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One Year from Trial, West Coast Environmental Law Stands with Youth Taking Canada to Court Over Weak Climate Change Action

Youth Plaintiffs Hold Canada Accountable for Charter Violations as Climate Crisis Deepens

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) & səliłwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) Territories / VANCOUVER

In a historic eight-week trial set to begin next October, 15 young Canadians will take their federal government to court, asserting that existing Canadian climate change law is severely inadequate and violates their *Charter* rights. Today, West Coast Environmental Law is announcing its decision to join this critical case (*La Rose et al. v. His Majesty the King*) in support of these youth plaintiffs, underscoring the urgent need for accountability and decisive action to safeguard current and future generations from escalating climate impacts.

Filed in October 2019, the lawsuit asserts that these young Canadians are already being harmed by climate change and that the federal government – through inadequate climate targets and plans, and by consistently missing those targets and delaying or not implementing its plans – is violating their rights to life, liberty and security of the person under section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. After years of procedural fights, in 2023 the Federal Court of Appeal confirmed that the youth could proceed with their case.

The plaintiffs come from communities across the country, from Vancouver Island to the Northwest Territories to Nova Scotia. Ranging from 16 to 24 years of age, these youth are all living with the impacts of climate change. Unprecedented heat waves, wildfires, floods and other extreme weather events are damaging their homes and communities, threatening their health and safety, and disrupting cultural and recreational activities central to their well-being.

Plaintiff Sadie Ava Vipond from Calgary, AB – who was 13 at the time the case was first announced – is now 19 and studying Environmental Sciences in university. She commented:

“Learning about the effects of humans on our Earth every day, it has become even more obvious that something big must be done to fight against the climate crisis. My hope is that this case will be part of that something, for the sake of our future and future generations.”

By joining this precedent-setting case, West Coast Environmental Law will be part of the litigation team as well as supporting the case through fundraising and awareness-raising.

West Coast, a non-profit based in Vancouver, BC, has also been spearheading efforts among local governments in British Columbia to launch a class-action lawsuit to force the world's largest polluters to pay their fair share of local climate costs – which would be the first of its kind in Canada.

Jessica Magonet, Staff Lawyer, West Coast Environmental Law said:

“We’ve long pointed out that industry and government decision-makers that contribute to the climate crisis are violating legal rights and that courts must hold them accountable. We are proud to join this precedent-setting case brought by these courageous young plaintiffs to force the federal government to use all available tools to secure a safe and livable future for all Canadians.”

West Coast is supporting the plaintiffs alongside Arvay Finlay LLP, Tollefson Law Corporation, Our Children's Trust, and the Pacific Centre for Environmental Law and Litigation (CELL). While West Coast Environmental Law is contributing its time to the case for free, we are also inviting donations from Canadians to help cover other fees and costs associated with the case.

“We are deeply grateful to stand alongside West Coast Environmental Law in supporting these 15 courageous young people as they seek justice,” said Deputy Director of Our Children's Trust Andrea Rodgers. “This trial comes at a crucial moment – every day, the climate crisis is worsening, threatening the health, safety, and fundamental rights of these young Canadians. WCEL's involvement sends a strong message that bold, coordinated legal action is essential to securing a safe and livable planet for all.”

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[West Coast Environmental Law](#) is a non-profit group of environmental lawyers and strategists dedicated to safeguarding the environment through law. West Coast works to transform environmental decision-making and strengthen legal protection for the environment through collaborative legal strategies that bridge Indigenous and Canadian law. www.wcel.org

[Our Children's Trust](#) was founded in 2010 on the idea that courts are vital to democracy and empowered to protect our children and the planet. Without a stable climate system, every natural resource we rely upon to exercise our basic human rights—life, liberty, home, happiness—is under threat. Our work will be achieved when there is universal recognition of children's climate rights by courts around the world and children's fundamental rights to life on this planet are protected. www.ourchildrenstrust.org