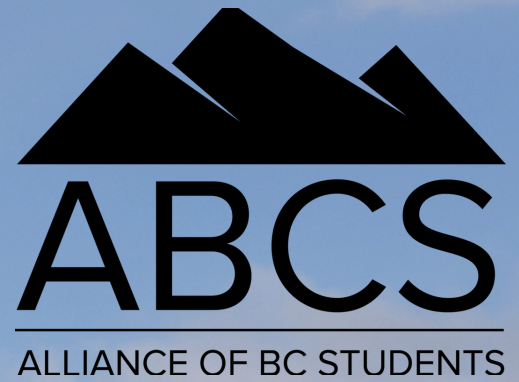




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SUMMIT
2021
STUDENT CLIMATE ACTION INITIATIVE



Student Climate Action Initiative Policy Backgrounder





Land Acknowledgement

The Alliance of BC Students acknowledges that British Columbia was established on the unceded, stolen, occupied, and shared territories of over 200 First Nations. Indigenous peoples have cared for and stewarded these lands and waters since time immemorial, and have been leading the resistance to the colonial resource extraction projects and environmental degradation that are causing the climate crisis. We seek to centre Indigenous peoples and voices in all that we do, and this starts by acknowledging the ongoing harm perpetuated by colonial systems of power and the link between colonialism and the climate emergency.



Summary

Climate change and the immediate climate emergency that we currently face is an intimidating and often anxiety inducing topic of discussion. Despite this, it is an important and prominent discussion amongst post-secondary students. Students have powerful voices and are calling for immediate change and action. From the small scale recycling group on campus, to organizing rallies to invoke provincial and national policy changes, all change is powerful and meaningful, yet big changes must be seen to remedy the current climate emergency. The Student Climate Action Initiative Summit is another step toward change, by promoting student alliances and unions across BC, and their commitment to reducing the impact of climate change in their schools, communities, across the province, Canada and the world; while also demanding immediate and drastic change for the future of the planet.

The world has entered a climate crisis, a “code red for humanity.” The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) submitted a report in August 2021 stating the implications of climate change, the causes of global warming, the possible consequences for the human race within the next few decades, and possible forms of limiting future climate change. The impact of humankind on climate change is unprecedented - and in many instances, irreversible. The IPCC report explains that, “human induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe.” These climate extremes can include increased rainy periods, droughts, monsoons, increased periods of wildfires, and much more.

To prevent this climate emergency from reaching catastrophic levels, aggressive stances on “limiting cumulative CO2 emissions, reaching at least net zero CO2 emissions, along with strong reductions in other greenhouse gas emissions.”
-Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science, IPCC



In November 2019, the Government of British Columbia passed the *Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* into law. Article 8-2 states that, “States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (b) *Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources.*” As students are largely represented by settlers, immigrants, and non-Indigenous individuals, our collective responsibility demands that we ally ourselves with the Indigenous communities and Nations that have been calling attention to the unsustainable practices and fossil fuel infrastructure investments since their introduction into these lands. Article 26 **clearly states** that Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories, and resources they have traditionally owned, occupied, or otherwise used or acquired. Any projects, investments, and/or policing of Indigenous peoples exercising these rights are a violation and disregard for the government's adoption of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. As a province and a collective of students living on these unceded and occupied lands, we are reminding our policymakers and governing bodies to take another step towards reconciliation by orienting our growth as a province in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Student Climate Action Initiative Summit represents the voice of BC students and is a response to the increasing concern surrounding climate change and its devastating effects on students and the world in the present and future. This document is a guide to the change that is demanded by those within the Student Climate Action Initiative, and demonstrates the expressed need for immediate action on the part of post-secondary institutions, the provincial government, and all those residing on the ancestral, traditional, and stolen shared lands of sovereign Nations whose territories are within the borders of British Columbia and Canada as a whole.

Definitions

“**Climate change**” means any significant, long-term change in the expected patterns of average weather of a region, or the entire planet, over a significant period of time. From shifting weather patterns that threaten food production, to rising sea levels that increase the risk of catastrophic flooding, the impacts of climate change are global in scope and unprecedented in scale.

“**Divestment**” is the opposite of an investment, meaning to get rid of stocks, bonds, investment funds, or other investment vehicles that are unethical or morally ambiguous. Divestment often refers to the ending of investment in fossil fuel infrastructure.

“**Global warming**” occurs when carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other air pollutants and greenhouse gases collect in the atmosphere and absorb sunlight and solar radiation that have bounced off the earth’s surface. Global mean warming has already reached 1°C above pre-industrial era levels (defined by the IPCC as the latter half of the nineteenth century), and with the trajectory of current global emissions levels, the temperature is likely to keep rising.

“**Pro-active just transition**” refers to a just transition which focuses on maximizing the benefits of a shift to a clean economy to workers and communities by doing so urgently, rather than just attempting to mitigate the impact these changes will have. For example, governments can invest in education to meet the demand for skilled labour generated by green infrastructure spending.

Demands

We, as post secondary students of British Columbia, demand the following changes:

- That the provincial government, within one year, require that all public post-secondary institutions fully divest from fossil fuels by 2025.
- We demand that each public post-secondary institution:
 - Stop providing training and education specific to the construction and maintenance of fossil fuel infrastructure, and develop new training and education to support the province's transition to greener energy;
 - Provide support to workers transitioning out of the expiring fossil fuel sector, including financial support for re-training and relocation;
 - Reject all sponsorship, grant, and scholarship funding from fossil fuel companies; and
 - Modernize the curriculum across all program areas to embed opportunities to advance the mitigation of climate change.
- Each public post-secondary institution publicly state that they will not, now or in the future, be a party to investment in pipelines and fossil fuel infrastructure.
- We demand that:
 - British Columbia stop all extractive resource projects, such as old growth logging, that have not received the free, prior, and informed consent of the host nations;
 - That the province privilege the agency of the host nations in decisions around resource projects on their lands
 - That the province and the RCMP immediately stop the violent arrest of land and water defenders.
- That the *University Act* be amended to ensure that each public post-secondary institution has, on its board of governors, reserved seats for the host nations on whose land the post-secondary institution operates.

Rationale

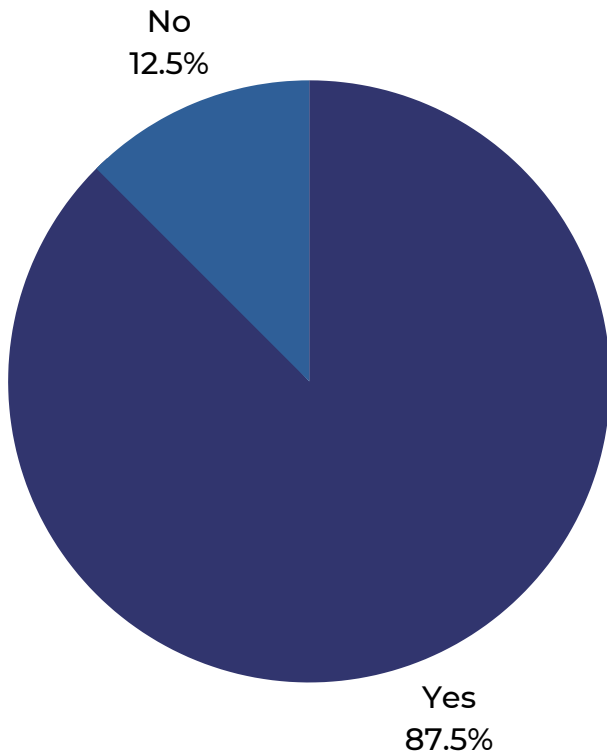
The Student Climate Action Initiative requests the adoption of these demands because:

- Marginalized communities and individuals, including students, are disproportionately affected by climate change due to a lack of ability to compensate for diminishing resources, leading to food and housing insecurity.
- Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by climate change because of the continued degradation of their land caused by climate change, including the capacity of the land to support food production, livelihoods, traditional medicines, and the production and provision of other ecosystems.
- Pipelines, terminals, tankers, and other fossil fuel infrastructure have been, and are being, constructed on stolen lands without the permission of these Indigenous communities.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has published a report in August of 2021 stating that “global warming of 1.5°C and 2°C will be exceeded during the 21st century unless deep reductions in carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gas emissions occur in the coming decades.” They project that, “with further global warming, every region is projected to increasingly experience concurrent and multiple changes in climatic impact-drivers. Changes in several climatic impact-drivers would be more widespread at 2°C compared to 1.5°C global warming and even more widespread and/or pronounced for higher warming levels.”
- Younger generations (people under 30) are disproportionately affected by climate change due to its impact on life expectancy. This directly impacts current and future post-secondary students in BC and across Canada.



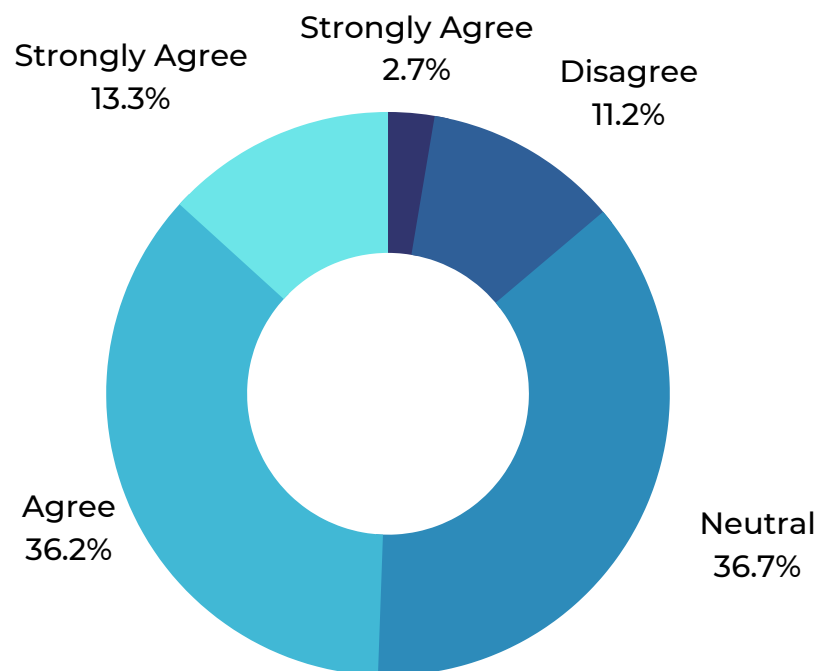
Climate Action Survey Results

Do you think climate change impacts you in your daily life?



The Climate Action Survey was a survey administered by the Alliance of BC Students to students within British Columbia to get a sense of their opinions on climate change. With a total of 528 responses, the overwhelming theme throughout the survey responses from students points to the need and demand for change within the provincial and federal government, as well as within post secondary institutions themselves.

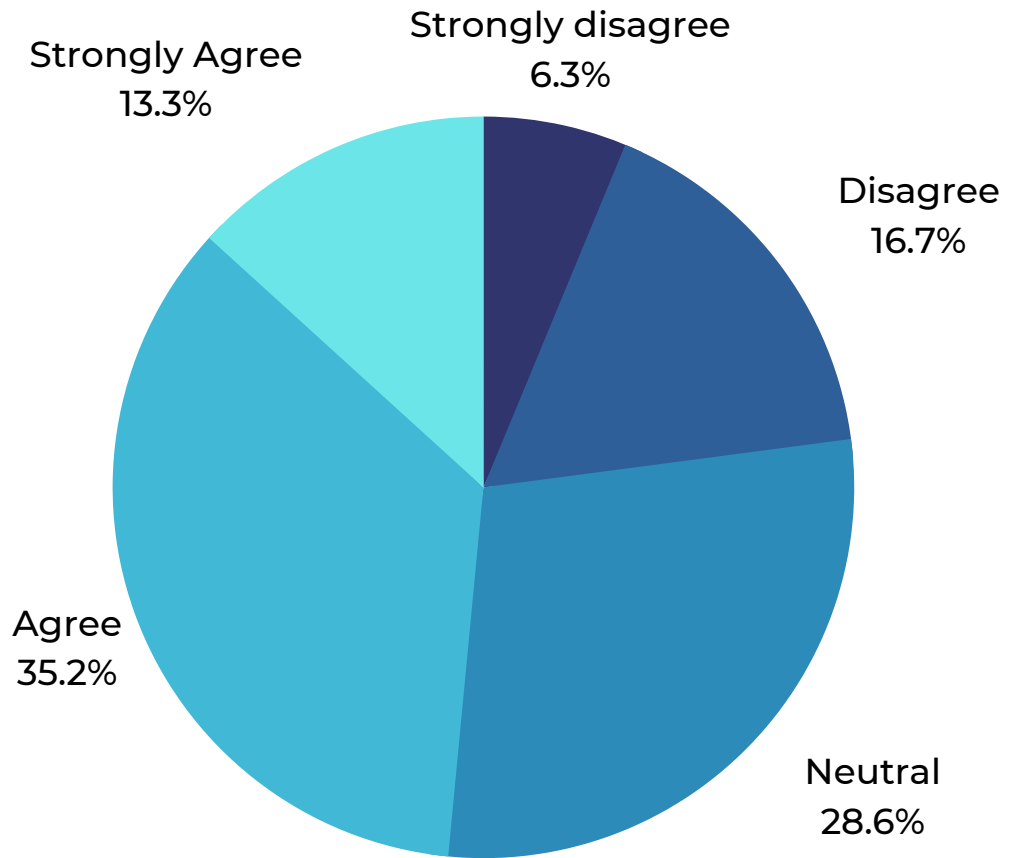
Climate change negatively impacts post-secondary students.



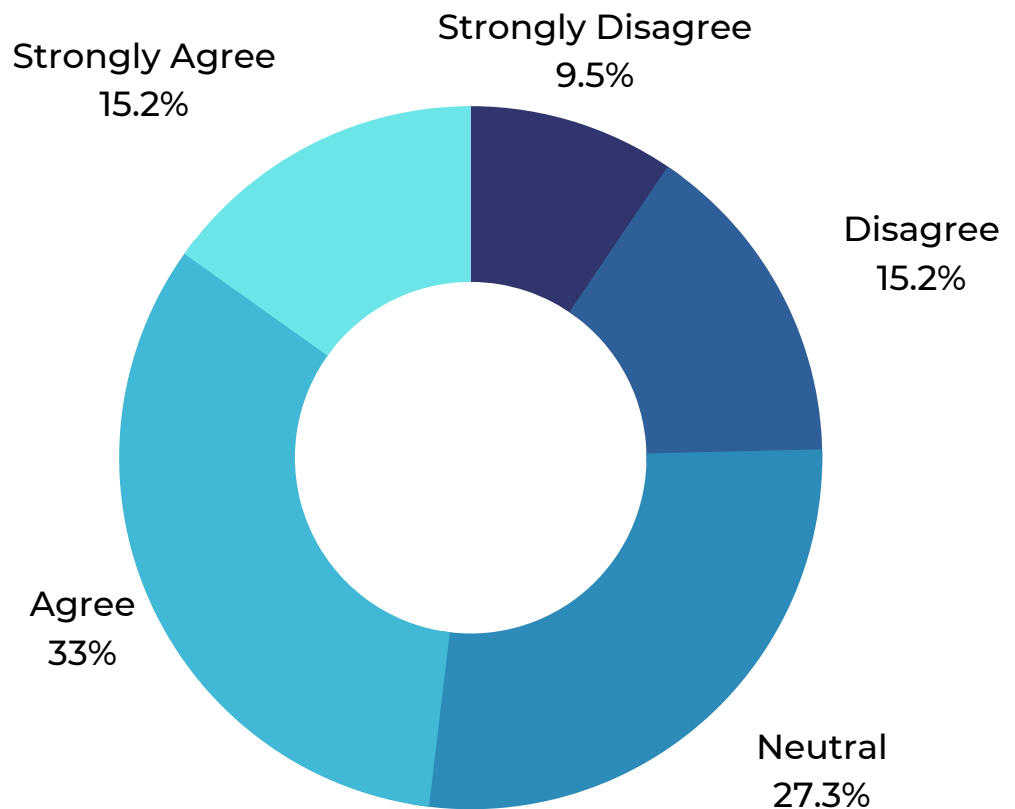
The questions that were asked of the survey takers concerned their feelings and impact on climate change, their post secondary institutions impact on climate change, and the government's impact on climate change. As stated above, the demand for change is ever increasing amongst post-secondary students.



As a student, I feel that my post-secondary institution is doing enough to address climate change.



The provincial government is doing enough to address climate change.



Endnotes

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