

Proposal: Faith Communities to Divest from Fossil Fuels, Prairie to Pine Regional Council

Passed on 3 June 2023 by the meeting of the Regional Council.

Action:

Instruct the Regional Council Executive to

1. Review the Regional Council's 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 and encouraging the transition from a carbon economy toward becoming leaders in a green economy.

2. Create an educational process to assist communities of faith and other ministries, their membership and supporters to:

Communicate with their 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.

Consider other actions such as switching to a more climate-conscious institution, divesting from less ethical investments, and transferring investments to ethical funds.

3. Support and promote a Network within the Regional Council to:

assist its membership in living out the above commitments;

study [Committed to Climate Action: The 2021-2022 Sustainability Report, The United Church of Canada](#)

study and act on recommendations found in the 44th General Council proposal GS08: Climate Justice Commitment, found at <https://commons.united-church.ca> > Governance > General Council > GC44 >

3. Proposals > Theme - Deepen Integrity

Original background:

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.

(Proposal then continues with the action proposal presented with amendments included at the beginning of this document.)