

Parish Action Kit on Climate Change



Photo credit: Ken Gray

The Outreach Group of the St. Philip's Church in Milford, Prince Edward County decided to organize a '350' letter writing campaign in support of Canada taking a strong stand at the Copenhagen conference in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

They have contacted the diocese and obtained support in spreading news of the kit through the diocesan web site [<http://ontario.anglican.ca>] , and are proceeding with a letter in the diocesan paper – The Dialogue.

The package they prepared is meant to give 'ordinary Canadians' a voice in the deliberations.

They then asked if there is a way this campaign could be widened across the national church.

So here is your parish action kit for a letter writing campaign.

What's in it?

An explanatory cover letter

A sample letter to Minister Jim Prentice, Minister of the Environment

Additional information sheets on the "350 Campaign" and the goals for the Copenhagen Conference

Letter Campaign for United Nations Climate Change Conference

Dear Friends:

In December, 2009 representatives from all nations of the world, including Canada, will gather in Copenhagen for the United Nations Climate Change Conference. A major objective of this conference will be to negotiate a follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol. As a citizen of this small planet, you have an important stake in these discussions.

If you are concerned about the fate of the Earth we have inherited and the ability of future generations to survive, you now have the opportunity to do something about it. This package has been prepared to inform and guide you to make your voice heard. We invite you to sign and send the attached letter to Canada's representative to the conference. Share it with others. Modify it if you wish. Together let us demand strong and effective action on the part of Canada.

BACKGROUND:

Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol but since declared it will not meet its commitments; in fact, Canada's greenhouse gas emissions increased by 26% instead of decreasing by 6 %. In the meantime, the dangers from climate change have become actual rather than predicted. Glaciers are melting; sea levels are rising; Canadian permafrost is melting; droughts are occurring in many parts of the world, including Canada.

Climate change, caused by increasing greenhouse gases, has become the defining environmental, economic and social issue of the 21st century. It has now been established that the safe threshold of carbon dioxide concentration (350 parts per million, ppm) has been exceeded, with the current value of 390 ppm and steadily rising. Unless halted through dramatic action, 'runaway' climate change will threaten the well-being, and possibly the survival of our planet.

So far, government response to global warming, worldwide, has been uneven. Greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase in many countries. Governments need to get a clear message that the people they represent want real action that will finally turn the corner. The international 350 movement has been organized to help bring this message to the national governments and to the international conference. This movement consists of many local actions, initiated by groups or individuals. Further information on this campaign can be found at www.350.org and in the attachment provided.

Please send the sample letter as is or modified as you wish, to Mr. Prentice by October 24.

Future generations will thank you for this action!

Sincerely,

St. Philip's Anglican Church Outreach Committee
with the support of the Diocesan Green Group
and the Partnerships department of the Anglican Church of Canada

Contact: Maylanne Maybee - mmaybee[at]national.anglican.ca

Attachments:

1. Sample letter
2. Additional information

Sample letter

The Honourable Jim Prentice
Minister of Environment
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Email: Prentice.J@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Prentice:

I am writing to you as a Canadian concerned about climate change. With regard to the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, I urge you to support decisive measures to halt further increases in greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce them to a safe level.

What was, only a few years ago, seen as one possibility among several has now become an undisputed fact: Climate change is real and is having increasingly serious impacts on the environment and people. More worrisome, its impact is stronger and faster than was predicted even a short time ago. Artic ice is melting much faster than expected, so are the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets. In Canada, we see impacts of changing climate in the melting of permafrost in the North and weather-related events such as floods and droughts in the South. The changes are taking place at an increasing speed and the predictions are repeatedly turning out too optimistic.

It is an undisputed fact that human activities are the primary reason for these changes. The unbridled use of fossil fuels, as our main energy source, is the main culprit causing the steady increase of carbon dioxide concentration in the air. It is now acknowledged that the safe concentration level of 350 parts per million has already been exceeded, and the trend continues unabated. Canada's own emissions continued to increase, in spite of the commitment made under the Kyoto Protocol. Without decisive action, it is now clear that climate change may get out of control, thus wreaking unpredictable havoc with our environment and the lives of present and future Canadians.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen offers one more chance to halt that dangerous trend. Canada must do its part, both at home and internationally, in reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases. This international conference is an excellent opportunity to agree to actions that will stop further growth and then begin reductions of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, before it is too late.

I count on you and the Canadian delegation to the UN Conference to promote immediate, measurable and effective steps towards eliminating the danger of runaway climate change. I support the adoption of a global treaty grounded in the latest science and built around the principles of equity and justice.

Sincerely yours,

Name:

Address (street, city/town):

Postal code:

cc.: Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada; 80 Wellington Street, Ottawa, K1A 0A2; pm@pm.gc.ca

Additional Information

a) Understanding 350 (from www.350.org)

- **So, what is global warming and what's the problem anyway?**

The science is clear: global warming is happening faster than ever and humans are responsible. Global warming is caused by releasing what are called greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The most common greenhouse gas is carbon dioxide. Many of the activities we do every day like turn the lights on, cook food, or heat or cool our homes rely on energy sources like coal and oil that emit carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases. This is a major problem because global warming destabilizes the delicate balance that makes life on this planet possible. Just a few degrees in temperature can completely change the world as we know it, and threaten the lives of millions of people around the world. But don't give up hope! You can help stop global warming by taking action here at 350.org.

- **And what does this 350 number even mean?**

350 is the number that leading scientists say is the safe upper limit for carbon dioxide--measured in "Parts Per Million" in our atmosphere. 350 PPM--it's the number humanity needs to get back to as soon as possible to avoid runaway climate change.

- **If we're already past 350, are we all doomed?**

No. We're like the patient that goes to the doctor and learns he's overweight, or his cholesterol is too high. He doesn't die immediately—but until he changes his lifestyle and gets back down to the safe zone, he's at more risk for heart attack or stroke. The planet is in its danger zone because we've poured too much carbon into the atmosphere, and we're starting to see signs of real trouble: melting ice caps, rapidly spreading drought. We need to scramble back as quickly as we can to safety.

- **How do we create the political change to steer towards 350?**

We need an international agreement to reduce carbon emissions fast, and 2009 might be our best shot. The United Nations is working on a global climate treaty, which is supposed to be completed in December of 2009 at a conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. But the current plans for the treaty are much too weak to get us back to safety. This treaty needs to put a high enough price on carbon that we stop using so much. It also needs to ensure poor countries a fair chance to develop. This year, we can create a grassroots movement connected by the web and active all over the world. We can hold our decision-makers accountable to producing a treaty that is strong, equitable, and grounded in the latest science. On 24 October, we're holding a Global Day of Climate Action to do just this. If this global movement succeeds, we can get the world on track to get back to 350 and back to climate safety. It won't be easy, that's why we need all the help we can get.

- **How do we get the world on track to get to 350?**

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- **How do we actually reduce carbon emissions to get to 350?**

Make no mistake—getting back to 350 means transforming our world. It means building solar arrays instead of coal plants, it means planting trees instead of clear-cutting rainforests, it means increasing efficiency and decreasing our waste. Getting to 350 means developing a thousand different solutions—all of which will become much easier if we have a global treaty grounded in the latest science and built around the principles of equity and justice. To get this kind of treaty, we need a movement of people who care enough about our shared global future to get involved and make their voices heard.

- **Will this thing work? Will world leaders listen?**

Only if we're loud enough. If we can make this number known across the planet, that mere fact will exert some real pressure on negotiators. We need people to understand that 350 marks either success or failure for these climate negotiations. It's not an easy fight—the other side has the power of the fossil fuel industry. But we think the voice of ordinary people will be heard, if it's loud enough. That's all of our job—to make enough noise that we can't be easily ignored.

- **Where did this 350 number come from?**

Dr. James Hansen, of NASA, the United States' space agency, has been researching global warming longer than just about anyone else. He was the first to publicly testify before the U.S. Congress, in June of 1988, that global warming was real. He and his colleagues have used both real-world observation, computer simulation, and mountains of data about ancient climates to calculate what constitutes dangerous quantities of carbon in the atmosphere. The Bush Administration has tried to keep Hansen and his team from speaking publicly, but their analysis has been widely praised by other scientists, and by experts like Nobel Prize winner Al Gore. The full text of James Hansen's paper about 350 can be found at <http://arxiv.org/abs/0804.1126>.

- **Isn't America the biggest source of the problem? What about China and India?**

Yes—America has been producing more CO₂ than any other country, and leads the industrialized world in per capita emissions. Even though China now produces as much CO₂ annually, the US still produces many times more carbon per person than China, India, and most other countries. And America has blocked meaningful international action for many years. That's why many of us at 350.org have worked hard to change U.S. policy—we staged more than 2,000 demonstrations in all 50 states in 2007, and helped spur Congress to pass the first real laws to reduce CO₂. Now we need help from around the world to persuade both the U.S. and the U.N. to continue the process.

China and India and the rest of the developing world need to be involved. But since per capita they use far less energy than the West, and have been doing so for much shorter periods of time, and are using fossil fuels to pull people out of poverty, their involvement needs to be different. The West is going to have to use some tiny percentage of the wealth it built up filling the atmosphere with carbon to transfer technology north to south so that these countries can meet their legitimate development needs without burning all their coal. A great resource for thinking about these questions is the paper prepared by the Greenhouse Rights Network, which can be found at <http://www.ecoequity.org/docs/TheGDRsFramework.pdf>.

- **350 is just a number. Wouldn't "Climate Emergency" or "Clean Energy Now" be a better call to action?**

350 translates into many languages--numerals are among the few things most people around the world recognize. More to the point, 350 tells us what we need to do. Far from boring, it's the most important number in the world. It contains, rightly understood, the recipe for a very different world, one that moves past cheap fossil fuel to more sensible technologies, more closely-knit communities, and a more equitable global society.

- **And what about all the other targets people are aiming for?**

Climate science is a rapidly evolving field. A few years ago, climate campaigners hoped that goals of 450ppm or a 2 degree Celsius rise in temperature might be "safe levels" for the world to shoot for. We wish they were right--it would make the world's job a lot easier. But, the latest data and climate models have convinced scientists that that these other targets are missing the mark, that 350 is the upper boundary for a safe climate. For many people around the world, this comes as no surprise--as the glaciers melt and the forests burn, it's clear that the effects of climate change are being felt right now. The scientific models are only affirming what we see all around us, and the longer we're above 350 the longer we're all in the danger zone. People and organizations all over the world uniting around the 350 goal. In every corner of the planet, we're coming together around a common call to action. And it's working.

The 350 rallying cry is a simple message that can cut through the static, hold our leaders accountable, and motivate our planet to swift and bold action. Take a look at our Messengers page and our Blog for politicians, scientists, and other important supporters getting behind the 350 target.

- **Why October 24th?**

The timing here is crucial--there is a narrow window when we can have the most influence in international climate politics. Too early and we're irrelevant, too late and we've missed our chance to have a real impact. Though the final climate meeting in Copenhagen doesn't take place until December, governments will be finalizing positions before the meeting takes place. Late October may well be our best chance we have before countries set everyone that negotiates for the United Nations climate talks will get their final orders.

With creative actions happening all over the globe, and photographs of those events appearing online, in the media, and on politicians' desks, we will change what these negotiators think they can achieve right before they make the important decisions of the UN treaty. Right now most of them know the science of 350ppm, but they don't think it is politically possible. On October 24, we are going to show them that not only is it possible, but it is

what everyone all over the world is demanding they do.

· Why another organization--there are already too many things going on!

It's true, there are lots of organizations and individuals working hard to solve the climate crisis. This is great news--it means that we don't really need to build a movement from scratch because it's already bubbling up all over the world.

Our hope is that we can shine a spotlight on the work of existing organizations, highlighting everyone's incredible work and knitting these many efforts together for a powerful and unified call to action--a call that is global, scientific, and specific. By providing a common platform with the 350 target, we can help to stitch together a whole that is truly greater than the sum of its parts, a diverse movement that speaks with one collective voice.

b) Some goals/ targets proposed for the UN Conference

a) European Union:

http://www.delcan.ec.europa.eu/en/press_and_information/press_releases/2009/09PR002.shtml

The EU's goal is to limit global warming to less than 2°C above the pre-industrial temperature as there is strong scientific evidence that climate change will become dangerous beyond this point.

The Copenhagen deal should both set global goals to reduce emissions and provide the basis for strengthening countries' ability to adapt to climate change. The Communication (Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen COM(2009)39) offers concrete proposals to reach these goals.

b) World Business Summit on Climate Change- The Copenhagen Call:

<http://www.copenhagencouncil.com/get-informed/news/text-of-the-copenhagen-call.html>

As global business leaders assembled at the World Business Summit on Climate Change, we call upon our political leaders to agree an ambitious and effective global climate treaty at COP15 in Copenhagen. Sustainable economic progress requires stabilizing and then reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Success at COP15 will remove uncertainty, unleash additional investment, and bolster current efforts to revive growth in a sustainable way. Business is at its best when innovating to achieve a goal and the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions is vital to our common social, economic and environmental future. At the Summit we agreed that this will require:

1. Agreement on a science-based greenhouse gas stabilization path with 2020 and 2050 emissions reduction targets.
2. Effective measurement, reporting and verification of emissions.
3. Incentives for a dramatic increase in financing low emissions technologies.
4. Deployment of existing low-emissions technologies and the development of new ones.
5. Funds to make communities more resilient and able to adapt to the effects of climate change.

c) The Climate Petition Seal the Deal!

<http://www.sealthedeal2009.org/petition.asp>

The world urges world leaders to:

- ❖ Seal the Deal at COP 15 on a climate agreement that is definitive, equitable and effective.
- ❖ Set binding targets to cut greenhouses gases by 2020 to avert the climate change threat.
- ❖ Establish a framework that will bolster the climate resilience of vulnerable countries and protect lives and livelihoods.
- ❖ Support developing countries' adaptation efforts.
- ❖ Seize this defining opportunity to protect People and the Planet.
- ❖ Power green growth; launch the green, low carbon economy of tomorrow