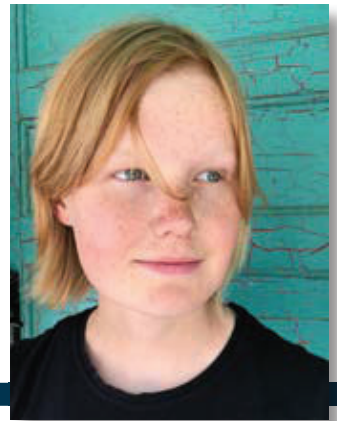


# Youth Climate Activism in Alberta

By Sadie Vipond



**M**y name is Sadie Vipond, and I am 16 years old. I have been involved in climate action ever since I was 12, and I continue to this day. I participate in climate activism because I feel that the wild places and living organisms do not deserve the changing climate impacts that we as humans are inflicting upon them. I spend my time in forests, parks and beautiful natural places and I passionately feel that I need to protect these areas.

I am part of *LaRose vs. Her Majesty the Queen*, a legal case against the federal government to fight for a safe climate future. Myself and 14 other young people from across Canada are asking the Federal government to take adequate action on climate change. We're not suing the government for money. Our ask is this: We want the federal government to implement a science-based climate recovery plan to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, prevent the dangerous effects of the climate crisis and ensure that Canada meets science-based climate targets. In the past, in the present, and unfortunately – but most certainly – in the future, the government has violated mine and my fellow plaintiffs' Charter rights to life, liberty, and security of the person, to equality, and my public trust rights, by contributing to the climate crisis by continuing to support and promote fossil fuels. For decades, the federal government has known that climate change and fossil fuel use threaten the life and personal security of children, but it continues to take actions that harm our generation and those

to come by enabling further fossil fuel extraction and combustion.

I actually started to worry about the climate crisis when I saw the effects around my city. Calgary has been enveloped by wildfire smoke on an almost annual basis, changing the colour of the sun and worsening the air quality. I'm sure we all remember the flooding that happened in Calgary a decade ago. When we have heavy rain, I worry that there will be more consequences, that floods will return, in bigger volume, with even greater damage to our city. These events have not been caused solely by the climate crisis, but their severity and frequency have increased because of the climate crisis. With these regular, very visual reminders of our changing climate, it is always hanging over my head, like a ticking time bomb.

Young people will be the ones forced into taking on this challenge, having to deal with the impacts even though we didn't even cause them. The effects of climate change are ramping up as time passes and our carbon emissions pile up. Through this case, politicians have heard the voices of young people, and this is so important because this issue concerns my future and every other young person's future as well. Politicians impact the planet nearly every time they create a law or regulation, as most human activities can be related to the climate.

We first went to court in October of 2019, and I honestly thought that we would be successful. Unfortunately, that did not happen. Our case was struck down by the federal courts. I remember I was in science class when I got a text

from my dad breaking the news to me. The rest of the science class was going on around me, but I just felt numb to the world. I just couldn't understand why the judge didn't side with us, because the effects of climate change on young people are so evident to me. I was confused and upset, and I still am. I still don't understand why the governments are choosing to ignore this issue for their own benefit. They are choosing to enable short-term corporate profits over long-term safety and security, and that is so worrying to me. It makes me feel very powerless. I don't know how to save the planet from greed.

I think that is why I love being a part of this case. I feel like I'm actually doing something meaningful, whether it is making a change or not. It lifts the feeling of helplessness. Of course, all the eco-anxiety doesn't just go away, but it helps. Honestly, if we succeed or not, I think that we have really gotten the word out there, that young people are suing the government for inadequate climate action, and I think that is really important. We are currently appealing the most recent decision, and continuing to go forward with this fight. But whether this case amounts to something or not, I am glad to be a part of it, to fight for my future and for my world. ♣

*Sadie Vipond is a youth climate activist based in Calgary, Alberta.*