

Summary of University Declarations of Climate Emergency

(as of August 2020)

National and local governments around the world are declaring a climate emergency, and in doing so, acknowledge that much more action is needed to slow anthropogenic climate change. In 2019, as many as 17 countries and the European Parliament declared a climate emergency, including the Canadian House of Commons. As of August 2020, over 1700 national and local jurisdictions in 30 countries have made climate emergency declarations, including 504 in Canada (Climate Emergency Declaration, 2020).

More recently, hundreds of universities around the world have recognized the need to both support broad climate action and commit their institutions to concrete carbon reduction or carbon neutrality commitments. Universities are recognizing the importance of showing leadership on combatting climate change (or at least being part of the movement) in order to maintain credibility with a generation of students who demand it, and growing segments of the public who support strong action.

A global scan conducted by the Interdisciplinary Centre on Climate Change at the University of Waterloo indicated that, while no comprehensive list exists of all universities that have issued declarations, a growing alliance of roughly 260 higher education institutions have signed the [SDG Accord](#), including 15 Canadian universities and colleges. The SDG Accord includes a declaration of a climate emergency and commits the signatories to the following three actions:

1. Mobilizing more resources for action-oriented climate change research and skills creation;
2. Committing to going carbon neutral by 2030 or 2050 at the very latest;
3. Increasing the delivery of environmental and sustainability education across curriculum, campus and community outreach programmes.

In addition to the 15 Canadian institutions that have signed the SDG Accord, the University of British Columbia (UBC) declared a climate emergency in December 2019. UBC is recognized as a national and international leader in climate action, and currently holds the top spot in the Times Higher Education global SDG impact ranking on Climate Action (UWaterloo ranked 88th globally in the 2020 ranking, slipping from 5th in 2019).

SDG Accord Institutional Signatories	
Canada	15
US	35
Asia and Middle East	26
Europe	124
Central and South America	45
Africa	12
Australia	2

Institution	Carbon Neutral Target
Université de Sherbrooke	2030
Université du Québec à Montréal	2040
École de Technologie Supérieure	TBC
Bishop's University	2050
HEC Montréal	2040
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	2050
Université Laval	Carbon neutral
Concordia University	2050
Cegep de Sherbrooke	TBC
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	2050
Polytechnique Montreal	2050
Selkirk College	2030
Université de Montréal	2040
Vanier College	TBC
University of Toronto	2030
University of British Columbia*	2050

*Not a signatory to SDG Accord

Many other Canadian universities have active campaigns underway by faculty and students to push their institutions to make similar declarations. This is also the case in the United States where many of the top climate change research universities have not yet taken this step. Much of this pressure was in the lead-up to the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP 25) in December 2019, and carried forward into early 2020. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many of these campaigns being sidelined. While significant pressure still exists in many of these institutions to do so, it's not clear if or when declarations will be endorsed.

Draft FAUW Climate Emergency Declaration

Submitted to FAUW by the Climate Justice Working Group, November 10, 2020

The Faculty Association of the University of Waterloo (FAUW) joins other academic institutions around the world in declaring a Climate Emergency. With this declaration, FAUW recognizes that:

- The global threats posed by the changing climate, and the impacts already being felt around the world, are severe and increasing. Climate breakdown is posing an extensive and increasing threat to peoples' lives, livelihoods and wellbeing, including impacts such as increased extreme weather events, migration, mass extinction, food and water security, flooding, and extensive impacts to human health.
- Those who are least responsible for the climate crisis suffer most from its consequences, particularly People of Colour, Indigenous people, and people of low income or those living in poverty, especially people in the Global South. Moreover, the climate crisis aggravates existing social, economic, and other inequities, posing additional hardships for women, elderly people, disabled people, and people living with illnesses.
- As a public institution, the University of Waterloo is known as a climate change leader and has begun to taking action, such as through the University's roadmap to carbon neutrality, and supporting leading research through the Interdisciplinary Centre on Climate Change (IC3), pioneering training of climate change professionals through Canada's first Master of Climate Change program, along with other programs and activities.
- Strong support for climate justice and for bolder climate action has been demonstrated throughout the University community by students, faculty and staff.
- Drastic societal change is needed to confront the climate emergency. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, immediately and significantly reducing fossil fuel use and transitioning to low carbon energy.
- As the faculty association of an institution of higher education and world-leading research, we recognize the strong leadership role faculty members play in our community for climate action. In representing educators of students who will bear the burden of climate breakdown, we acknowledge we have a role to play in turning our attention to the climate crisis and its equity consequences.
- In undertaking this role, we must avoid reproducing colonization, dispossession, and inequality. Importantly, meaningful climate action must build on the support of the community and on respect of Indigenous Peoples' human rights.

In declaring a climate emergency, FAUW is committing to act as a leader in the university community, including through our own operations, as well as through supporting our members in research, teaching, and service directed to augmenting climate leadership. FAUW commits to accelerate its ambition on climate action by:

- Applying a lens of climate justice in all FAUW policies, plans, and operations.
- Committing to achieve carbon neutrality in FAUW activities by 2050, for instance by tackling emissions from business travel and food.
- Reporting on progress toward carbon neutrality in a way that is easily accessible, transparent, and accountable to members.
- Raising awareness about the climate emergency and climate justice among its membership.

- Divesting FAUW investments from fossil fuels and fossil fuel infrastructure and reinvesting for a climate-safe future.
- Supporting faculty where possible in their action-oriented climate change research and service, across the campus and in the broader community, and in enhancing their teaching capacity on climate crisis and climate justice issues.