

State of Climate Philanthropy in Canada

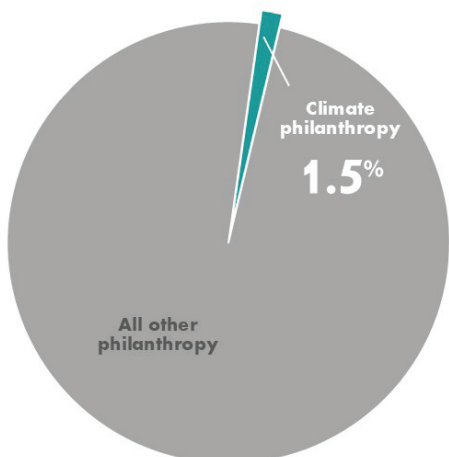
SEPTEMBER 2025



So far 2025 has been a discouraging year for both government and corporate action on climate change.

Governments, particularly in the West, have been cutting climate investments and rolling back policy. In the US alone, Donald Trump has put US\$369 billion of clean energy investments on the chopping block while forcefully dismantling national climate regulations. The European Union, for its part, has passed omnibus legislation watering down its European Green Deal, while Germany and the United Kingdom both announced dramatic cuts to international climate finance in favour of new military spending. Meanwhile, in Canada, the federal government dropped its world-leading consumer carbon tax in March, with provincial governments like British Columbia following suit, and is facing increasing pressure to repeal or re-consider other key climate policies.

Total climate philanthropy in
Canada (2023)



The private sector, too, appears to be embracing the backslide. All of the world's biggest banks, including Canada's big five, have now quit the Net Zero Banking Alliance, a global coalition that once counted more than 140 financial institutions committed to shifting capital to the net zero transition. The private investment picture is murky, with global investment in climate technologies down 19 percent, while in Canada, auto manufacturers have delayed or scaled back much of the C\$46 billion promised since 2020 for building electric vehicles.

Suddenly, both government and private sector action on climate change, globally and here in Canada, has become much less bold and much less reliable.

The backdrop for this political and corporate recalcitrance, of course, is demonstrably worsening climate impacts. The year 2025 is expected to join 2024 and 2023 as the three hottest on record. Extreme heat, drought and wildfires are all registering record years on many parts of the planet. And, in Canada itself, 2025 has brought historic heat waves and wildfire burn area.

Climate philanthropy, also referred to as “climate-focused philanthropy” or “climate change mitigation philanthropy”, is charitable giving that is targeted at reducing, removing and avoiding the greenhouse gas pollution that causes climate change.

It’s in this context that Clean Economy Fund has conducted its annual analysis of philanthropic giving for climate solutions in Canada. This analysis is for the year 2023, the most recent for which data is available.

Philanthropy, after all, is a powerful force for driving Canada’s transition to a climate-safe, net-zero emissions future. Not only because, as we’ve previously shown, philanthropy is capable of unlocking much greater amounts of public and private capital – much like the first dominoes in a domino chain – but also because well-targeted philanthropy can challenge prevailing government and private sector trends, countercyclically sparking climate leadership where it would otherwise not happen.

So climate philanthropy matters – perhaps now, when government and private sector leadership is lagging – more than ever.

Yet there is a persistent shortage of climate philanthropy. According to the US-based ClimateWorks Foundation, climate philanthropy has never exceeded more than 2 percent of total philanthropic giving globally - at least so long as they’ve been measuring it. That puts climate behind causes like animal charities and social services, and miles behind the biggest philanthropic causes like education, health and religious organizations.

The shortage of climate philanthropy persists in Canada also.

Climate philanthropy in Canada is at \$389 million, making it just 1.5% of total charitable giving

Our new analysis, for the year 2023, shows that climate philanthropy in Canada is at C\$389 million and comprises just 1.5 percent of total Canadian charitable giving – putting Canada below the current global average of 1.8 percent.

Contributing to Canada’s total is \$131.5 million in foundation-led climate philanthropy, which includes contributions from family foundations, corporate foundations and community foundations, in addition to an estimated \$257.5 million in individual and business donations.

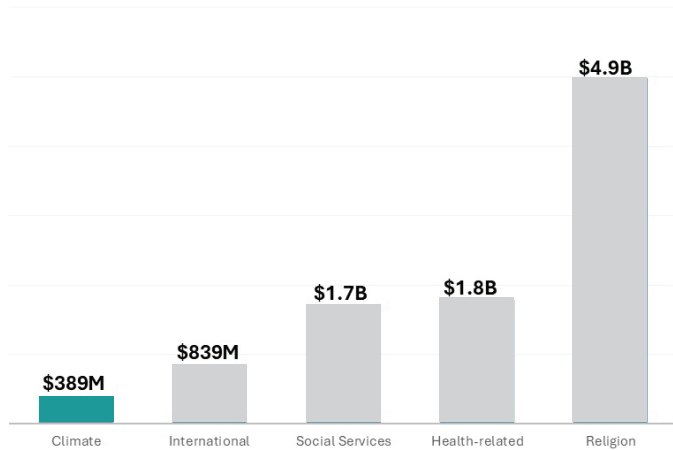
How does Canadian climate philanthropy compare?

At \$389 million, climate philanthropy in Canada is comparatively low.

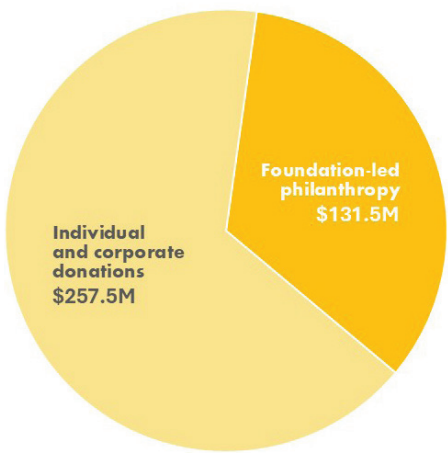
To start, Canada is behind its international peers. With 1.5 percent of philanthropic giving going towards climate solutions, Canada is underperforming against the current global average of 1.8 percent. In fact, to have met the global average, Canada would have needed to generate roughly \$78 million more climate philanthropy in 2023. Unfortunately, a lack of comparable data among Canada's international peers prevents us from making reliable country-to-country comparisons beyond the global average.

Climate philanthropy in Canada is also low compared with other charitable causes. At \$389 million, climate philanthropy sits at *less than half* of what Canadians sent to international charities in 2023; *less than one quarter* of what went to health-related causes and to social services; and *less than 10 percent* of the philanthropy destined for religious organizations.

Climate philanthropy compared with other charitable causes (2023)



Breakdown by type of philanthropy (2023)



3 reasons why climate philanthropy is lagging.

For many, it's counterintuitive that climate philanthropy in Canada is so low. After all, almost three quarters of Canadians see climate change as an urgent issue. So why then is it the target for only 1.5 percent of our charitable giving? Recent insights provide us with some clues.

- 1. Pessimism.** In its 2025 Giving Report, CanadaHelps, an online giving platform, notes that Canadians who feel dejected about solving climate change are at least three times less likely to give charitably to climate solutions.

Considering climate pessimism is widely prevalent, it is no doubt also affecting those in the philanthropic community. To increase philanthropic giving, we need to increase confidence in philanthropy's ability to solve the problem.

- 2. Perceived Responsibility.** Another clue can be drawn from the public opinion polling that shows Canadians believe the primary responsibility for solving climate change belongs to governments and businesses. Many potential donors and philanthropic leaders are likely unclear about what role philanthropy can even play in solving climate change. That suggests we need to get better at making the connections between philanthropy and impact.
- 3. Lower Familiarity.** Ultimately, we at the Clean Economy Fund put our stock in one overriding explanation for Canada's low level of climate philanthropy: it's simply that climate change has emerged more recently as a societal issue and, as a result, the pathways for philanthropy are less understood.

While climate change has emerged as a top issue for Canadians over the past 25 years, it's less familiar and less entrenched than the more popular philanthropic causes in Canada. Even among environmental causes, climate change is less familiar. Grants data shows that environmental issues with longer track records, like nature conservation, are the recipients of sometimes more than twice as much philanthropy as climate solutions.

Signs of momentum.

The good news is climate philanthropy – both from foundations and from individual and business donations – showed significant signs of momentum in 2023.

When it comes to foundation-led philanthropy, which saw more than 70 private and public foundations giving a total of \$131.5 million in climate-focused grants in 2023, we see two encouraging trends.

The good news is climate philanthropy showed significant signs of momentum in 2023.

First, we see many existing climate funders increasing their commitments to climate solutions. The two examples that stand out are the Ivey Foundation, which in 2023 began spending down its entire \$100-million endowment over five years, all for the sake of climate solutions, and the Trottier Family Foundation, which announced a stunning \$20-million per year increase in its climate grant-making beginning as of 2023.

The second encouraging trend we see is new funders entering into the fray. Like the Peter Gilgan Foundation, which in 2023 launched a robust climate program that grew its climate-grantmaking almost tenfold. Also the Ronald S. Roadburg Foundation, based in Vancouver,

which began ramping up its ambitious climate program in 2023. Finally, as of 2023, we also see a growth in Donor Advised Funds, and in particular those held at community foundations, beginning to get more engaged in climate solutions.

The latest upshot of this momentum, if we fast forward a few months and afford ourselves a sneak peak at 2024 and 2025, is major new pledges of climate funding by foundations, including C\$481 million over ten years committed through Clean Economy Fund's Climate Champions platform.

At the same time as these encouraging signs from foundation-led philanthropy, there was a big lift in the charitable donations coming from individual households and businesses. According to the annual charity snapshot prepared by Blumbergs, charitable organizations across the board in Canada reported a 12 percent increase in revenue from individual, corporate and otherwise tax receipt-able donations in 2023. While the data doesn't allow us to see exactly which causes those individual and corporate donations went towards, this boost inevitably provided a positive shot in the arm for the important climate work being advanced by Canada's charitable sector.

Aiming for \$1 billion by 2030.

With climate philanthropy in Canada lagging, we simply must facilitate more of it.

Our first goal should be to match the global average as soon as possible. That means lifting climate philanthropy in Canada from 1.5 percent of total philanthropic giving to 1.8 percent, which in turn means growing climate philanthropy from 2023's \$389 million to at least \$467 million.

But we need to quickly set our sights higher than this. Canada's contribution to climate pollution is among the highest in the world. And while it is industry and governments that ultimately need to do the heavy lifting to move Canada to net-zero emissions, philanthropy can be the all-important first domino that sets the rest of the chain in motion. So the moment for climate philanthropy is now.

For that reason, Clean Economy Fund's objective it to grow climate philanthropy in Canada to \$1 billion per year by 2030, almost triple what we see in 2023. That may seem a tall order but it is necessary given the scale of the climate crisis we face. Tripling the amount of climate philanthropy could, in effect, triple the amount of innovation, triple the amount of advocacy and mobilization, and triple the size of the giant leaps we take.

Our goal for increasing climate philanthropy in Canada

Climate philanthropy today	Goal for 2030
\$389M PER YEAR	\$1B PER YEAR

At Clean Economy Fund, we believe this goal becomes achievable when the philanthropic community, and Canadians writ large, see the impact that every philanthropic dollar can have when it's well targeted. And that is the value we can provide.

In the words of one of Canada's hockey greats, "you miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take". When it comes to climate solutions, it's time for Canada's philanthropic community to take a big shot at **\$1 billion by 2030**. Clean Economy Fund is excited to help our peers shoot, and score, with this ambitious goal.

Our methodology.

For more detail about the methodology used for this analysis, as well as citations, please see the online version at www.cleaneconomyfund.ca/climate2025

Note: Last year, Clean Economy Fund piloted a first-ever calculation of total climate philanthropy in Canada, using 2022 data. The methodology used in this year's calculation includes a number of modifications that improve the quality and credibility of the calculation. Because of these modifications, we caution against comparing this analysis for 2023 with last year's analysis for 2022. Going forward, we intend to use this calculation for 2023 as our baseline year.

Citation: Clean Economy Fund. (2025). *State of Climate Philanthropy in Canada*. <https://www.cleaneconomyfund.ca/climate2025>



About CEF.

Clean Economy Fund is a public foundation connecting the philanthropic community with high-impact climate solutions in Canada.

Learn more at: www.cleaneconomyfund.ca