

Global Climate Strike March 15, 2019 – Sackville New Brunswick

To the policy makers of our schools, our community, this province, and this country,

Our planet is on the precipice of an unprecedented crisis. According to a recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the time left for us to find a way to limit global warming to 1.5° C, our best possible chance for preserving a livable future for all, is terrifyingly short. The report states that, if global emissions of carbon dioxide are not reduced by at least 45% by 2030, reaching net zero by 2050, the climate catastrophe in which we now find ourselves will have passed the point of no-return [1]. A 1.5° C rise in global average temperature will fundamentally alter this planet, making life harder for generations to come; any warming greater than that, however, will cause unimaginable devastation and seriously jeopardize, if not entirely eliminate, our species' ability to survive on the Earth. Faced with this timeline and the threat it poses to billions of human lives, young people across the globe have become stunned and outraged at the apathetic and complacent response on the part of our policy-makers; our future is at stake, yet our governments have almost uniformly failed to act meaningfully in response to this impending disaster. We cannot state our desperation in strong enough terms: our species is facing extinction. Our chances at a survivable future are vanishing with each passing day. It is for this reason that, across the planet, students of all ages are rising up and saying: "enough"; why should we sit passively in our schools, as the single greatest threat to human existence grows in seriousness with each moment we remain silent? If the future we are told to prepare for is one that we may be denied through the inaction of our leaders?

Today, on March 15th 2019, students from Salem Elementary School, Marshview Middle School, Tantram Regional High School, and Mount Allison University gather at Sackville Town Hall to raise our voices in unison and solidarity, and to demand change from policy-makers at every level of administration and government. We choose to disrupt our educations today in recognition of the disruption of our lives that will inevitably occur if we remain complacent. We as young people are rising up now because it is us who will be forced to live or die in the world that we build today. We have wasted too much time already, waiting for action that never came. We still have the chance to preserve this world for the young people of today and of tomorrow, but we need to act with courage immediately to fundamentally change the ways in which we conduct our lives in this town, in this province, in this country, and on this Earth.

We call upon the Town of Sackville to take action, to preserve our futures. In recognition of the seriousness of the position in which we now find ourselves - particularly as a town vulnerable to rising sea-levels, it is time to declare a Climate Emergency. Doing this will emphasize the urgent need to prioritize climate action in Sackville on the part of all members of our community, including and especially, our Mayor and Town Council. Additionally, in light of the release of the IPCC report in 2018, we call upon the Town of Sackville to review, reevaluate and update their 2010 "Sustainable Sackville" plan[2], and direct the resources necessary to ensure that both current and new goals will be met.

We call upon the Government of New Brunswick to take action, to preserve our futures. Many young people are unaware of the consequences of climate change will have on them. From extreme temperatures, to the decline of healthy forests, to the contamination of water, it is crucial that these facts be explained and taught to students, who will only then be able to fully understand and deal with this crisis. Consequently, we call upon New Brunswick's Minister of Education to modify school curricula to include education on climate science and climate change that reflects the reality of the situation, and that these new curricula be appropriately and regularly reviewed and updated to keep relevant to the changing contexts and conditions of the climate crisis. The changes

we need will only occur if our young people are informed about what has happened, what is happening, and what we can do to build a sustainable and livable tomorrow. Additionally, we call upon the Government of New Brunswick to cease their resistance of carbon-pricing programs and enact this necessary step in meeting our targets for emissions reduction. We also call upon the Government of New Brunswick to halt all fracking projects taking place or being considered in this province, and stand by a moratorium on fracking.

As Mount Allison students, we demand that our university take action, to preserve our futures. We call on you as an institution to take a stand on the climate crisis by divesting our endowment of the top 200 publicly-traded fossil fuel companies. We think that Mount Allison University must take a stand in solidarity with people and the planet by enacting institutional change. We also ask that MTA work to further “indigenize” our classrooms by incorporating Indigenous knowledge into course material. This will not only strengthen Settler/Indigenous relations, but it will also provide students and faculty the opportunity to deepen our knowledge on sustainable ways of life that are embedded in Indigenous worldviews.

Finally, we call upon the Federal Government of Canada to take action, to preserve our futures. This government was elected on a promise of climate leadership, and we demand they make good on that promise. The Canadian Government must work to implement bold and innovative new climate policy that recognizes and responds to the seriousness of the climate crisis actively, as the Green New Deal seeks to do in the United States of America [3]. Such a policy must include: 1) a recognition of the sovereign rights of Canada’s First Nations over their land and governance, and the need for explicit, prior and informed consent before undertaking any projects within their territory, 2) a commitment to avoid investing in or permitting new fossil fuel projects, 3) a plan to transition to a 100% renewable energy economy, 4) a plan to drastically reduce carbon emissions in accordance with our stated commitments in the Paris Climate Accords, with the goal of reaching net zero emissions as soon as possible, 5) a commitment to ensuring safe work for all in a renewable-energy economy, and 6) a commitment to upholding and advocating for the rights of migrants, many of whom will be forced to leave their places of origin due to the damage we have already caused to our planet. The development and implementation of such a plan will no doubt be politically, economically and culturally challenging for this country and its government, but it is entirely within our capabilities, and is essential to ensuring a just and livable future for all.

While the work and changes that we are calling for may seem extreme, we must remember that the state of our planet, our climate and our species is equally extreme. Only a bold, innovative and trailblazing effort now can avert a climate catastrophe of unprecedented proportions from taking place in our lifetimes. We students are relying on our policy-makers and elected representatives to be courageous and work with us, not against us, to produce the kinds of changes we need to protect and preserve the Earth. It is the only Home any of us have.

Respectfully,

Youth of Sackville representing Salem Elementary School, Marshview Middle School, Tantramar Regional High School, and Mount Allison University

[1] "Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C Approved by Governments," Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, October 8, 2018, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>.

[2] "Measuring the Success of Our Sustainable Sackville Plan," Town of Sackville, December 13, 2016, <https://sackville.com/2016/12/measuring-success-sustainable-sackville-plan/e.com/2016/12/measuring-success-sustainable-sackville-plan/>.

[3] Greg Carlock and Emily Mangan, "A Green New Deal," Data For Progress, September 2018, <https://www.dataforprogress.org/green-new-deal#greenprint>.