a dangerous level of climate change. The science indicates that to avoid exceeding the 2°C limit, industrialized countries need to reduce their combined emissions of greenhouse gases to 25-40% below the 1990 level by 2020. This is the only way we can avoid the environmental and social catastrophe already beginning to be created by climate change.

While climate change impacts the whole of the earth, its effects are particularly acute for communities and individuals who are already marginalized, making it an issue of both ecological and social justice.

- Indigenous communities in Canada, particularly in northern regions, are witnessing the loss of generations of traditional knowledge as their territories experience unpredictable weather patterns and changes to vegetation and animal habitat as a result of warming temperatures. In addition, First Nations are experiencing the erosion of their sovereignty in favour of rapid resource and infrastructure development.
- People living in poverty or experiencing homelessness in our communities are disproportionately impacted by extreme weather events due to inadequate shelter and social infrastructure to keep them safe, dry, and warm (or cool).
- Many poorer countries are already experiencing the financial and social demands of addressing the needs of “climate refugees” and migrants who have been forced to relocate from areas experiencing dramatic climate change resulting in massive displacement, loss of agricultural land, and increased pressure on humanitarian relief programs.

If left unchecked, climate change will continue to exacerbate these concerns as the global human family experiences increasing water shortages, soil depletion, extreme and unpredictable weather events, declining biodiversity, and acidification of our oceans.

In 2010 General Synod resolved to encourage Anglican dioceses and parishes to take action on climate change in a variety of ways. And in his charge to Synod in 2011 Archbishop Johnson reminded us that “Our environment is not incidental, it’s not a side-bar, our environment is the very place [where] God’s saving work is done.” Confronting the impact of climate change and working to meet the necessary emissions reductions in Canada requires concerted effort at the personal, local, provincial, and federal level. Necessary changes can be made in our practices and choices at home and in our parishes, however significant action to address this crisis also requires policy leadership from all levels of government.

**Share the Good News!** Knowing that others are working alongside us in our pursuit of positive social and environmental change helps us all to recognize that we are part of a wider movement. Consider sharing the results of your vestry motion with your wider community, other Anglican parishes, and through your ecumenical and interfaith relationships. **Please also let Ryan Weston, Social Justice and Advocacy Consultant at the Diocese of Toronto, know the decisions made by your vestry regarding this motion so that we can track and promote the efforts of Anglicans across the Diocese of Toronto to take action on climate change.** Ryan can be reached by email at [rweston@toronto.anglican.ca](mailto:rweston@toronto.anglican.ca) or by phone at 416-363-6021 ext. 240.

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## 2015 Vestry Motion

This year's vestry motion asks your parish to make a commitment to take some local action to address climate change *and* to call on the provincial or federal government to implement effective policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat ongoing climate change. The motion is below, along with suggestions of possible actions for both the parish level and the policy level. **Feel free to choose one (or more!) of these possible actions, or to come up with your own actions out of your local context.**

**We, the vestry of \_\_\_\_\_ [name of parish], commit our parish to \_\_\_\_\_ and we call on the government of Canada [and/or Ontario] to \_\_\_\_\_ in order to address the impact of climate change.**

### Suggestions for Possible Action

#### **We commit our parish to...**

- ☐ Carry out a program of study regarding the impacts of climate change, with the intention to prepare a motion for action to Synod in 2015

#### **And/or**

- ☐ Research and pursue options to reduce our parish carbon footprint over the next year, with a report on results to the 2016 vestry (Options may include: a green audit of parish buildings; developing active/green transportation strategies for parishioners; or a commitment for parishioners to make changes in their homes)

#### **And/or**

- ☐ Develop and implement an active public education program for our wider community highlighting the impacts (local, national, and international) of climate change and providing concrete steps to action

#### **We call on the government to...**

- ☐ Establish firm targets for reduced carbon emissions at a minimum of 25% below 1990 levels by 2020, with a clear plan for implementation

#### **And/or**

- ☐ Introduce a tax on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from both individuals and corporations, structured similarly to those implemented by British Columbia and Quebec, starting at \$50/tonne of GHG emitted, and gradually rising

#### **And/or**

- ☐ Respect the sovereignty of First Nations in Canada, allowing communities to set their own conditions for resource extraction and transportation on their lands, including their right to resist the imposition of oil pipeline infrastructure



**Diocese of Toronto**  
Anglican Church of Canada