

Moving Beyond Coal

An open letter from leaders of Faith-based groups in British Columbia

The Honorable Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia
The Honorable Mary Polak, Minister of the Environment,
The Honorable Todd Stone, Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Terry Lake, Minister of Health

Premier and Honorable Ministers,

We write as leaders of Christian, Jewish, Unitarian, Quaker, and Sikh traditions in British Columbia. We are concerned about the moral and environmental issues regarding the proposal to build a new coal transfer facility at Fraser Surrey Docks (FSD) that would expedite the shipment of up to 8 million tons of U.S. thermal coal through Surrey, the Fraser River, and Salish Sea to Texada Island. **We are asking you to reconsider the recently approved permit for the augmentation of the Texada Island port facility that would enable the increased coal export, and to phase out all U.S. thermal coal exports from BC ports.**

The end use of this coal is for electric power generation, primarily in China. The practice of burning coal is the source of most of the horrific air pollution problems in that country. Contributing to the increase in coal-related disability among the Chinese weighs heavily on our conscience. Coal is also the fossil fuel most directly linked to the rising CO₂ emissions in China of the last 20 years.¹ **Our province has shown strong leadership in the past on commitments to reduce GHG emissions² and our municipalities have robust plans to reduce carbon output. The traffic in coal is not compatible with those plans.**

In our weekly sermons we encourage our congregations to adopt a sustainable lifestyle. Many of them are walking the talk, reducing their carbon footprint in their daily choices of what they buy and how they travel. Now our congregations are asking us to act as emissaries of their message to you, to embrace a shift in the way to do business. Therefore we will not stand idly by when we see local actions that will contribute to climate destabilization. We state emphatically that making money at the expense of the health and prosperity of the planet is wrong.

Our traditions teach us that human and non-human life is sacred and inter-connected. **Our compassion compels us to act to prevent the suffering of human and non-human life on this miraculous planet.** Although the amount of coal proposed for traffic through the FSD is a small fraction of the global coal use, this is the coal that you, the representatives of the BC electorate, can control. Approval of these permits means that you are complicit with a continued dependence on a dangerous fuel that is a relic of a time that is no more. Denying the permits would send a powerful message that BC is committed to being part of the solution to the climate crisis.

We ask you to consider both current and future generations of life on this planet as you make these decisions.

¹CO₂ Emissions from Fuel Combustion - Highlights 2013, International Energy Agency

² Province of British Columbia, Climate Action Plan, 2008

Sincerely,

The Reverend Beth Hayward, Senior Minister, Canadian Memorial United Church, Vancouver

Rabbi David Mivasair, Rabbi Emeritus, Ahavat Olam Synagogue, Vancouver

The Reverend Dr. Dorothy Jeffery, Minister, St. Stephen's United Church, East Delta

The Reverend Bruce Sanguin, Minister in the United Church of Canada, Vancouver, founder of Home for Evolving Mystics

The Reverend Debra Thorne, Minister, Beacon Unitarian Church, New Westminister

The Reverend Phillip Hewett, Minister Emeritus, Unitarian Church of Vancouver

The Reverend Dr. Daniel Bogert-O'Brien, Minister, Colebrook United Church, Surrey

The Reverend Scott Swanson, Interim Minister, Crescent United Church, Surrey

The Reverend Dr. Stephen Atkinson, Minister, North Shore Unitarian Church, West Vancouver

The Reverend Samaya Oakley, Developmental Minister, First Unitarian Fellowship of Nanaimo, Nanaimo, BC

The Reverend Karen E. May, Minister, Texada Island United Church, Van Anda, BC

Christopher F. Bernard, MDiv., Pastoral Care Chaplain/Spiritual Health Leader, Roman Catholic Health Care, Vancouver

The Reverend Maxine Pirie, Order of Ministry, Powell River United Church, Powell River

The Reverend Peggy Jensen, Minister, St. George's United Church, Courtenay

The Reverend Dr. Gary A. Gaudin, Minister, South Arm United Church, Richmond

The Reverend Janice Young, Minister, St. John's United Church, Sechelt

The Reverend Bethan Theunissen, Minister, Trinity United Church and Heartwood Community Café, Vancouver

Janette McIntosh, Organizer, Metro Vancouver KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Vancouver

Janet Gray, BC-Yukon KAIROS organization, Victoria

The Reverend Dr. Adela D. Torchia, Rector, Anglican Parish of St. David and St. Paul, Powell River

Henri Lock, United Chaplain, University of Victoria

The Reverend Dr. Allan Saunders, Minister, First Metropolitan United Church, Victoria

The Reverend Mark Green, Lead Minister, Cadboro Bay United Church, Victoria

The Reverend Julianne Kasmer, Chaplain, Our Place Society, Victoria

Ellen Pye, Clerk of Vancouver Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quaker),
Vancouver

The Reverend Emilie Teresa Smith, Parish Priest, St. Barnabas Anglican Church, New Westminster

The Reverend Dr. Margaret Cornish, Rector, St. Alban Anglican Church, Richmond

Sister Cecilia Hudec, Sisters of Charity, Richmond

Sister Gertrude A. Jocksch, Sisters of Charity and Programs in Earth Literacies, Richmond

The Reverend Dr. Victoria Marie, Pastor, Our Lady of Guadalupe Tonantzin Community Society,
Vancouver

The Reverend Fr. John Tritschler, Holy Rosary Cathedral, Vancouver

The Reverend Patricia Dutcher-Walls, Vancouver School of Theology

The Reverend Rebecca Simpson, Minister, St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Mission

Mrs. Janet Eastwood, Leader of Children, Youth and Family Ministries, Haney Presbyterian Church,
Maple Ridge

The Reverend Geof Jay, Moderator for the Presbytery of Westminister and Minister, St. Andrew's-
Newton Presbyterian Church, Surrey

The Reverend Laurie Deacon, Minister, St. Aidan's Presbyterian Church, New Westminster

The Reverend Dr. Brian Fraser, Minister, Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Burnaby

The Reverend Dr. Glen Davis, Faculty member, Vancouver School of Theology, Vancouver

The Reverend Joyce Davis, President, Westminister Presbyterial

The Reverend Mary Fontaine, Executive Director, Hummingbird Ministries of the Presbytery of
Westminister

The Reverend Dennis Howard, Minister, Langley Presbyterian Church, Langley

Dr. Sallie McFague, Distinguished Theologian in Residence, Vancouver School of Theology,
Vancouver

The Reverend Brenda Nestegaard Paul, Pastor, Faith Lutheran Church, Powell River

The Reverend Ian Nestegaard-Paul, Priest, Anglican Parish of St. Bartholomew's, Gibsons

Gian Singh, President of Gurdwara Dasmesh Darbar , Surrey

Giani Narinder Singh, Head Priest, Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran, Surrey

The Reverend Tim Dutcher-Walls, Chaplain, New Vista Society, Burnaby, and Faith & Society Committee, BC Synod (Lutheran)

The Reverend Dr. Gregory Mohr, Bishop, BC Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Westminster

The Reverend H. Paul Schmidt, Pastor, Retired. Evangelical Lutheran Church, Delta

The Reverend Tim Le Drew, Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Richmond

The Reverend Lori-Anne Boutin-Crawford, First Lutheran Church, Vancouver