

## **THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY WE ARE FACING**

**Prepared by the Sustainability and Climate Emergency Committee of Cobourg  
(SCEAC)**

This article describes the climate emergency we are facing. This is followed by what we as individuals can do to mitigate the worst effects, and protect civilization from runaway global heating. At the end is a link to an Ecological Footprint calculator that will help you estimate your annual carbon footprint.

### **QUOTES FROM VARIOUS ARTICLES THAT TELL THE STORY**

The extraordinarily hot and cold temperatures that are becoming more common as climate change accelerates are responsible for 5 million deaths globally every year.<sup>1</sup>

Rises above 1.5° C increase the chance of reaching tipping points in natural systems that could lock the world into an acutely unstable state. This would critically impair our ability to mitigate harms and to prevent catastrophic, runaway environmental change.<sup>2</sup>

A billion people will be affected by extreme heat stress if the climate crisis raises the global temperature by just 2C, according to research released by the UK Met Office at the [Cop26](#) climate summit. The scientists said that would be a 15-fold increase on the numbers exposed today.<sup>3</sup>

These planet-wide events all combined are having a detrimental impact on crops and livestock, and though it is too early to calculate the full cost, the world will likely see [significant price hikes](#) in coming months on everything from tomatoes to bread to beef.<sup>4</sup>

Extreme weather continues [slamming crops](#) across the world at a time when food prices are already [near the highest in a decade](#). The list goes on: Flooding in China's key pork-producing region has raised the threat of animal disease. Devastating rains in the EU are raising fears of widespread fungal diseases in grains. And in the High Plains along the U.S.-Canada border, grains and livestock are at risk as [predicted deepening drought](#) keeps commodities brokers and farmers on edge. Russia, another global bread basket, is also hot and dry, and [wheat crop expectations have fallen](#).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-07-07/climate-change-linked-to-5-million-deaths-a-year-new-study-shows>, Bloomberg Green, Energy & Science, by Laura Millan Lombrana, July 7, 2021

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2113200> Call for Emergency Action to Limit Global Temperature Increases, Restore Biodiversity, and Protect Health

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/09/1bn-people-will-suffer-extreme-heat-at-just-2c-heating-say-scientists>

<sup>4</sup> [https://regenerationinternational.org/2021/08/13/a-world-of-hurt-2021-climate-disasters-raise-alarm-over-food-security/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=engagingnetworks&utm\\_campaign=September+RI+Newsletter&utm\\_content=September+RI+Newsletter](https://regenerationinternational.org/2021/08/13/a-world-of-hurt-2021-climate-disasters-raise-alarm-over-food-security/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=September+RI+Newsletter&utm_content=September+RI+Newsletter)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

The risks to health of increases above 1.5° C are now well established. Indeed, no temperature rise is “safe.” In the past 20 years, heat-related mortality among people over 65 years of age has increased by more than 50%. Higher temperatures have brought increased dehydration and renal function loss, dermatological malignancies, tropical infections, adverse mental health outcomes, pregnancy complications, allergies, and cardiovascular and pulmonary morbidity and mortality. Harms disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, including children, older populations, ethnic minorities, poorer communities, and those with underlying health problems.<sup>6</sup>

The consequences of the environmental crisis fall disproportionately on those countries and communities that have contributed least to the problem and are least able to mitigate the harms. Yet no country, no matter how wealthy, can shield itself from these impacts. Allowing the consequences to fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable will breed more conflict, food insecurity, forced displacement, and zoonotic disease — with severe implications for all countries and communities. As with the Covid-19 pandemic, we are globally as strong as our weakest member.<sup>7</sup>

Many governments met the threat of the Covid-19 pandemic with unprecedented funding. The environmental crisis demands a similar emergency response. Huge investment will be needed, beyond what is being considered or delivered anywhere in the world. But such investments will produce huge positive health and economic outcomes. These include high-quality jobs, reduced air pollution, increased physical activity, and improved housing and diet. Better air quality alone would realize health benefits that easily offset the global costs of emissions reductions.<sup>8</sup>

These measures will also improve the social and economic determinants of health, the poor state of which may have made populations more vulnerable to the Covid-19 pandemic. But the changes cannot be achieved through a return to damaging austerity policies or the continuation of the large inequalities of wealth and power within and between countries.<sup>9</sup>

## **WHAT WE CAN DO AS INDIVIDUALS**

To keep the increase on global temperatures from exceeding a 1.5 degrees C increase, governments across the world must take unprecedented action of the kind they took in WWII where industry and all of society was turned over to meet the needs of this war.

It is far less costly to governments to implement measures to mitigate global heating than it is to address the costs of the devastation caused by global heating. Not to mention the deaths, starvation, mass migration etc we would be facing.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMe2113200> Call for Emergency Action to Limit Global Temperature Increases, Restore Biodiversity, and Protect Health

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

A key action we as citizens can take is to “*use our voices to encourage action at every level*”. To let our governments know we want them to take aggressive action to stop global heating. “*It’s not about saving the planet. The planet will be orbiting the sun long after we’re gone. It is about saving us – our civilization, and many of the other living things that share this planet with us*”. “*It’s engaging and using your voice and advocating for change in your community in your place of work. In the school that you would have your child attends or the organization that you’re part of*”.<sup>10</sup>

But we should also examine our own lifestyle and the changes we can make to reduce our contribution to the global heating. Things such as:

- have fewer children – in north America that is the most significant action one can take because Canada’s per capita CO2 emissions is 14.2t per person compared to 1.77 per person in India.<sup>11</sup>
- reduce our consumption of goods, shop local, and minimize our on-line shopping – see article on effects of using Amazon<sup>12</sup>
- eat a more plant based diet<sup>13</sup>
- rely on walking and biking more than a car
- make our houses very energy efficient – net zero if possible; use renewal sources of energy such as solar, ground source heat, wind – see <sup>14</sup>

To enable you to understand your personal impact on global heating, the Sustainability and Climate Emergency Advisory Committee (SCEAC) has posted an Ecological Footprint Calculator that calculates this. We have also provided instructions on how to use this calculator. This link will take you there [Sustainability & Climate Change Emergency Advisory Committee - Town of Cobourg](#).

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/30/climate-crisis-emergency-climate-disaster>;

‘Extraordinary is no longer extraordinary’: US scientists on a year of climate disasters

<sup>11</sup> <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/canada?country=CAN~IND~IDN#per-capita-how-much-co2-does-the-average-person-emit>;

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/dec/11/how-one-click-shopping-is-creating-amazon-warehouse-towns-were-disposable-humans> ‘Pollution everywhere’: how one-click shopping is creating Amazon warehouse towns

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theenergymix.com/2022/01/23/richest-countries-could-slash-emissions-free-up-land-by-reducing-meat-and-dairy-consumption/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theenergymix.com/2021/12/29/net-zero-home-rode-out-edmonton-cold-snap-with-no-furnace-required/>;