

Updates from the WLUFA Climate Action Committee
February 2022

Dear WLUFA,

We're writing this post to update you on some of the [WLUFA Climate Action Committee's](#) activities to date for the 2021-22 academic year. Please don't hesitate to contact us (by emailing Derek Hall at dehall@wlu.ca) if you would like to know more about what we've been up to or would like to get involved!

1. On November 9, 2021, the Laurier administration issued a [press release](#) announcing the approval by the Board of Governors in June 2021 of a strategy to target a 40% reduction in the carbon intensity of Laurier's endowment fund by 2030 and to move towards the establishment of a separate fossil fuel-free endowment fund. The CAC wrote a letter responding to this announcement that was sent to the administration by the WLUFA Executive. In the letter we applauded the steps Laurier is taking towards further incorporating climate change considerations into the university's investment strategy. We also expressed our concern that Laurier's commitments do not do enough to respond to the climate emergency, and noted that those commitments are less ambitious than those made by other Ontario universities. The University of Waterloo, for instance, [has included](#) not just the endowment but the pension fund in its commitments, and has pledged a 50% reduction by 2030 as opposed to Laurier's 40%. The University of Toronto in late October [committed to ending all of its direct investments in fossil fuels](#) within the next 12 months. We stated that Laurier needs to have an open debate involving the whole university community about these new commitments and about the ways in which Laurier could and should do more.

We also wrote in the letter that the welcome commitments Laurier has made this year should be implemented with the input and participation of the broader university community. Decarbonizing the university's investment portfolio will require careful consideration of principles of equity and justice and attentiveness to the possibility of greenwashing (the making of sustainability commitments that do not achieve what they claim and/or do not genuinely contribute to sustainability). It is of the utmost importance that Laurier's approach to decarbonizing its investments be transparent and open to participation from the Laurier community. The CAC plans to participate in the process and to seek to ensure that WLUFA stays informed about it.

2. We have begun working with the Sustainability Office on coordinating Laurier support for and engagement in the [Link the Watershed](#) initiative. LtW is a proposal from transit unions and other groups to connect the transit systems of Brantford, the Region of Waterloo and Guelph. Better public transit in the Grand River watershed has the potential to contribute to improved connections between Laurier's campuses, more accessibility for students, faculty and staff, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions from commuting. A petition in support of LtW can be found [here](#); please do get in touch with us if you would like to help mobilize on behalf of this initiative.

3. Two of us attended a Canada-wide university climate action workshop organized by CAUT on December 9. The workshop was an opportunity to connect with climate activists in other faculty associations across Canada and to learn about approaches to university climate action. Information about the event can be found [here](#).

4. Laurier's 2018-2022 Sustainability Action Plan contained a commitment to develop a Carbon Reduction Roadmap for the university in 2018 and 2019, but as of early February 2022 this document has not been publicly released. We have been working to get the university to release it, and in late 2021 we received a redacted version of the document. We have begun to provide feedback and suggestions on the Carbon Reduction Roadmap to the university.