



BALSILLIE SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

67 Erb Street West, Waterloo, Ontario Canada N2L 6C2

BSIA Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions Plan

For the period May 2025-April 2026

We acknowledge that the Balsillie School, the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the Centre for International Governance Innovation are located on the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Anishnaabe, and Haudenosaunee Peoples.

Preamble

This document is the Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA)'s plan for reaching net zero carbon emissions. It has been prepared in part in order to allow the BSIA to sign the [Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges](#). It responds to the pledge, plan, proceed and publish commitments made by signatories of the initiative.

This preamble covers background information about the BSIA and the approach the School is taking to achieving net zero.

- 1) The BSIA is an institute for advanced research, education and outreach on global governance. Founded in 2007, the BSIA is an equal collaboration between the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), the University of Waterloo (UW), and Wilfrid Laurier University (Laurier). To facilitate collaboration between CIGI, UW and Laurier on a practical level, the BSIA is a separately incorporated entity.
- 2) The BSIA's activities as a separately incorporated organization fall to some degree outside of the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reporting and action frameworks of its three partner institutions. The BSIA has thus moved to take climate action on its own. These actions are designed to complement those being taken by CIGI, UW and Laurier. It is important to note the nature of the relationship between the BSIA as a separately incorporated institution and BSIA-affiliated faculty, students and (most) staff. BSIA-affiliated faculty and some staff are employed by UW or Laurier, not by the BSIA. The BSIA does not enroll students, offer courses, or grant degrees, and BSIA-affiliated students are enrolled at either UW or Laurier. The existing GHG reporting frameworks and goals at UW and Laurier thus already cover many of the activities of BSIA-affiliated faculty, staff and students. The initiatives discussed in this document all apply to the specific activities of the BSIA as a separately incorporated organization, and in case of conflicts between them and frameworks, goals and regulations at CIGI, UW and Laurier, the latter take precedence. Links to information about the emissions reductions activities of UW and Laurier can be found at the end of this document.
- 3) In making this plan publicly available, the BSIA and its affiliated faculty, staff and students recognize the GHG emissions that result from their research, teaching, studying, service, and administrative work, and pledge to work towards reducing them. The BSIA is committed to approaching climate action in ways informed

by a concern for justice and equity in the world at large, in Canada, in the Region of Waterloo and the Haldimand Tract, and within the BSIA itself. The carbon emissions of BSIA-affiliated faculty, students and staff are not equal, and those inequalities need to be kept in mind as the BSIA works towards net zero emissions.

- 4) The BSIA's core goals (quoting the Governance document) are "to develop new solutions to humanity's critical problems, improve global governance now and in the future, and enhance the quality of people's lives around the world." The research, education and outreach work being done at BSIA can contribute in important ways to grappling with the extraordinary challenges posed by climate change. In the medium term some of that work will unavoidably involve GHG emissions. The initial goals and priorities of this plan focus on reducing unnecessary emissions, on thinking creatively about new, less carbon-intense ways of doing things, and on better understanding the emissions implications of everything we do. To meet its core goals, however, the BSIA will for the moment need to continue funding some quite carbon-intense activities (such as flying, where appropriate).
- 5) While the BSIA commits to working towards net zero GHG emissions, this is not a goal that the School can accomplish on its own. It will require engagement with the partner organizations and a broader context of supportive public policy in a wide range of areas.
- 6) This plan does not envisage a role for offsets (supporting or paying for reductions in greenhouse gas emissions other than at the BSIA) in getting the BSIA to net zero GHG emissions. It seeks to identify ways in which the BSIA can reduce its own GHG emissions, not ways in which the School can pay other people to reduce theirs.
- 7) Thus, while the plan commits the BSIA to trying to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2040 and covers a range of initiatives that will start our work towards that goal, it does not present a detailed road map that would allow us to achieve net zero. The plan will require substantial further elaboration and development in the years to come.
- 8) While the BSIA's activities involve hundreds of faculty, fellows, researchers, staff and students, the BSIA as a separately-incorporated organization is relatively small. In developing this plan, we have sought to develop a GHG reporting framework that is accurate, transparent and credible but that also does not put an unreasonable burden on the BSIA director and staff.

Goals of this Plan

The goals of this plan involve different time frames:

Over the **long term**, the School commits to achieving net zero carbon emissions (Scope 1 and Scope 2, and Scope 3 travel) by 2040.

Over the **medium term**, the School has set interim emissions reduction targets of 10% by 2026 for building-related emissions (Scope 1 and 2) and 30% by 2026 for travel-related emissions (Scope 3).

Over the **short term**, the School will, during the 2025-26 fiscal year (May 1 to April 30), calculate and report its emissions for 2024 and compare them to the already-calculated 2019 (pre-pandemic) baseline and the 2023 figures; continue implementation of the carbon budgeting process for School-funded travel that was created in 2021-22; work to reduce emissions from the building (natural gas and electricity) and other School activities; and provide educational opportunities to help faculty, staff and students reduce emissions from their work lives.

BSIA Activities that Generate Carbon Emissions

The following is a list of activities and processes that we have identified as relevant sources of carbon emissions related to the BSIA. Emissions associated with items 3 through 8 are under the purview of the BSIA narrowly construed – that is, they are funded by the BSIA and/or are under the School's control. The BSIA has limited direct control over emissions related to items 1 and 2, but these emissions sources are included in our commitment to net zero.

The items are identified in carbon accounting terms as being Scope 1, 2 or 3. Scope 1 emissions are the direct emissions from CIGI/BSIA-owned or -controlled sources, Scope 2 emissions are indirect emissions from electricity, steam, heating and cooling purchased and consumed by BSIA, and Scope 3 emissions are all other indirect emissions.

- 1) Building heating and cooling (Scope 1). The BSIA is located in the CIGI Campus building, which is owned by CIGI. The School is thus a tenant of one of its partners. The BSIA does not control the building's design or heating/cooling sources, though does have some control over the internal temperature of the parts of the building that it occupies. The energy for heating at the BSIA comes from natural gas and that for cooling from electricity.
- 2) Building electricity (Scope 2). Again, the BSIA does not control the design/wiring or power sources of the building, but does have some control over the amount of electricity used in the parts of the building it occupies.
- 3) BSIA-funded travel by faculty, students, staff and guests (Scope 3). The BSIA directly provides funding for travel related primarily to events at the School (visiting speakers, workshops) and to graduate student research and conference attendance. The key modes of transportation are air travel, automobiles (mileage reimbursement), taxis and shuttles. This plan does *not* cover travel directly funded by the universities or CIGI or by granting agencies like SSHRC.
- 4) BSIA-funded events catering (Scope 3). This refers primarily to food and drink provided at BSIA events and paid for by the School, and associated equipment and supplies (plates, cups, cutlery, etc.).

- 5) BSIA-funded/provided equipment and supplies (Scope 3). This includes staff computers and materials like paper and toner that are purchased by the School for the use of faculty, staff and students.
- 6) BSIA-funded promotional material and mail (Scope 3). This includes brochures, annual reports, and envelopes.
- 7) Online conferencing software (Scope 3). This includes electricity consumption at the BSIA and by the servers of software providers. It does not include home use of this software by BSIA faculty, staff and students.
- 8) The BSIA's waste stream (Scope 3). Includes wastewater, solid waste and recycling.
- 9) Commuting to and from the BSIA by faculty, staff and students (Scope 3). The primary relationship of most BSIA-affiliated faculty, staff and students is with their home university, and their commuting-related GHG emissions are best reported by their home institutions rather than by the BSIA. We note that UW already reports the commuting-related emissions of [employees and students](#). As noted below, however, the plan does include efforts to reduce the commuting-related emissions of BSIA-affiliated faculty, staff and students.

A Carbon Emissions Reporting Framework for the BSIA

- 1) *The Building: Scope 1 and 2.*
The BSIA will work with CIGI to use existing frameworks and guidelines for building emissions reporting to determine the extent of the CIGI campus' GHG emissions from heating, cooling, and electricity use.
- 2) *Travel: Scope 3.*
Emissions estimates are easier to determine for travel than they are for most other kinds of Scope 3 emissions (though they are still estimates rather than direct measurements). In 2021-22 the BSIA provided travel data for 2018-19 to Sustainable Waterloo Region in order to calculate a baseline for travel-related emissions from before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024-25 SWR calculated the School's 2023 travel emissions. In 2025-26 the School will report its 2024 travel-related emissions and compare them to the 2019 baseline and the 2023 figure. The School commits to reporting its future travel-related emissions.
- 3) *All other Scope 3.*
Other types of Scope 3 emissions are much more difficult to measure or credibly estimate, and many net zero plans do not include Scope 3 emissions for things like commuting or purchased equipment, materials and food. The BSIA will not measure, estimate or report its emissions for Scope 3 emissions other than business travel. The School will, however, take actions aimed at reducing emissions in these areas.

Initial Actions Aimed at Reducing BSIA Carbon Emissions

- 1) The BSIA declares a climate emergency.
- 2) The BSIA Global Climate Action Committee has been made a permanent committee of the BSIA. The Committee works with the School on implementing and updating this plan. Membership of the Committee ideally consists of:
 - At least one faculty member from UW and from Laurier;
 - At least one student from each BSIA-affiliated program;
 - At least one BSIA staff member.
- 3) The Building: the BSIA has agreed with CIGI to take responsibility for 50% of the building-related GHG emissions for the CIGI Campus. We will continue to rely on gas and electricity consumption records provided by CIGI to measure and reduce those emissions. The interim emissions reduction target is 10% by 2026.

Actions that the BSIA can take on its own (without needing to coordinate with CIGI) to reduce building-related emissions include raising the building's internal temperature in the summer and lowering it in the winter (that is, using less air conditioning and heating), and working to reduce energy consumption in offices and classrooms.

- 4) Travel: in 2021-22, the BSIA developed a simple way to estimate the carbon emissions associated with proposals for travel funding (flights, reimbursed automobile mileage, taxi and shuttle trips, rail). Proposals for BSIA funding for workshops, events or travel now require that applicants use this framework to generate a "carbon budget" of estimated GHG emissions associated with their proposal, and to explain why those emissions are necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the application. Applications should also consider alternative, less carbon-intensive ways of meeting their goals and compare their viability with that of the proposed travel.

The BSIA's Research Clusters receive funding from the School for their activities and do not need to go through a central applications process in order to have those activities approved. The Clusters will also be asked to calculate carbon budgets for their planned activities before finalizing them and to consider alternate, less carbon-intensive ways of achieving their goals.

- 5) As noted above, the BSIA will not report on or make a numerical commitment with respect to Scope 3 emissions other than business travel. The School will, however, work to develop routines and practices that are likely to reduce emissions in these areas and to provide relevant education and training for BSIA-affiliated faculty, staff and students. The BSIA can draw on expertise at UW and Laurier (including through Laurier's Green Office Program) and at external organizations like Sustainable Waterloo Region for these purposes. Examples might include the use of green catering guidelines to reduce food and beverage-related emissions and discussions of how to reduce printing and other materials use.
- 6) While this plan considers commuting-related emissions for BSIA-affiliated faculty, staff and students to fall under the jurisdiction of emissions reporting and reduction frameworks at Laurier, UW and CIGI, the School will work to promote more climate-friendly commuting practices such as cycling, carpooling and using

public transportation. This will include consideration of how to facilitate working from home and remote participation in meetings where appropriate. The School continues to recognize and emphasize the importance of face-to-face interaction and in-person presence of faculty, staff and students.

- 7) To facilitate work on all of these goals, the BSIA has joined [Sustainable Waterloo Region](#).

Expanding BSIA Climate-Oriented Research, Education, Outreach and Partnerships

The BSIA is already a hub of climate-oriented research and education, with world-class faculty, students and other researchers, and many important initiatives under way across and beyond the School's research clusters. Research at BSIA is grappling with the implications of climate change in a wide range of areas, including migration, security (including food security), political economy, and human rights. The BSIA commits to expanding climate-oriented research, education, outreach and partnerships in the coming years, including by seeking to connect more with climate action in the Region of Waterloo and by developing partnerships with community organizations.

The BSIA's [Environment and Resources Research Cluster](#) is one important venue for this work. The ERRC is profiling climate modelling and governance work in its public events, in the course of which it is networking with national and international organizations; establishing new research partnerships among BSIA researchers as well as external partners; and pursuing external funding. The cluster is also providing training opportunities for graduate students in order to prepare them to work in the climate policy field, including understanding climate models, how to work at the science-policy interface and how to produce policy-relevant research materials. This activity is expected to result in substantive findings that can be used in teaching and supervision and for the development of executive short courses for the Balsillie Executive Institute.

Reporting and Updating

The BSIA commits to reporting its carbon emissions (as delineated above), and its progress towards meeting its emissions reduction targets, every calendar year. The baseline data for 2019 and the figures for 2023 can be found [here](#).

The BSIA commits to updating this plan every year to incorporate new approaches to GHG emissions reductions and updated reductions targets. The Global Climate Action Committee will have responsibility for coordinating this work.

Postscript: Creation and Approval Process of this Plan

The Balsillie School Council approved at its October 2020 meeting a motion creating a new Global Climate Action Committee tasked with preparing a proposal that would, if approved, allow the School to sign the Global Universities and Colleges Climate Letter (now renamed the Race to Zero for Universities and Colleges), preferably before 1 April 2021. This committee was created in late 2020 and worked from January to May 2021 to draft the plan. The committee circulated a survey requesting input from

the BSIA community in April 2021, and held a town hall meeting on the draft plan on April 9. The committee received valuable advice and feedback on the plan from staff at UW, Laurier and CIGI and from the BSIA community.

The original plan, and the BSIA's signature of the Race to Zero, were approved by Council on 14 May 2021 and by the Balsillie School's Board on 22 September 2021. The plan is updated every year.

Global Climate Action Committee Members, 2024-25

Derek Hall, faculty, Laurier (Chair)
Hannah Barbero, MIPP, Laurier
Ainsley Cunningham, MAGG, UW
Sarah Greene, PhDGG, UW
Jonathan Hui, PhDGG, Laurier
John McMurtry, MAGG, UW
Finn O'Connor, MAGG, UW
Andrew Thompson, staff, BSIA
Hope Tracey, PhDGG, UW
Larissa Varella, staff, BSIA
Kiara Yllescas, MIPP, Laurier

Appendix A: GHG emissions reductions activities information for Laurier and UW

<https://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/>

<https://uwaterloo.ca/sustainability/projects-and-initiatives/energy-and-climate-change/climate-and-energy-action-plan>

<https://www.wlu.ca/about/discover-laurier/sustainability/index.html>

Appendix B: Recommended reading on academia, GHG emissions, and emissions reductions

Department of Geography, Planning and Environment. (2019). Flying Less Policy. Concordia University. https://www.concordia.ca/content/dam/artsci/geography-planning-environment/docs/Flying_Less_Policy_GPE_June1_2019.pdf

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Hall, D. (2024). Reporting of and policy on greenhouse gas emissions from air travel at Canadian universities. International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education (ahead of print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-03-2023-0102> and https://scholars.wlu.ca/poli_faculty/60/

Higham, J., & Font, X. (2020). Decarbonising academia: Confronting our climate hypocrisy. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 28(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2019.1695132>

Hoolohan, C., McLachlan, C., Jones, C., Larkin, A., Birch, C., Mander, S., & Broderick, J. (2021). Responding to the climate emergency: How are UK universities establishing sustainable workplace routines for flying and food? *Climate Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2021.1881426>

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