DIVEST from Fossil Fuel Investments

Testimony to Olympia City Council

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I’m Glen Anderson. I have lived and worked in this local community since January 1975.

Thank you for passing agenda item 4-F tonight, urging the Washington State Investment Board to seriously consider divesting from fossil fuels. I want to reinforce the importance and urgency of selling fossil fuel investments – both to stop worsening the climate crisis and to protect the pensions of City of Olympia employees and retirees, along with the pensions of other public employees statewide.

I am a lifelong Washingtonian who retired after a career working for the State of Washington. My pension is absolutely necessary to pay for my living expenses. I am counting on the Washington State Investment Board to manage our assets skillfully to protect my pension.

I am one of many local persons who have testified to the Washington State Investment Board (WSIB) on a number of occasions in recent years, but they have refused to take our advice.

Perhaps they will listen to the Olympia City Council. The same Board is mismanaging the pensions of Olympia’s employees and retirees, as poorly as they are failing to serve Washington State employees and retirees.

Ten to fifteen years ago people were warning about “Peak Oil” – the peak in oil supply, after which oil will become more scarce and more expensive. Now we are experienceing “Peak Oil DEMAND.” People are moving away from oil.

This means that the fossil fuel economy is actually much shakier than most people think, so fossil fuel investments are much riskier than people think. Several times since 2014 I have spoken to the WSIB and urged them to promptly sell your fossil fuel investments. I am disappointed with WSIB’s lack of progress in protecting our pensions from this rapidly worsening risk.

The world has been significantly shifting away from coal and oil. **A rapidly growing number of significant entities have been selling their fossil fuel investments** not only because they’re concerned about the rapidly worsening climate crisis, but much more **because fossil fuel stocks have become risky.** This board must divest too, before it is too late.

This shift away from fossil fuels will escalate rapidly, so **the fossil fuel industry is financially vulnerable now and will crash soon**.

Fossil fuel companies used to be considered safe, high quality “blue chip” investments, but now they are doomed to crashing – and crashing sooner rather than later.

An economic bubble always seems positive and safe while the bubble is expanding. But **when the bubble bursts, the crash occurs rapidly**.

Thanks to the Olympia City Council for joining the growing number of voices urging WSIB to sell all fossil fuel investments now before it’s too late.

There is another angle is important too: The moral and ethical angle. I take very seriously the moral and ethical aspects of the issues that I work on.

We all know the familiar advice to “put your money where your mouth is.” We need to manage our finances consistently with the values we express. This implies taking our money away from activities that violate our values.

Strategically, we should also take additional actions to cut off larger money supplies from activities that are bad morally or ethically. Divestment is obviously moral and ethical – just like the divestment campaign that pressured giant business corporations to stop supporting South Africa’s apartheid.

We absolutely must protect the earth’s climate. And we absolutely must protect the pensions of employees of state and local governments.

Thank you for urging the Washington State Investment Board to divest from fossil fuel investments.