



To the University of Toronto community,

As members of the [UTERN](#) Environmental Working Group Coalition, representing the tri-campus environmental justice community and the undersigned student groups, we are writing in support of the [Divest Canada Coalition's nation-wide open letter](#), the [Divestment and Beyond Coalition's petition](#), and the [Temerty Medicine Divestment Open Letter](#) calling on the University of Toronto to divest its endowment, pension, and donations fossil fuels, declare a climate emergency, and invest in a socially just climate transition.

We are calling on the University of Toronto to:

- (1) Commit to full fossil fuel divestment as outlined in the Divestment & Beyond Coalition's petition,
- (2) Publicly disclose all of U of T's financial investments,
- (3) Declare a climate emergency,
- (4) And create a set of specific environmental requirements that donors must demonstrate commitment to before donations can be accepted.

As a world-class educational institution producing cutting-edge research in [climate change science](#), we find it hypocritical and deeply disappointing that the University continues to engage in greenwashing without taking decisive action on the climate crisis, despite an advisory committee explicitly [recommending](#) divestment from fossil fuel firms that ignore climate warming thresholds and perpetuate climate misinformation. In response, the strategies outlined in the [Beyond Divestment response letter](#), the [Investing to Address Climate Change charter](#), and the [Low-Carbon Action Plan](#) emphasize ESG investments and decarbonization. These [false solutions](#) allow the University to continue investing in what are, in real terms, the most polluting companies in the world. U of T's actions thus far demonstrate that while the University has ample time and power to consult on its investments, it uses this power only to build a "green" public image while maintaining the status quo. The University has failed to use its social and financial capital in line with its [stated values](#), thereby failing to demonstrate leadership in the face of the climate crisis.

Let us be clear where [U of T's money](#) is really coming from: 63% of the University's budget comes from tuition and other student fees and 24% comes from the Provincial government. In addition to fees, however, it is students' achievements and successes that make U of T a leading academic institution. The University leverages that reputation to garner much of its remaining millions of dollars in donations and other funding. We believe that, as the University's resources are primarily students and taxpayers, U of T has a duty to publicize how its endowment and pension funds are being invested. The University owes its constituents financial

transparency and stronger commitments to addressing repeated calls to take action against the fossil fuel industry.

Released earlier this year, the Divest Canada Coalition's [open letter](#), the Divestment and Beyond [petition](#), and the [Temerty Medicine Divestment Open Letter](#) have garnered 700, 1200, and 120 signatures, respectively, as of October 23rd. The number of signatories on these letters, in addition to the support for this letter, demonstrate widespread support for divestment of university funding and donations among students, faculty, and alumni.

These petitions serve as evidence that divestment is a mainstream issue: a national and global precedent for fossil fuel divestment at educational institutions already exists. Increasing numbers of world-renowned institutions have committed to divestment, including [Cambridge University](#), [University of British Columbia](#), [Brown University](#), and the [University of California System](#), to name a few. Meanwhile, President Gertler [rejected calls for divestment](#) in 2016, with U of T retaining its outdated stance on fossil fuel investments, which is uncomfortably reminiscent of President Connell's [opposition](#) to implementing full divestment from the South African Apartheid regime in the 1980s. We, the environmental clubs of U of T's three campuses speaking as one, are demanding that U of T acts in alignment with its purported institutional values by joining the [growing list](#) of universities that have committed to divestment.

We are living through a climate crisis whose effects will be felt for generations. The climate warming that we are seeing is not on a [promising trajectory](#). It is well-known that anthropogenic climate change is contributing to global environmental change, such as increased storm events, polar ice cap melting, loss of biodiversity, and increased periods of drought, and that the burning of fossil fuels is the [key driver](#) to this crisis. Notably, it is the global poor and Indigenous peoples who will [face the very worst](#) of this crisis, with access to food, resources, homes, and stability becoming ever more precarious. If U of T is to take pride in being a world class institution and leader of innovation, it is an ethical failure to ignore climate science and keep supporting fossil fuel companies. U of T has a social, moral, and fiduciary duty to divest from fossil fuels, reinvest in sustainable alternatives, and actively take part in green and just transitions.

Thus, we are asking UofT to:

- Commit to fossil fuel divestment as outlined in the Divestment & Beyond Coalition's petition
- Publicly disclose all of U of T's financial investments
- Declare a climate emergency
- Create a set of specific environmental requirements that donors must demonstrate commitment to before donations can be accepted

Sincerely,

The UTERN EWG Coalition

The UTERN EWG Coalition is made up of member environmental groups run by students who work together across campuses to achieve the collectively set goals of The University of Toronto environmental community. We wish to acknowledge that UofT is on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg Peoples, Haudenosaunee Peoples, and The Chippewa Peoples. The Mississauga's of The New Credit are the most recent to call The Greater Toronto Area their home, but we also acknowledge the Petun-Tionontati Peoples, The Huron-Wendat, and The Attiwonderonk Neutral Nations. Toronto and Mississauga are governed under Treaty 13, The Toronto Purchase of 1805, The Ajetance Treaty 19 of 1808, Treaties 22 and 23, along with Treaty 13A. We seek to realign our thinking and efforts to further and center Indigenous causes and movements. For more information regarding this letter, please e-mail utern.toronto@gmail.com.

Names of Student Group Signatories to this letter:

University College Literary and Athletic Society (UCLit)
Victoria University Students' Administrative Council (VUSAC)
Regenesiis University of Toronto
University of Toronto Environmental Resource Network (UTERN)
Leap Chapter UofT
Dig In! Campus Agriculture (DI!CAN)
Environmental Students' Union (ENSU)
Environmental Law Club
Zero Waste UTM
New College Student Council (NCSC)
University of Toronto Environmental Action (UTEA)
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Students' Union
Anthropology Students' Association
The University of Toronto Mississauga Students' Union (UTMSU)
The Scarborough Campus Students' Union (SCSU)
The University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU)
Veg Club
Woodsworth College Students' Association (WCSA)
Healing Hearts Through Art (H2art)
Arts and Science Students' Union (ASSU)