

B.C. Climate **Solutions** Council

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September 23, 2021

The Hon. George Heyman

Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Dear Minister Heyman,

As government works to finalize the Roadmap to 2030, we write to provide advice on paths to integrate and enable full Indigenous participation in achieving our provincial climate targets. The B.C. government has committed to pursue rights recognition in partnership with Indigenous peoples. This involves a changed relationship where Indigenous governments are active partners in provincial government policy, planning, and decision-making through consultation and collaboration, such as plans to build a net-zero economy by 2050. However, significant institutional and financial barriers remain that limit the scope of Indigenous participation in this work and in turn will limit the success of our efforts to address climate change.

Addressing these barriers has the potential to unlock Indigenous capacity and expertise, improve the success of the Roadmap to 2030, and advance Indigenous rights and reconciliation. Below we identify the key issues that are currently preventing this and provide recommendations on how to address them.

Meaningful consultation and early engagement

In recent years the B.C. government has ramped up consultation efforts with Indigenous peoples who may have an interest in, or be affected by, government decisions — particularly as they relate to lands and natural resources. While this is a step forward, the extent of information that government shares through these consultations is often still quite limited. Information provided is at a high level and does not necessarily lay out the specific plans or details which government intends to pursue. This limits the ability for Indigenous peoples to consider the full implications of government proposals and provide meaningful feedback. To improve the efficacy of consultation with Indigenous peoples, we recommend that government provide full, clear, and precise information on their proposals.

Building capacity

The increasing scale of government consultation with Indigenous peoples has highlighted gaps in Indigenous capacity to engage. Indigenous leaders and communities have limited human and financial resources to respond to consultation outreach or to fully analyze and advance the strategic opportunities that government initiatives may present. Support behind building this capacity is essential to enable Indigenous peoples in contributing to the fullest extent on climate policy.

The provincial government has a responsibility to empower Indigenous nations with the support and funding needed to improve their capacity. According to Article 39 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), *“Indigenous peoples have the right to access financial and technical assistance from States and through international cooperation, for the enjoyment of the rights contained in this Declaration.”* In addition, although a range of resources already exist through provincial and federal government programs, there is a need to increase awareness of these resources and the ease of accessing them for Indigenous peoples. There may also be opportunities to place a climate lens on support programs so that they specifically enable Indigenous engagement on climate policy. To this end, we recommend that government put in place funding mechanisms that are dedicated to supporting Indigenous capacity to engage on climate policy and plans in B.C., and develop a communications plan to share these resources with Indigenous communities.

Potential pathways to building Indigenous capacity are seen in current Indigenous representative organizations. Such organizations are establishing their own collaborative groups, like the First Nations Climate Action Technical Advisory Group under the First Nations Leadership Council, which can focus on strengthening Indigenous climate leadership in B.C., and build capacity, understanding, and resilience in Indigenous communities. The government of B.C. could promote and support Indigenous peoples to establish dedicated climate caucuses and staff in their own communities, or could organize and fund a central Indigenous climate caucus with support of the provincial government.

Mobilizing Indigenous resources

Many Indigenous communities have economic development officers (EDOs) who work to improve the economic situation of the community, find ways to create jobs, assist with the establishment of businesses, grow the revenue of First Nations, and help create the environment in which the local economy and community will flourish. EDOs have a large role in guiding the direction of the community, yet they are a mostly untapped constituency in the fight against climate change. By proactively engaging this resource on provincial climate policy, government could enable increased Indigenous participation in climate planning and implementation, while also supporting Indigenous communities to identify and pursue their own economic opportunities related to the transition to net zero. As a first step we recommend that government reach out and convene a discussion with Indigenous EDOs or other Indigenous leadership groups for those Nations without EDOs.

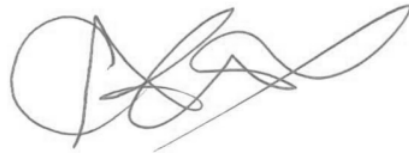
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The approaches we have outlined above can help advance climate action, Indigenous rights, and reconciliation in tandem. As one of the groups most impacted by climate change, Indigenous peoples must play a foundational role if our efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change are successful. Government can realize this opportunity by developing new tools to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples that recognize their existing governance structures and support their full and meaningful participation in this work.

Sincerely,



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Clean Energy Canada
Co-Chair, B.C. Climate Solutions Council



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