

Vestry Motion 2020 – Taking Action on Climate Change

We, the vestry of __ (parish) __ in the Diocese of Toronto, recognize that there is a global climate emergency. We acknowledge that all sectors of society, including government, business, churches and other non-profit organizations, and private individuals, have an obligation to do what they can to minimize their contribution to climate change.

We call on the government of Canada to commit to the following:

- End public financing of the fossil fuel industry
- Bring Canada's climate and energy policy into alignment with the Paris Accord emissions targets to do our part to limit the rise in global average temperatures below 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Support a just transition to a low-carbon economy through investment in renewable energy sources and infrastructure, energy-efficient technologies, and skills development and retraining for high-quality, sustainable jobs in the renewable energy sector.
- Assist Indigenous, northern, and coastal communities, and other vulnerable populations, to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change on their local environments.

As Christians, we have a particular obligation to care for the earth as God's beloved creation (Genesis 1 26-28, 2:15), as well as for the most vulnerable among the human family (Matthew 25). Accordingly, we also commit our parish to the following goal(s): _____

Some examples of possible parish goals:

- Reducing our parish energy use by __ %
- Encouraging use of active and public transportation by parishioners, and carpooling where these options are not practicable.
- Eliminating (or reducing by __%) our use of single-use plastic products
- Divesting from investments in oil, gas, and coal and/or investing in renewable energy projects
- Planting [x number of trees] this year [on church or private property, or participating in community tree-planting projects]
- Other: _____

Backgrounder - Taking Action on Climate Change

Climate change is already disrupting life on Earth as we know it. Average global temperatures have already increased 1 degree Celsius over pre-industrial levels, bringing about melting glaciers and polar ice caps, rising seas, deadly heatwaves, and more intense storms. Canada is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world, and the Arctic region, three times as fast, with permafrost thawing 70 years ahead of projections¹. Even in southern Canada, climate change impacts such as more intense storms, flooding, greater occurrence and severity of wildfires, and hotter, dryer summers, have become the new normal.² Ocean levels are rising, and oceans are getting warmer and more acidic, resulting in the decimation of fisheries stocks and threatening “100-year floods” on an annual basis.³ Lakes, too, are warming, with Lake Superior one of the fastest-warming lakes in the world.⁴ Seasonal shifts disrupt wildlife breeding and migration, and insect pests that used to be controlled by long, cold winters are increasing their range and activity, leading to impacts on forests, agricultural crops, and the spread of disease.

The human costs of climate change affect low-income people most, as they have fewer resources to protect themselves or recover from a disaster, but the costs are borne by all of us. The July 2013 storm that caused flash flooding across the GTA resulted in \$850 million in property damages, making it the costliest natural disaster in provincial history⁵.

If we were able to maintain global temperatures at this level, it would be challenge enough. But we are on track for much more devastating impacts. In October of 2018, the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued a report warning that “Climate-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are projected to increase with global warming of 1.5 C and increase further with 2 C.” Furthermore, the report cautions that “limiting global warming to 1.5 C ... require[s] rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure, and industrial systems... [and] can only be achieved if global CO₂ emissions start to decline well before 2030.”⁶ This leaves us only a decade to bring about the transitions we need. The time to act is now.

The Canadian House of Commons and over 50 municipalities in Canada, including at least 8 within our Diocese (as of October 15, 2019) have joined over a thousand jurisdictions worldwide in declaring a climate emergency. This past July, General Synod passed Resolution C003 recognizing a global climate emergency, encouraging dioceses, parishes and all members of the Anglican Church of Canada to make the Baptismal Covenant and fifth Mark of Mission a priority, and urging Anglicans to collaborate with other Canadian faith communities to strengthen our voices on climate change. This past September, millions of people worldwide joined student-led protests calling for climate action.

Addressing climate change will take commitment from every sector of our society: governments, businesses, churches and other faith and community organizations, and individuals. Let us encourage our governments and each other to take up the challenge.

¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/arctic-permafrost-thawing-early-1.5179760>

² https://changingclimate.ca/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/04/CCCR_FULLREPORT-EN-FINAL.pdf

³ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/3/2019/09/SROCC_SPM_HeadlineStatements.pdf

⁴ https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/lake-superior-fast-warming-1.5277713?fbclid=IwAR0qml9axTf47Ud5T3_X1VAJI7OIEYRCOz4RgFCPC9Pa8fv5TnhXf1YNVoM

⁵ https://www.thestar.com/business/2013/08/14/july_flood_ontarios_most_costly_natural_disaster.html

⁶ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Headline-statements.pdf