

For Release: November 1st, 2021

Media Contact:

Jaden Dyer: 604-785-7656

Students commence Hunger Strike pressure on SFU to demand full divestment from fossil fuels

Unceded territory of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), kwikwəłəm (Kwkwetlem) and səliwətaʔl (Tsleil-Waututh) (Burnaby, BC).

Students at Simon Fraser University have provided SFU administration an ultimatum to commit to full divestment from fossil fuels by 2025. Other educational institutions around the world have made the pledge to divest from fossil fuels, including Harvard University, the University of California, UBC, UVic, Guelph, Concordia, Lakehead, Université du Québec à Montréal, and the University of Toronto just this past week. SFU, however, has continued to resist full commitment, continuing to possess holdings supporting fossil fuel industries instead of putting full support in renewable, sustainable energy. SFU has stated that divesting only passes the problem to other investors who may have less interest in communicating with companies about climate concerns. SFU students, however, state financial holdings supporting fossil fuels sends a message of complicity in exacerbating the climate emergency, inconsistent with their statements of being “leaders in sustainability”¹ and committed to “serving as an instrument of reconciliation”² with Indigenous peoples. The students believe to truly be the global leaders they claim, SFU needs to demonstrate full support for alternative energy innovation, development, and access, especially initiatives which put the needs of traditionally marginalized groups forefront, such as Indigenous renewable energy projects. Investments in alternative energy are not only investments in climate solutions but in the career fields upon which many students, staff, and faculty members depend. Additionally, the students state that as investors continue to pull away from the fossil fuel sector, its value will only continue to decline. In 2019, for example, it was S&P 500 stock index’s “worst-performing segment”³. SFU administration needs to better align with student held values. Bold claims and buzzwords are not enough.

Students, faculty members, and staff at Simon Fraser University have expressed their demand for full divestment for over seven years, but have not received a commitment. As the administration has failed to accept the students' ultimatum by the November 1st deadline, the hunger strike will commence at 12 p.m. The strike will continue to pressure the institution for this climate emergency measure until a commitment is reached.

In addition, SFU students request a commitment to taking tangible action to oppose the Trans Mountain Expansion project, including preparing an official statement of opposition and educating the campus community on the safety risks accompanying the installation of the new expanded tank petro-facility on Burnaby Mountain. The most recent efforts by SFU administration toward the federal government regarding the Trans Mountain Expansion project was in 2016. Amplifying the voices of SFU administration, SFU students, and local Indigenous Nations (whose unceded traditional territories all three of SFU's campuses reside), in collaboration, may exert some political influence to amend the project, with the safety of students, faculty, staff, and local peoples being of greatest concern.

Tim Takaro, an anti-TMX activist and head of the SFU Health Science Department, says,

“The Board of Governors is not understanding the urgency of the climate crisis. Even hundreds of deaths in the province this summer from climate change has not been enough to change their slow-walking policies on divestment, nor has it moved the SFU President to vocally oppose construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline under the campus. As the fire risk in the forest around campus grows, and the only exit off the mountain remains adjacent to the expanding fuel storage facility, we have a local existential threat on top of the global climate threat...”

He suggests, in these circumstances, “...students and other citizens are forced to take extraordinary measures to protect themselves and future generations.”

HUNGER STRIKE DETAILS

- The strike is taking place in the northeast corner of the Academic Quadrangle, to the left of Jugo Juice and the entrance to the Education Building
- Stacy, a member of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, has authorized the presence of the strikers on their grounds
- The strikers will be consuming only salt, lemon water, and vitamin tablets until the university administration accepts their demands

- Throughout the duration of the strike, they will be willing to engage in a respectful dialogue with university administration liaisons
- Zain Haq, one of the organizers and hunger strikers of the divestment campaign, is willing to be arrested should he not be permitted by campus security to remain camped on the grounds

For more information, please contact Jaden Dyer:

- Phone: 604-785-7656
- Email: dyerjaden@gmail.com

1. [SFU joins UN's Race to Zero in support of global effort to act on climate change - SFU News - Simon Fraser University](#) Paragraph 3
2. [Honouring the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation - Surrey Campus - Simon Fraser University \(sfu.ca\)](#) Paragraph 8
3. [Fossil Companies Worst-Performing: 2019 Stock Index - The Energy Mix](#) Paragraph 1