

Proposal for a WLUFA Climate Action Committee

Rationale for a Climate Action Committee

The global climate crisis is already having and will continue to have profound and long-term implications for the shape of our world. While governments have repeatedly pledged to tackle greenhouse gas emissions and commit to reduction targets, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has asserted that efforts currently fall far short of what is needed to avoid a catastrophic rise in global temperatures. An adequate response to the global climate crisis will require that climate considerations be incorporated into all aspects of our daily lives. It will also require that as a society we recognize and address that climate change is having disproportionate impacts on those among us who are rendered vulnerable due to racism, poverty, colonialism and other forms of marginalization. Climate change is simultaneously an environmental issue and an issue of social justice.

Universities are key sites for teaching, research, debate, collaboration and innovation on climate and climate-related issues. As large institutions, however, they are also important contributors to greenhouse gas emissions—from the energy used to heat and run buildings and other infrastructure, to the extensive air travel involved in research activities. The wider Laurier community has seen significant climate-related activity over the past year, from the completion of a “Climate is Life” mural, to participation in climate strikes, to the passage of departmental resolutions on climate action. A number of university-level initiatives have also begun to encourage climate action. Laurier’s Sustainability Action Plan for 2018-22 aims “to create a culture of sustainability at Laurier and beyond throughout our academics, research, physical operations, outreach and community partnerships to achieve key sustainability goals”. It states that this process will contribute “to the strategic goals of the university”, and identifies “climate action” as one of the Plan’s three core themes. The Plan seeks, for instance, to create a Carbon Reduction Roadmap for Laurier with short-, mid- and long-term greenhouse gas reduction targets, setting an overarching operational goal of reducing Laurier’s greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent (compared to 2009 levels) by 2022. Climate-related research and initiatives also feature prominently in Laurier’s 2017-20 Strategic Mandate Agreement.

Laurier must do much more to reduce its greenhouse gas footprint, inspire new generations to build sustainable and inclusive societies, and to centre considerations of equity and justice in all dimensions of climate action. As employees of the university and members of its governance structures and processes, WLUFA members play a significant role in shaping Laurier’s greenhouse-gas footprint and its responses to the climate emergency. We drive the evolution of curriculum; our workplace practices have an impact on the use of energy and products; our collective agreement shapes parking policy, and thus our members’ transportation habits; and our voices influence investment, sustainability and travel policies. Meanwhile, we have a direct stake in how our workplace and workplace practices are reshaped by Laurier’s efforts to tackle the climate issue.

In order for WLUFA membership to participate effectively in shaping climate policies and action at Laurier, we propose the creation of a WLUFA Climate Action Committee. The proposed committee would engage in climate action with respect to WLUFA’s internal operations, our

members' relationship with the university, the university's broader activities, and climate action beyond Laurier.

Committee Governance

The following are the proposed governance principles and mechanisms for the Climate Action Committee. It is understood that once established the committee may seek approval from the WLUFA Executive to make adjustments to these principles and mechanisms in order to most effectively carry out its work.

The WLUFA Climate Action Committee will seek to be representative, transparent and accountable to the WLUFA executive and to the broader membership. That said, it is important to note that the purpose of the committee is to advocate for and support action to address the climate crisis and promote sustainability on and off campus. As such, this proposal makes the basic assumption that climate change is real and there is a need to act. Potential committee members will be expected to share this conviction and sense of urgency.

- **Member numbers and terms**

The committee will initially aim to have 8-10 members, though we would like to consider a flexible membership model that would allow a larger membership if there is wide interest in participation. Committee members will be appointed to two-year terms, with half the members renewing every year.

- **Representation**

As far as possible, the selection of committee members should be based on the following criteria:

- The committee should reflect the diverse character of WLUFA membership,
- At least one seat shall always be available for an Indigenous member,
- There will be at least one member from each bargaining unit from each of the Waterloo and Brantford campuses,
- There will be at least one member from each Laurier location,
- There will be at least one librarian on the committee.

Given that Laurier is located on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Attawandaron Peoples, and that Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island are on the front lines of movements to confront unsustainable development practices, the committee recognizes the essential importance of incorporating and supporting Indigenous perspectives and priorities relating to climate action. While conscious of the large amount of service work that Indigenous WLUFA members are asked to do, the committee will actively encourage the participation of Indigenous members. The committee will also actively build relationships with and seek advice from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives.

- **Appointment process and terms**

A call for nominations (including self-nominations) will go out in early April for new or renewing committee members. Nominees will be required to submit a 200-word statement and will be appointed by a vote of the WLUFA Executive, after consultation with the committee, on the basis of their statements' alignment with the aims and objectives of the

committee. New members will be appointed in May and will begin June 1st, in sync with the new WLUFA executive. In the event that a member leaves the committee, vacant spots may be filled by appointing approved members from a recent nominee list or by placing a call for new members.

- **Member removal**

In the rare circumstances where a committee member does not participate actively in the committee's work or becomes obstructive of that work, membership in the committee can be revoked by the WLUFA Executive. A request for removal of a member would only occur after the member is invited by the committee to present their case for remaining a member and committee members vote in an anonymous ballot, with 70% or more of the members voting in favour of requesting the member's removal.

- **Chair selection & responsibilities**

The Chair will be selected by the committee once the new committee membership has been appointed each year. The outgoing Chair of the committee will call a meeting for early June, where the committee will hold a vote to determine the Chair for the following year. The Chair's duties will include:

- Convening and chairing committee meetings,
- Representing the committee in its relationship with the WLUFA Executive,
- Overseeing the committee's work throughout the year to ensure that activities remain on track.

- **Executive Officers**

The committee will begin with a small executive, leaving open the potential to expand executive roles as needed and as approved by the WLUFA Executive. The committee's initial executive members beyond the Chair will be:

- A Vice-Chair, who will be responsible for meeting minutes, assisting the President with internal communication to committee members and standing in for the President in their absence;
- A Communications Officer, who will be responsible for leading communication with WLUFA members about the activities of the committee and will also provide key support for the committee's formal communications with the Sustainability Office, other campus organizations and Senior Administration.

- **Relationship to the WLUFA Executive**

The committee will endeavour to maintain open lines of communication with the WLUFA Executive and recognizes the ultimate authority of Executive to approve or reject proposed activities of the committee. To this end, the following measures will be taken.

- The committee will develop a plan of activities for submission and approval by the WLUFA Executive at the beginning of every academic year. It will submit an activities report to the WLUFA Executive every December and April.
- Approval of the WLUFA President (potentially via an Executive Committee Liaison) will be sought before any official correspondence to the WLUFA membership listserv or placement of any materials on the WLUFA web site. The committee understands that it is the prerogative of the President to take such items to the WLUFA Executive for approval if this is deemed necessary, and that this may introduce a delay in approvals.

- If no members of the WLUFA Executive are appointed to the committee, the WLUFA Executive will appoint one of its members to attend committee meetings as a non-voting observer.
- **Meetings**
The committee will normally meet formally twice in fall semester and twice in winter semester. When possible, the meetings will be hosted in-person at Laurier locations, with an effort to accommodate members on different campuses through rotation of location. Members are welcome to attend all meetings in person, but appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that remote attendance is always possible. Ad hoc meetings around specific issues or of sub-committees may take place in between regular committee meetings, with the expectation that any additional meetings will include formal reporting back to the main committee at the next regular meeting of the main committee.
- **Stipends**
In line with existing practice recognizing the need to support Contract Faculty who take up committee roles, WLUFA will provide the Climate Action Committee with a minimum \$2,000 to divide between Contract Faculty committee members as stipends for their service (up to a maximum of \$1,000 per member). In the event that there are more than two Contract Faculty members on the committee, and where finances allow, the WLUFA Executive will increase the stipend available so that each Contract Faculty member receives a \$1,000 stipend. If the Chair of the Climate Action Committee is a Contract Faculty member, that member will receive a ½ stipend to compensate for their service.

Mandate

While the priorities and activities of the committee will ultimately be determined by its members, we suggest the following as four core areas of focus.

- 1) **Addressing climate considerations internal to WLUFA operations.** This would involve working with the WLUFA Executive and WLUFA Office to incorporate climate considerations with respect, for instance, to travel, office practices, and investments. It might involve WLUFA participating in the Sustainability Office's new Green Office Program (<https://lauriercloud.sharepoint.com/sites/sustainability/programs-and-services/Pages/Green-Office-Program.aspx>).
- 2) **Connecting/convening faculty across the university to share ideas, debate issues, and educate and mobilize one another.** This could include discussion of departmental resolutions relating to the climate emergency (as passed in Fall 2019 by Global Studies and by Political Science and North American Studies), discussing and reflecting on faculty involvement in the Green Office program, considering the incorporation of climate concerns into the Collective Agreements, discussion of our pedagogy and research (and their implications for greenhouse gas emissions), and other faculty involvement in climate action on campus.
- 3) **Playing a role in the university's climate action.** This could include encouraging the Administration to set ambitious goals and take decisive actions to reduce the university's contributions to global warming and to address the relationships between the climate emergency and other aspects of social and environmental justice and sustainability.

4) **Raising WLUFA's voice on climate issues outside Laurier.** This would include partnering with external organizations and networks (e.g. OCUFA, CAUT, and other labour and social movement organizations) to shape climate-related policy locally, provincially, nationally and internationally. It could also include involvement in local climate action around specific issues and campaigns, particularly Indigenous climate initiatives taking place on the Haldimand Tract. Finally, by strengthening communication and collaboration on climate issues across the WLUFA membership we hope that the committee's work will have the added benefit of supporting and promoting members' research on climate and related issues.

Participants in the Ad Hoc Climate Proposal Committee

This proposal was drafted by WLUFA members who came together to work on a proposal for a WLUFA Climate Action Committee after an open call to WLUFA membership on May 12, 2020. The following are the members of the committee who agreed to have their names included in this proposal:

- Derek Hall, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Alex Latta, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Manuel Riemer, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Science
- Alicia Sliwinski, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Randall Wigle, full-time bargaining unit, Balsillie School of International Affairs and Lazarides School of Business and Economics
- Simon Dalby, full-time bargaining unit, Balsillie School of International Affairs and Faculty of Arts
- Tom Deligiannis, part-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Lee Willingham, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Music
- Jessica Cameron, part-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Bree Akesson, full-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Social Work
- Sarah Morgan-Vandenberk, part-time bargaining unit, Faculties of Arts, Liberal Arts & Social Work
- Laszlo Sarkany, part-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts
- Kai Reimer-Watts, part-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Science
- Stephen Svenson, part-time bargaining unit, Faculty of Arts

They would like to ask for nominations on July 15th with a start of August 15th. The Executive committee had no problem with this change.