

## Appendix IV – PROPOSAL

**Proposal to: Prairie to Pine Regional Council**

**Proposal Name: Faith Communities to Divest from Fossil Fuels**

**Date: April 28, 2023**

**From: Rev. Lynda Trono, Rev. Jeri Bjornson, and Diane Dwarka  
(Members of the Prairie to Pine Regional Council)**

### **1. What is the issue?**

We are in a climate crisis. This crisis is a tangled web, part of a global system that has many moving parts and is hard to untangle. It is a system that is destroying our planet. Future generations are at risk. One key part of the problem is that banking institutions worldwide continue to fund fossil fuel expansion. This includes Tar Sands, Mountain Top Removal, Fracking, Deepwater Drilling, Liquefied Natural Gas, and Coal Mining.

The five major Canadian Banks (RBC, TD, Scotiabank, BMO, and CIBC) are heavily invested in the Alberta Tar Sands, the Coastal GasLink Pipeline, the TransMountain Pipeline Expansion, and the doubling of Line 3 that goes through Manitoba and into the United States at Gretna. These projects have been executed without the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous peoples of those areas.

Between 2016 and 2021, Canadian banks have funneled an alarming CA \$911 billion into coal, oil, gas, and tar sands. To put this number in perspective, between 2016 and 2020, the federal government invested \$60 billion in climate action and clean growth. Recent reports name RBC as the number one funder of fossil fuel extraction in the world. It is evident that banks are not going to decrease their funding without pressure from outside.

Scientists, world leaders, religious leaders, and Indigenous peoples around the world are calling for a drastic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions if we are to have any hope of survival. Government, business, and financial institutions have been slow to respond.

Time is running out. We must act now.

### **2. Why is this issue important?**

In the United Church Creed we are called to live with respect in Creation. Our love for Creation and our compassion for future generations demand that we come together to connect, grow, listen, inspire hope, and affect change.

The United Church of Canada, in its local communities of faith and its regional and national expressions, is entrusted with considerable financial resources. As stewards of the resources entrusted to us, we seek to be faithful to each other, to all our relations, and, indeed, to the earth itself. As investment bodies within The United Church of Canada nationally, regionally, and locally, we seek to invest responsibly and faithfully, mindful of the impact of our choices upon One Earth.

The integrity of our theological commitments to care and live in respectful relationship with creation requires bold, daring, and public action. We are called to collaborate deeply with Indigenous peoples, global partners, the ecumenical community, civil society, and governments in change strategies. We are invited to robustly reflect Indigenous self-determination, renewed eco-spirituality, youth engagement, and sustained advocacy.

For many years now The United Church of Canada has been advocating for government to regulate industry in order to lower greenhouse gas emissions. We have been involved ecumenically in numerous initiatives to address the climate crisis, most recently with Kairos's For the Love of Creation

Through *Faithful Footprints* the United Church has been successful in offering congregations, United Church camps, education centres, and community ministries, opportunities to improve their buildings' energy and carbon performance and dramatically reduce our carbon footprint.

The current climate catastrophe calls us to build on the work that we have already undertaken and more intentionally engage all levels of our church. In 2015 General Council 42 approved a carbon emissions goal consistent with the Paris Agreement and took bold investor action, divesting \$3.5 million. Today, we hold \$15 million in green transition/SDG funds. The Treasury Fund and Pension Plan are committed to multiple carbon reduction commitments.

The 44th General Council committed itself to "intensify our historic commitment to climate justice through stronger denominational advocacy and investor action. The climate catastrophe requires a bold, daring whole church commitment with an expedited timeline and strengthened effort. "

It is time for the whole church, nationwide, at all levels to engage our financial institutions on this issue.

### **3. How might the Regional Council respond to the issue?**

#### **A. The Regional Council will**

1. Familiarize themselves with The United Church of Canada's statements, policies, and actions regarding Climate Justice including the recently published [Committed to Climate Action: The 2021-2022 Sustainability Report | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](#).
2. Review their investment policies, investments, and the practices of its financial institutions using the United Church in Canada's "Responsible Investing Guiding Principles" with a particular focus on climate justice.
3. Review investment and banking policies to ensure that they encourage the transition from a carbon economy toward becoming leaders in a green economy.
4. Communicate with its financial institutions with regard to any policies and practices that fall short of a transition to a green economy particularly continuing investments in fossil fuel expansion projects.
5. Consider other actions such as switching to a more climate-conscious institution, divesting from less ethical investments, and transferring investments to ethical funds.

6. Make this a Region Wide initiative by challenging Communities of Faith and individual members and adherents to commit themselves to these recommendations.
- B. Initiate and promote a Network within the Region to study [Committed to Climate Action: The 2021-2022 Sustainability Report | The United Church of Canada \(united-church.ca\)](#) and study and act on recommendations found in the 44<sup>th</sup> General Council proposal GS08 Climate Justice Commitment (2).pdf ).

#### **4. What will be the impact? (Staff time and budget)**

We envision a small information package going out to each faith community primarily by email. It will include The United Church of Canada Responsible Investing Guiding Principles, a letter from the Regional Council explaining the requested action, and a brief primer on how banks are contributing to the climate crisis. The information on banks will be put together by an ad hoc group that has been working on this issue over the past year.

Staff time will be needed for consultation, the writing of a letter, coordinating and sending out a package to faith communities.

Faith communities will be impacted as well by taking on the task of looking closely at their congregational investments and communicating with their financial institutions.

#### **5. How does this proposal help us live into the commitments on equity?**

Communities that face the most discrimination due to race, class, age, and gender and orientation are already most impacted by the climate crisis. Those with less resources have less ability to recover from each climate disaster that takes place. When we work for climate justice we are living into all of our commitments on equity.

#### **6. For the body transmitting this proposal to the Regional Council:**

**Are there comments, affirmations, or suggestions you would like to make with respect to this proposal?**

The Earth is counting on you!

