

Kids Take Ontario Government to Court over Climate Change Plan

by [Monique Conrod](#)



Seven young people in Ontario are taking the provincial government to court over its plan for fighting climate change.

The young climate activists range in age from 12 to 24 years old. They include students, artists, community workers and entrepreneurs who live in different parts of the province. Three are members of First Nations. The youngest in the group, Sophia Mathur, was the first student in Canada to join the Fridays for Future strikes started by Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg.

They are working with an organization called Ecojustice, which helps people fight to protect the environment, and Stockwoods LLP, a law firm in Toronto.

The young people say the province's climate action plan will not do enough to fight global warming. They are asking the Ontario Superior Court of Justice to order the government to take stronger action.

In 2016, the Ontario government developed a climate action plan that would help lower the amount of greenhouse gases the province produces. (*Greenhouse gases cause temperatures to rise, adding to global warming and climate change.*)

But in 2018, the people of Ontario elected a new government, led by Premier Doug Ford. The new government cancelled more than 700 programs the previous government had created to reduce greenhouse gases.

The cancelled programs included renewable energy projects like wind and solar power; more money for cleaner public transit; programs to help more people buy electric cars; and rules that required businesses to lower the amount of greenhouse gases they produce.

Then the new government created its own climate action plan. But this plan allows the province to produce higher amounts of greenhouse gases, which means it won't do as much to fight climate change.

The young climate activists are asking the court to declare that the new, weaker plan violates the rights of Ontario's youth and future generations.

Their argument, which they put forward on Nov. 29, 2019, is based on Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter guarantees certain rights to all Canadians. Lawyers for the young people say two of these rights are being violated by the Ontario government.

The first is the right to "life, liberty and security." The lawyers say this includes the right to a stable and sustainable environment, but the government's climate plan doesn't do enough to protect the environment.

Without stronger action, the activists say, climate change will have dangerous effects on the environment. This includes more wildfires and floods; more insects, like ticks and mosquitos, that spread diseases; poor air quality that can make people sick; and melting ice in Canada's north which will lead to other environmental problems.

The second right that is being violated is the right of all Canadians to "equal protection under the law." The lawyers say that young people and future generations will suffer the most from the effects of climate change. This means they are not being given equal protection by the Ontario government.

The climate activists are asking the court to order the government to set new, lower limits for greenhouse gases produced in the province, and to create a new climate action plan which will make sure Ontario meets those limits.

Young people around the world are taking their governments to court over climate action. Lawsuits have been filed in the United States, Colombia, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, India and Pakistan. In October, 15 other young Canadians filed a similar claim against the federal government.

Comprehension Questions:

- 1) The young people mentioned in this article are trying to do something they believe in. Do you have a cause or a charity that you feel strongly about (*or is there one that interests you*)? What could you do, to make a difference (*big or small*)? Who would your actions help, and how?
- 2) The article mentions two rights which the young people say are being violated by the government's climate change plan. What are they and what do they mean?