

**REPORT TO PARKS & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY JANUARY 23, 2019**

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“Forget that the task of planet-saving is not possible in the time required. Do what needs to be done, and check to see if it was possible only after you are finished.”

- Paul Hawken, author and entrepreneur

**SUBJECT** Climate Emergency Declaration

**TIME SENSITIVITY**

There has been some suggestion that this report should be forwarded to the Board’s Strategic Planning session. To clarify, it is coming forward in advance of the Board’s Strategic Plan being adopted – and in response to the key emerging board priority of climate change – because there is a \$1 million funding opportunity through the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions with a Letter of Intent deadline of February 15<sup>th</sup>. There are more details about this funding opportunity contained in the body of the report below.

**ISSUE**

To provide background information on the current climate emergency identified in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report in October 2018,<sup>1</sup> the actions taken by other local governments around the world in response, and to outline what we think the CRD should do to seize opportunities - economic, social and environmental - and to avoid the astronomical costs to taxpayers in the region that will result from inaction.

**BACKGROUND**

In October 2018, the IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C described the enormous harm that a 2°C rise in global temperatures is likely to cause compared to a 1.5°C rise. The report outlined that limiting global warming to 1.5°C may still be possible with ambitious action from national and sub-national authorities, civil society, the private sector, indigenous peoples and local communities. Everyone has a role to play.

In response to the IPCC report, cities in the UK including Bristol, Manchester and London England have declared climate emergencies and are accelerating their paths to carbon neutrality. Bristol’s resolution is the most ambitious:

**Full Council calls on the Mayor to**

1. Declare a ‘Climate Emergency’;

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<sup>1</sup> The IPCC’s Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sr15>

2. Pledge to make the city of Bristol carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3)<sup>2</sup>;
3. Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
4. Work with other governments (both within the UK and internationally) to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;
5. Continue to work with partners across the city and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans;
6. Report to Full Council within six months with the actions the Mayor/Council will take to address this emergency.

A number of other cities around the world have also declared climate emergencies, including Berkeley, Oakland and Santa Cruz in the United States, Ballarat and Vincent in Australia, others in the United Kingdom. On Wednesday evening, the City of Vancouver declared a climate emergency.

Cities and metro regions are particularly well-poised to take action and we have motivation to do so. On the one hand, cities and metro regions worldwide are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, cities and metro regions are centres of innovation able to implement quickly and have much to gain economically, socially and environmentally by taking action.

Michael Bloomberg, billionaire, philanthropist and former Mayor of New York City shares a key insight in *Climate of Hope: How Cities, Businesses Can Save the Planet*.<sup>3</sup> He realized quite quickly after he became mayor “a central truth that the national debate about climate change got wrong: What was good for people and job growth was good for fighting climate change.”

He goes on to write:

Trees and parks give people opportunities for recreation and relaxation and they also suck carbon and soot out of the air. Strong mass transit connects people to job opportunities, and also reduces traffic and air pollution. Bike lanes connect neighbourhoods and help improve public health, and they all help keep cars off the streets by giving people a safe alternative. Energy-efficiency measures save consumers money and clean air while also shrinking the city’s carbon footprint. *Most of the things that make cities better, cleaner, healthier, and more economically productive places also reduce carbon emissions.*<sup>3</sup>

Clear in Bloomberg’s work and in all other writings on cities and metro regions and climate change is that fear is not a motivator nor is “saving the polar bears.” A key responsibility of local

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<sup>2</sup> Scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol explained:

<https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/faqs/services/scope-3-indirect-carbon-emissions>

<sup>3</sup> Michael Bloomberg and Carl Pope, *Climate of Hope: How Cities, Businesses Can Save the Planet* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2017), 28. Emphasis in the original.

governments in British Columbia, according to Section 7(d) of the *Community Charter* is “Fostering the economic social and environmental wellbeing of its community.” Taking serious climate action is the best long-term way to protect and enhance the well-being of our residents economically, socially and environmentally.

The CRD has long been a climate leader. According to the CRD’s website, “For more than a decade the CRD and its partners have been providing leadership on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing for climate change impacts. Addressing climate change means fundamentally re-thinking many of the big questions: where we live, how we move, what we eat, where our energy comes from, and what a changing climate will mean for life on southern Vancouver Island. Every action and decision has a climate impact – either locally or globally.”<sup>4</sup> And Climate Action is once again emerging as a key strategic priority for the board through the strategic planning process, as it was in the last term.

We as a region are dealing with some of our most difficult transportation challenges to date. It is important that as we address these challenges we show our commitment to doing so in a way that will reduce emissions.

We are in a new reality. Bolder leadership is needed in the post-IPCC report world.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Parks and Environment Committee recommend to the CRD Board:

1. That the Capital Regional District Board declare a Climate Emergency;
2. That the CRD take a leadership role to work towards achieving carbon neutrality in the region by 2030;
3. That the Board Chair write to all local governments in the region requesting that they also declare climate emergencies and commit to working towards climate neutrality by 2030;
4. That staff be directed to submit a Letter of Intent for the \$1 million Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions Theme Partnership Program by the deadline of February 15 2019, to address the question: “How can the Capital Region achieve carbon neutrality by 2030?”
5. That the CRD Board Chair write to the Provincial Minister of the Environment, assert the CRD’s support to help the Province close the 25% emissions gap in the *CleanBC Plan*, and call on the Province to provide the powers and resources to local governments to make the Region’s 2030 target possible;
6. That the CRD Board Chair write to the Federal Minister of the Environment, assert the CRD’s support to help Canada meet its Nationally Determined Contribution target made

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.crd.bc.ca/about/what-we-do/sustainability/climate-change-a-priority>

in the Paris Agreement and call on the federal government to provide the powers and resources to local governments to make the Region's 2030 target possible.

### **ARGUMENTS YOU COULD USE TO VOTE 'NO' TO THIS RECOMMENDATION**

*"We can't possibly become carbon neutral by 2030; we don't have enough information."*

Mayor Helps met recently with the Director of the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) at UVIC. PICS has recently launched a funding program to help accelerate climate action. Grants of \$1 million are available to "connect top researchers with policy and industry leaders to develop climate change solutions for British Columbia and beyond." (See Appendix A). Mayor Helps asked, "Is 'How can the Capital Region achieve carbon neutrality by 2030?' a good research question?" The answer was an enthusiastic yes. The funding application is, of course, a competitive process; PICS staff have offered to work with our staff to assist in developing the Letter of Intent, due February 15th.

*"It's going to cost too much."*

The CRD's own research, "Climate Projections for the Capital Region," (2017) documents the impacts of climate change on human health, rainwater management and sewerage, water supply and demand, tourism and recreation, transportation network, ecosystems and species, buildings and energy systems, and food and agriculture. Each impact will have a correlative cost. The more we work now to mitigate climate change, the less the costs will be in the longer term.

The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change makes this case very clearly. Using the results from formal economic models, the Review estimates that if we don't act, the overall costs and risks of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP each year. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the estimates of damage could rise to 20% of GDP or more. In contrast, the costs of action – reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change – can be limited to around 1% of global GDP each year.<sup>5</sup>

*"This is a distraction from the real work that we need staff to be doing."*

The largest single contribution to greenhouse gases in the region is transportation, fully 50% of our emissions. Solving the transportation in the region also rose to the top of the Strategic Planning agenda for the board. This is just one example of how the work that we need staff to do anyways will *also* allow us to decrease our emissions as a region. As Bloomberg, quoted above notes, increasing the health and quality of life of our residents and the strength of our economy is also good for reducing emissions.

*"Taking action on climate change doesn't align with my politics or ideology."*

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<sup>5</sup> [http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview\\_report\\_complete.pdf](http://mudancasclimaticas.cptec.inpe.br/~rmclima/pdfs/destaques/sternreview_report_complete.pdf)

We turn once again to Bristol for inspiration. Bristol City Council has 56 members. They voted, unanimously, across party lines (See Appendix B), to endorse the resolution outlined above. Conservatives, Greens, Liberal Democrats and Labour members all voted in support. Creating a strong, prosperous low-carbon economy and enhancing the health and well-being of residents is everybody's politics.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have an opportunity as a board and as a region to take leadership in British Columbia and in Canada. We hope that the Parks and Environment Committee and the CRD Board will vote unanimously in favour of these recommendations. Our research demonstrates clearly that taking action is the lowest cost, most prudent and also most inspiring way to proceed in an era where the scientists have given us 11 years to help create a sustainable future.

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6. That the CRD Board Chair write to the Federal Minister of the Environment, assert the CRD's support to help Canada meet its Nationally Determined Contribution target made in the Paris Agreement and call on the federal government to provide the powers and resources to local governments to make the Region's 2030 target possible.

Respectfully Submitted,

Director Helps  
Director Taylor  
Director Tait