

B.C. Climate **Solutions** Council

David Black, President, MoveUP

Toni Boot, Mayor,
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Ian Bruce,
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David Suzuki Foundation

Colleen Giroux-Schmidt, Vice
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Matt Horne, Climate Policy
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Mark Jaccard, School of Resource
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Director, Simon Fraser University

Khelsilem, Councillor,
Squamish Nation Council

Adriana Laurent, Co-Founder and
Project Administrator,
UBC Climate Hub

Scott Maloney, Vice President,
Environment, Teck Resources Ltd.

Skye McConnell, Manager of
Policy and Advocacy, Shell Canada

Kurt Niquidet, Vice President,
Council of Forest Industries

Nancy Olewiler, School of
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Danielle (DJ) Pohl, President,
Fraser Valley Labour Council

Arjun Singh, Councillor,
City of Kamloops

Merran Smith, Executive Director,
Clean Energy Canada

Karen Tam Wu, Regional Director
for British Columbia,
Pembina Institute

Jill Tipping, President & Chief
Executive Officer,
BC Tech Association

Joie Warnock, Assistant to the
President, Unifor

September 10, 2021

The Honourable George Heyman
Minister, Environment & Climate Change
Government of British Columbia

Re: B.C.'s Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy & Funding

Dear Minister Heyman,

The Climate Solutions Council strongly supports long-term and sustainable funding for the implementation and periodic review/updating of the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy. By making measured and responsible public investments at a scale required to support meaningful action to improve B.C.'s climate resilience, the provincial government can help prepare British Columbia for the inevitable impacts arising from a changing climate in a proactive and responsible manner. To date, the scale of investment has not matched the scale of the challenge.

The Council represents a diverse membership of individuals spanning private businesses, First Nations governments, labour organizations local governments, industry, academia, and the environmental community—this broad representation is, in our view, a major strength in delivering on our mandate to provide advice to the B.C. government.

We are seeing firsthand in B.C., and around the world, the devastating impacts of the changing climate. The major events of this summer—the far-reaching impacts of heat waves and sustained high temperatures, more intense and longer wildfire season, and increased flooding have contributed to major crops losses, jobs and lives disrupted through short- and long-term displacement, damage and destruction to ecosystems, and most tragically, deaths in B.C. due to climate change. We see the impacts on our infrastructure, employees, agriculture, biodiversity, productivity, communities, human health, social cohesion, and quality of life for all ages. The Council agrees that

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bold action on climate change must include both the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as well as preparing for the unavoidable impacts of a changing climate. The increasing volatility and uncertainty of these events and their impacts demand that we strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond. Bold action requires ensuring there is capacity within our governments at the provincial and local level to help our communities prepare and adapt.

In July, the Climate Action Secretariat briefed the Climate Solutions Council on the next phase of the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy. The Council recognizes the important work done by your Government with the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy and we urge you to strongly support this work through public awareness, recognition, and funding.

The members of the Council have taken the time over the summer to consider the impacts of the changing climate on our lives, communities and livelihoods and why the time for the Province to act is now. We provide a selection of their reflections below:

- While there is unpredictability and uncertainty, the benefits of planned¹ actions to adapt to climate change exceed the costs, sometimes significantly, providing a strong business case for investment in adaptation. **Across 60 assessments of adaptation actions analyzed by the Canadian government, the average cost-benefit ratio was 5.6:1, highlighting the strength of this investment. 75% of those 60 had a cost-benefit ratio of >1.**
- *Focus on our current and future management systems and community infrastructure to improve resiliency in a changing climate.* Flooding, drought, fire, extreme temperatures, and their combination create a multiplying effect that will have significant negative impacts on the people and economy of B.C. An example is the Vancouver flooding at the end of 2018, which was the result of intense rain combined with a high-tide that knocked out City infrastructure including the Neighborhood Energy Utility. Another example was supply chain disruptions associated with wildfire induced rail line closures in B.C. during July 2021.
- *Impacts to workers and the way we work.* Whether outside or inside without sufficient cooling, we must address how we work, to keep people healthy, safe, and productive in extreme heat.
- *Addressing extreme heat events and wildfire smoke on vulnerable populations.* For example, there are over 3,500 homeless people in Metro Vancouver and they are at high risk from the conditions we've recently faced.
- *Impact on our ecosystems.* Reports of aquatic species in greater Vancouver and other parts of B.C. dying (e.g., spawning salmon) during June 2021's heat wave and higher

¹ <https://changingclimate.ca/national-issues/chapter/6-0/>

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than normal temperatures thereafter highlighted risks to species, ecosystems and natural resources across B.C., and point to potential for all sorts of other impacts that are not so immediate and obvious. Acknowledging the important role healthy ecosystems can play in improving resilience of our communities to extreme weather and taking ecosystem-based and biodiversity enhancing approaches (protecting and restoring nature) to adaptation is critical.

- *Sea-level rise.* While the impacts aren't as immediate, there is a need to ramp up planning and investment to be ready for what is coming later this century. For people whose homes, livelihoods and personal enjoyment are defined by the coastline, we aren't doing close to enough to be ready for massive changes.
- *Sustainably managed forests* can be a significant contributor to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Climate change and past management (increased forest fuel loads) is contributing to greater natural disturbances (fires and pests). These natural disturbances contribute significant GHG emissions.
- *Co-operation with the business community and academia on adaptation actions and assessing the risks and preventive impacts is an opportunity.* For example, implications of water access and use are fundamental for many businesses in B.C. Collaboration between governments, business, and academia on solutions to adapt will spur innovation and manage the economic, social and environmental impacts of changing water availability.

On a personal note, for those of us with children and grandchildren, we think about how the changing climate has already permanently changed how they experience the world, for example, summertime play has been inside because of smoke or extreme heat. Some children's lives now include knowing what standing-by for evacuation means, and for those such as the children in Lytton and other parts of B.C.'s interior, their lives now include the trauma of fleeing their community and losing their homes.

We offer the following advice to all the B.C. Government:

- **Fund the upcoming CPAS budget request in full.** Ensure long term sustainability of funding for climate preparedness and adaptation appropriate to the level of risk and impacts. One example is more short-term investment around cooling and clean air shelters, and more linkages with the province's housing strategy as a medium- to long-term solution.
- **Speed.** It is critical that the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy has specific, substantive, and actionable objectives and plans that are implemented across the

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province as soon as possible. With the recent pace of these extreme weather events, urgency of action is critical.

- **Inter Government Cooperation and Integration.** We support the continued inter-ministry cooperation and coordination. We strongly encourage collaboration between Indigenous peoples, local, provincial, and federal levels of government to support adaptation initiatives in B.C. It is also important to look for the integrated opportunities and co-benefits that climate preparedness and adaptation activities bring. For example, heat pumps not only reduce GHG emissions but also offer cooling benefits during hot weather.
- **Collaboration.** Ensure strong collaboration and alignment with adaptation partners such as industry, academia, and the public and private sectors. Ensuring standards, codes and best practices are modernized to address the changing climate is an important component of adaptation planning to help prepare crucial sectors.
- **Awareness.** Deploy the right mechanisms and accessibility to communicate to all the people of B.C. timely information that can reduce risks and save lives and property. The heat dome brought an increased emphasis on identifying heat stroke and measures to help prevent it. Communicating the importance of Fire Smart planning may help save whole communities. It is critically important we also support people and business proactively have the information to prepare and adapt. Being proactive in our adaptation planning and investment strategies can lead to positive employment and quality of life outcomes if we ensure communities and our most vulnerable populations have the capacity and means to undertake these activities.
- **Monitoring and Reporting** From an accountability perspective, it will be important to measure the progress and effectiveness of the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy and communicate this publicly in the annual climate accountability report required by the *Climate Change Accountability Act*. Our Council would be happy to support, where we can, these activities by sharing with you processes and procedures to facilitate evaluation and accountability measurement gleaned from research and experience in other jurisdictions.

Preparing and adapting to the changing environment, dealing with, and mitigating the impacts is an intergenerational challenge. We cannot undo the past or avoid the effects of climate change, but we can be better prepared to reduce their impacts and strengthen the resilience of our communities, ecosystems and economy. Different solutions will be needed for different regions. The cost of preparing and adapting to protecting people, ecosystems and property will be significant and continuous, but the longer we delay, the higher these costs will be. The cost of inaction is too great.


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Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please do not hesitate to call us. Thank you for the leadership your government is taking to help ensure a strong and resilient future for B.C.

Regards,



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



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