U of T Community Response to the Report of the President’s Advisory Committee on Divestment from Fossil Fuels

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[Response authors](#h.ijnri9pc1cf0)

[U of T Faculty](#h.o575kvgdbxke)

[U of T Staff](#h.ppcx9antqiyv)

[Current U of T Students (please list program and year)](#h.exsu42n0jtav)

[Alumni (please list degree and year)](#h.9y7sp9nf53k3)

[Reviewers and proofreaders](#h.81vw7w5hjnzm)

[Response endorsers](#h.m3o2hyuy03kk)

[Likely endorsers](#h.gszmhxlxlw14)

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*Please edit this document as needed. By writing this Response relatively quickly, we can establish a strong narrative about what should be done and attract broad community support. Thank you for your help!*

*Do not change the sharing settings.*

# Purpose

1. To respond to the report [the “Report”] of the President’s Advisory Committee on Divestment from Fossil Fuels: <http://www.president.utoronto.ca/secure-content/uploads/2015/12/Report-of-the-Advisory-Committee-on-Divestment-from-Fossil-Fuels-December-2015.pdf>
2. To suggest additional exclusion criteria for fossil fuel divestment
   1. Divest from firms that violate indigenous rights
   2. Also divest from firms with large reserves
3. To suggest other improvements to the course of action suggested by the Report
   1. Responding to the recommendations about partnerships with the fossil fuel industry
4. To demonstrate broad U of T community support for divestment

# Major tasks

1. Find people from across the U of T community who are willing to work as authors of the Response (including students, faculty, staff, and alumni) [SINEAD D., MILAN I.]
   1. Priority: find some high-credibility faculty members who are supportive [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
   2. Write template email inviting someone to work as an author [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
   3. Develop list of people willing to serve as proofreaders [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
   4. Look into David Wolfe - U of T PoliSci / Munk - as a possible divestment supporter [Sinead]
   5. ~~Attend UTSU Sustainability Commission meeting to look for contributors~~ [MILAN I.]
   6. Email UofTFacultyDivest signatories with requests from Milan and Katie [MILAN I.]
2. Define “non-conventional and aggressive extraction”
   1. Consult with the Pembina Institute and Carbon Tracker [BEN]
   2. Research whether any institution already screens investments on a similar basis and look at what kind of wording they use [FRANCESCA, GRAHAM H.]
3. Develop an exclusion criterion based on indigenous free, prior, and informed consent and/or social injury imposed on aboriginal communities
   1. ~~Draft an~~ email which can be used to reach out to potentially interested indigenous experts~~, explaining the possibility of adding some sort of exclusion criterion based on harm caused by fossil fuel companies to indigenous groups:~~ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/11PyeRUc_n1tjmS6IBwMTJ4uSQQ0dqZ5gSowqV4txWpk/edit?usp=sharing>
   2. Reach out to Susan Blight, Heather Milton-Lightening, and Clayton Thomas-Muller re: indigenous criterion [JOANNA, SYDNEY, AMIL, AMANDA]
   3. ~~Contact Taiaiake Alfred (uVic)~~ [MILAN I.]
   4. Contact Pamela Palmater (Ryerson) [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
   5. Contact Melina Laboucan-Massimo
   6. Contact Art Sterritt (Gitga'at First Nation)
   7. Contact Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (Lakehead) [PIETER B.]
   8. **To be done ASAP:** Consult with First Nations House, the Native Student Association, and other U of T aboriginal institutions [JOANNA, SYDNEY, AMIL, AMANDA]
   9. Research whether any institution already screens investments on a similar basis and look at what kind of wording they use [GRAHAM H.]
   10. Consult with Dimitri about what wording would be most effective [MILAN directed Dimitri to JOANNA, SYDNEY, AMIL, AMANDA]
   11. Summarize content on social injury imposed on indigenous groups in the brief, as well as oral presentations to the committee [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
   12. Look at the recent B.C. Supreme Court ruling on the Northern Gateway pipeline for any useful language [SINEAD]
4. Develop an exclusion criteria based on the fossil fuel reserves owned by firms
   1. Draft an argument for why the committee’s own reasoning applies to firms with large fossil fuel reserves [MILAN I.]
   2. Key point: they keep denying that most of their reserves are unburnable
   3. Research whether any institution already screens investments on a similar basis and look at what kind of wording they use [GRAHAM H.]
5. Express concern about proposed partnerships with the fossil fuel industry [LINDA K.]
6. Praise and reinforce the best parts of the report [LILA A., MILAN I.]
   1. Recommends divestment of multiple Funds
   2. Recommends immediate divestment
   3. Accepts the argument that climate change causes social injury, and that divestment is an appropriate and financially responsible response
   4. Rejects shareholder activism as an adequate response
   5. Makes repeated reference to 2 ˚C and 1.5 ˚C temperature targets, acknowledges that most fossil fuel reserves cannot be used
   6. Acknowledges intergenerational justice
   7. Recommends exclusion based on firms distorting climate science
      1. Draft a recommendation based on lobbying activity by fossil fuel corporations which distorts policy-making [LILA A.]
7. Highlight parts of the report that could be helpful to other divestment campaigns
   1. Try to get the committee to publish the “review of the literature relevant to issues concerning fossil fuel divestment” and “thorough assessment of divestment decisions taken at peer universities and other institutions around the world” which they reference on p. 22 of the Report [SAM H.]
8. Final document assembly
   1. Comments from as many authors and proofreaders as possible
   2. Check for anything we missed: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14kuC_dFrHIVl81i4PllWGmRaDDoxgOO36MSFhjSmbN8/edit#gid=0>
   3. Incorporate all comments from authors and proofreaders
   4. Typeset in LaTeX [MILAN I.]
   5. Final proofreading [MILAN I.]
9. Find individuals and organizations to endorse it
   1. Outreach to prominent people who have endorsed the campaign already: <http://www.toronto350.org/divestuoft> [MILAN I., KATIE K.]
   2. Outreach to on-campus organizations that have already endorsed the campaign [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
      1. The Association of Part-time Undergraduate Students: <http://apus.ca/divestment/>
   3. Email librarian and faculty signatories to the open letter at <http://www.uoftfacultydivest.com/> and <http://www.uoftfacultydivest.com/petition-for-librarians/> [KATIE K., MILAN I.]
   4. Suss out whether any members of the *ad hoc* committee might be willing to informally advise us, or even endorse the Response [SAM H.]
   5. Contact Hal Jackman about endorsing the campaign
10. Publicize the campaign
    1. Find every article about U of T fossil fuel divestment which has been in a prominent news source or represented the campaign in a positive or neutral way [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
    2. Compile a list of relevant journalists and editors, including contact details [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
    3. Prepare a press release to be made public at the same time as the Community Response [PLEASE VOLUNTEER FOR THIS]
    4. Get in touch with Naomi Klein [KATIE K.]
11. Plan for contingencies
    1. What’s the plan if Gertler surprises us by releasing a decision before the Community Response is done?

# Exclusion criteria options

## Impacts on indigenous communities / violation of indigenous sovereignty

### General options

1. Drop this entirely from the Community Response
2. Include a call for a criterion, without detailed wording (be open to petitions from aboriginal communities, go and develop your own criterion, etc)
3. Produce detailed wording of our own for a criterion

### Specific possibilities

* **Petition-based:** Aboriginal governments could attest to the University of Toronto, attesting that a particular fossil fuel corporation is imposing social injury on their community or violating the obligation of free, prior, and informed consent
  + **Advantages:** Creates a much simpler process for divestment than requiring the community to file a brief and go through the whole U of T process
  + **Disadvantages:** Requires effort by impacted communities, could lead to questions of authority (who can legitimately make such an attestation?)
* **Ask the university to consult:** Recommend that U of T consult with aboriginal experts and communities about one or more investment exclusion criteria
* **Corporations where an aboriginal community has a legitimate claims either pending or resolved in court documenting a violation of free, prior, and informed consent**
* **(a) violation of free, prior, and informed consent** and **(b) violations of aboriginal title** (for example, impacts on culturally important practices like fishing)

## Corporations with large fossil fuel reserves

Reasoning

* **Internal logic of the Report / 1.5 ˚C target:** The central argument of the Report - about “blatant disregard” for the 1.5 ˚C warming target - is fundamentally inconsistent with the view that these reserves are usable. Also, companies have publicly stated that they don’t think they have any stranded assets.
* **Public statements that they have no stranded assets**

Potential wording

* **Own above a set level of reserves in gigatonnes of CO2**
* **Firms that stand to lose more than X% of their corporate value if their assets are stranded**
  + “Corporations which would experience a loss equivalent to at least 10% of their total value if the total global carbon budget is set to avoid 1.5 ˚C of warming”

# Important documents

## Important for writing the Response

Ben’s work on defining non-conventional and aggressive extraction: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1HjCtr9VemFXJXqaQEvLVws1EjU1XsmK6rJ7XzTfDfQE/edit>

* Francesca Hannan’s research on this topic: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1m7qrjN-qrwiLtBPPKgnCLSWsfPXiGvm4us81cTVwII8/edit?usp=sharing>

Detailed breakdown of the committee’s report: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14kuC_dFrHIVl81i4PllWGmRaDDoxgOO36MSFhjSmbN8/edit#gid=0>

## Important background

The updated divestment brief: <http://www.uoftfacultydivest.com/files/fossil-fuel-divest-new.pdf>

Our oral submissions to the *ad hoc committee*: <http://uoftfacultydivest.com/files/divest-u-of-t.pdf>

# Communication channels

## For internal communication

Group email list: [community@toronto350.org](mailto:community@toronto350.org)

* If you are not already on it, ask someone with an @toronto350.org email address to add you (such as [milan@toronto350.org](mailto:milan@toronto350.org))

## Media

Journalists and editors who have written stories about the campaign, or who have been contacted about the Community Response

* Emma Paling (Huffington Post Canada) [emma.paling@huffingtonpost.com](mailto:emma.paling@huffingtonpost.com)
* Maayan Kreitzman (UBC campus radio) [kreitzman.maayan@gmail.com](mailto:kreitzman.maayan@gmail.com)
* Daryn Caister (Green Majority radio, U of T) [thegreenmajority@gmail.com](mailto:thegreenmajority@gmail.com)
* Joshua S. Hill (CleanTechnica) <https://about.me/JoshSHill>
* Arthur Kaptainis (U of T News)
* Charles Mandel (National Observer) <http://www.nationalobserver.com/u/charles-mandel>
* Tavia Grant (Globe and Mail)
* Emily Johnpulle (The Varsity)
* Eunize Lao (Alternatives Journal)
* Sharmini Peries (Real News Network)

# January 25th timeline

February 1st: Have the Community Response sufficiently developed to raise at our meeting with President Gertler

February 11th: All initial input from authors should be in so that a draft can be circulated to everyone for comments

February 18th: Be finished with everything except for proofreading and final preparation

February 25th: Have the final document ready in time for the Governing Council meeting

# Draft Responses

January 23rd: <http://www.sindark.com/350/Community-Response-0-3.pdf>

January 25th: <http://www.sindark.com/350/Community-Response-0-4.pdf>

* Includes Lila’s text on climate change deniers

# Response authors

## U of T Faculty

Linda Kohn

* Professor, Graduate Faculty; Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, University of Toronto

Douglas Macdonald

* Senior Lecturer and Associate Member of graduate faculty, School of the Environment

Andrea Muehlebach

* Professor, Faculty of Anthropology

## U of T Staff

## Current U of T Students (please list program and year)

Lila Asher

Sinead Dunphy

Amanda Harvey-Sanchez

* 2nd year undergraduate student, Environmental Studies, Sociocultural Anthropology, Equity Studies

Graham Henry

Milan Ilnyckyj

* 4th year PhD student, Political Science

## Alumni (please list degree and year)

Dimitri Lascaris

# Reviewers and proofreaders

See *Style and grammar conventions for the Community Response*: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13egaINHhbApE2fqUq-H9WRw5A86i9XBswilYaRx112k/edit?usp=sharing>

Tamara Balan

* Willing to help proofread

Ihor Ilnyckyj

* Willing to help proofread

Amanda Lewis

* Willing to help proofread

Alena Prazak

* Willing to help proofread

Peter Russell

* Professor Emeritus, Political Science - willing to review a draft Response

# Response endorsers

Ihor Ilnyckyj

## Likely endorsers

Tom Cullen ([g.tom.cullen@gmail.com](mailto:g.tom.cullen@gmail.com))

The Graduate Students’ Union (GSU)

* Contact: Nickie Van Lier

U of T alumni at the 2016-01-23 Friends’ House post-Paris event: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1o_xEHJE2y8kV9wTFpTNsfauJiOoXYkZoVyxdC_SwN3o/edit?usp=sharing>

## Possible endorsers

The University of Toronto Faculty Association (UTFA)

* Contact: Scott Prudham