



BRITISH COLUMBIA CONFERENCE

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA L'ÉGLISE UNIE DU CANADA

August 12, 2015

Government of British Columbia
Climate Leadership Group
By email to: climateleadershipplan@gov.bc.ca

Re: Government of British Columbia's Climate Leadership Plan

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing you at the behest of the Justice Advisory Circle of the BC Conference of The United Church of Canada, to add our comments to the Climate Leadership Plan in response to your request for engagement. I wish to open by congratulating the government for recognizing that climate change is happening and is an issue of grave concern to all that inhabit our province. Going further, I wish to acknowledge the steps already taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to applaud the commitment to reduce them further. Our church has some concerns that will be detailed below, but we also wish to thank you for what you have done and for your commitments to do more.

While we note the matters responded to in the discussion paper are based in economic and social planning areas, our church, together with other churches in Canada and around the world, feels this issue has profound ethical and moral dimensions. Climate change (as your paper confirms) is being caused largely by polluting emissions from richer, over-developed countries but the consequences will be suffered disproportionately by poorer developing nations, poorer communities and persons within all nations, vulnerable ecosystems, and future generations.¹

Members of our church have also affirmed that "the search for justice for God's creatures and healing for God's creation (is) the church's first priority..."

*Life in the "whole inhabited earth" (oikoumene) is life in relationship. We are bound up with one another and with the world of nature—not just our kinfolk, or our kind.*²

Climate change demands moral and political leadership, it requires transformation of our economy and our lives. Governments alone (again, pointed out in your paper) cannot bring about the changes necessary. We must all adopt unforeseen and even challenging new practices. As acknowledged in your report, government can and must remove regulatory barriers to change and provide supports for persons affected by change. We would go further, however, in urging government to stop subsidizing and supporting industries and practices known to

¹ (from UCC website: <http://united-church.ca/ecology/climate>)

² (Mending the World: an Ecumenical Vision for Healing and Reconciliation. <http://www.united-church.ca/files/partners/relations/mending.pdf>)

cause further damage, while co-creating the institutional framework that will encourage all of us to build and adopt innovative solutions.

In previous communications with the Premier, we have sounded a strong note of caution with respect to the continued and expanded reliance our province is placing on hydrocarbon resource extraction and transportation. This will have the effect of creating new emissions issues (fracking is a known source of methane emissions – not to mention water table concerns) locally and abroad and may, in fact, delay the world shift to renewables that is encouraged by the scarcity of cheap carbon. A carbon based economy is an economy that compounds our climate change burden.

Our members are also concerned with further large scale hydro projects, particularly from the perspective of lost northern farmland in a time of southern drought, and the loss of forested land as a 'carbon sink'. We urge you, instead, to develop our province as a design and program leader in the reduction of carbon reliance and the rapid introduction of renewable energy sources. Doing otherwise simply negates the entire thrust and intent of the government's Climate Leadership Plan.

We are also concerned about the timing of the plan. The overwhelming weight of scientific evidence confirms that 2050 will simply be too late. We must act sooner. Our church joins many other religious organizations in urging rapid and meaningful action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as a matter of faith, conscience and common-sense response to the calls of climate scientists.

In general terms, as steps towards a more complete and immediate plan, we affirm the principles and goals outlined in the Climate Leadership Plan Discussion Paper. We encourage broad-based increases in the carbon tax, so long as the funds secured are invested in incentives for low-carbon economic innovation, and in direct supports to those who are most impacted, and least able to adapt to the broad transformations required. We note, for instance, with interest and enthusiasm the commitment to expanded mass transit and more sensibly planned communities in the discussion paper as an example of a thoughtful and appropriate response. The poor among us will also need our full attention and economic support. We are sure you will receive many more suggestions.

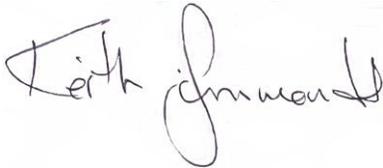
For our part, we call on the government of British Columbia to add to and strengthen its commitments:

- Demonstrate Leadership by increasing emission reduction targets and ensuring that they apply across the board to all economic sectors;
- Demonstrate Fairness by acknowledging and addressing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups in the province – particularly First Nations dependent on sensitive ecosystems and children and seniors living in poverty.
- Demonstrate Ecological Stewardship by strengthening environmental protection and limiting ecological damage caused by industrial development, so that B.C. can continue to benefit from the abundance of our province far into the future.
- Demonstrate Responsibility by investing in science and natural resource data so that policy and management decisions are based on evidence.

- Demonstrate Economic Stewardship by encouraging sustainable communities that foster public and private investments in innovative low-carbon economic development and climate resilience.
- Demonstrate Responsible Management by building climate resilience into the planning and management of provincial government service delivery.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasize our thanksgiving for your open and willing stance on the topic of Climate Change. As you have noted, this is a matter of grave concern and import for all of us; for every creature in this province and on this earth. It is the economic, moral and ethical issue of our time and we shall all be held accountable for our actions in respect of it. No matter what our belief system, no matter what our faith, we know the children who come after us and the creatures that rely on the earth we share will demand from us an accounting. What did we do, where did we stand, how did we respond? Let us hope and pray we will have the beginnings of a healthy world and a clean environment to show them.

Yours in peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Simmonds". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "K".

Keith Simmonds
President
BC Conference, The United Church of Canada