



The Parish of St. Mary York

Faith in Action

Building hope for tomorrow in the face of climate change

Climate Change: Oh Canada!

Guest author: Mike Howe

So far, we've looked at the global effects of climate change. What changes are we seeing in Canada, and what can we expect in the future?

- Longer and hotter summers bringing more heat waves and wildfires
- Higher temperatures cause increased evaporation and more droughts
- Increase in severity of weather events such as hurricanes, heavy rainfall, and snowfall
- Increased coastal and inland flooding due to sea-level rise and heavy precipitation events
- Changing vegetation as our traditional coniferous (evergreen) forest continues to move northward and is replaced by deciduous tree canopy.

Changing vegetation is not only about the trees. This will impact those creatures that are dependent on this type of vegetation for food and shelter. The ultimate impact of these changes will depend on how successfully species can adapt to the "new normal."

Climate change places increasing pressure on all living creatures to be able to adapt. Certain species, such as human beings, are more readily able to adapt than others. Those who are unable will be challenged to survive.

The great Canadian icon, the polar bear, for example, is facing an uncertain future due to dwindling sea ice in its Arctic habitat. Longer, warmer summers are causing much of the Arctic Ocean to be ice-free for extended periods of time, decreasing the bears' access to their primary food source – seals. Consequently, the bears are forced to spend more time foraging on land, where they are at risk of coming into conflict with humans.

Not only will the animals have to adapt, but it is also likely that Canada will experience an increase in human refugees, as climate change causes their countries to become increasingly inhospitable.

In my final article of this series, I will be discussing some of the likely impacts, specifically for New Brunswick and in particular Fredericton.

