



British Columbia Library Association Submission to the British Columbia Public Consultation on the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy

12 August 2021

Thank you for inviting responses to the draft Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy.

The British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) leads and supports the B.C. library community in advocacy and professional development. BCLA works to ensure that all British Columbians have equitable access to information, ideas, and works of the imagination. BCLA builds partnerships and relationships with libraries, with all levels of government and with provincial and national organizations that share similar goals and values. BCLA advances the values of the association and promotes a widespread understanding of the benefits of library and information services.

In the context of climate preparedness and adaptation, B.C. libraries support related research, education, and community resilience and well-being.

Introduction

Libraries specialize in providing *life-enriching* services to residents across B.C. Increasingly, these services include mobilizing *life-saving* crisis responses (e.g., cooling stations, internet access, emergency information). Libraries provide space for community members to gather both in person or virtually, share information, and mobilize local networks to assist others. Considering July's deadly heat dome event, and other extreme threats such as wildfires and flooding, this service is critical and will continue to be so.

Unlike government response services that focus on episodic, short-term emergency events, libraries specialize in building and maintaining long-term relationships within their communities. Crisis resiliency research provides compelling evidence of how libraries provide critical social infrastructure before, during, and after crisis events¹.

BCLA appreciates the B.C. government's work in identifying climate risks and proposing the expansion of existing programs and initiatives. In particular, the guiding principles for B.C.'s Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy provide a solid foundation for work to increase community resilience and prioritize effective solutions to mitigate risks.

However, the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy's proposed actions for

¹ Klinenberg, Eric. 2018. *Palaces for the people: how social infrastructure can help fight inequality, polarization, and the decline of civic life*. Crown, New York.



2022-2025 are not at the scale of effort and imagination necessary to adequately prepare and adapt, or to prevent further risk and harm.

Earlier this week, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 6th Assessment Report (August 9, 2021) was released. It concludes that “Climate change [is] widespread, rapid, and intensifying” and “unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5°C or even 2°C will be beyond reach.” Both the scientific evidence, as well as the findings of the B.C. government, including the independent audit report from the B.C. Office of the Auditor General (November 28, 2017) and the Preliminary Strategic Climate Risk Assessment (July 2019), show clearly that more substantive and urgent action is needed across all of government.

Recommendations

1. Invest in transformative mitigation efforts to eliminate fossil fuel emissions in production and use, and protect and strengthen ecosystems.

Transformative mitigation efforts are necessary in order to reduce risks and stabilize the climate. As stated in *Managing Climate Change Risks: An Independent Audit* (BC Auditor General, November 28, 2017), both adaptation and mitigation are essential for a climate resilient province and must happen in tandem. B.C. has not been successful at reducing fossil fuel emissions or meeting its reduction targets, and the efforts necessary for this transition are substantial. Without eliminating emissions as quickly as possible, our climate and local conditions will continue to change, making adaptation impossible.

Near term actions must include eliminating emissions sources, protecting and restoring ecosystems, corrective actions to account for missed targets, and updating targets in line with the IPCC and our responsibilities.

2. Increase funding for local communities and municipalities.

As noted, across B.C., Indigenous communities, municipalities, and districts are on the front lines of climate impacts and the necessary work of planning and implementing both mitigation and adaptation work. At the same time, many municipalities lost funding for this work with the cancellation of the Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program in May 2021.

Restore and increase funding for implementation at the local level and ensure funding is stable so that communities can plan and invest in long term strategies.

3. Provide detailed plans which ensure that necessary preparation, adaptation, and mitigation work is completed.



Detailed plans should include specifics about funding and other necessary resources, timelines, and commitments. While some specifics are provided in the draft strategy, many of the proposed actions are small and isolated, or continue to focus on considering options, while major opportunities are missing.

In the Fall 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update (December 17, 2020) the province reported spending of over \$10 billion in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These relief and recovery measures, both large-scale and smaller actions, were implemented and reported on within days or months. The climate emergency response requires similar investment, urgency, and transparency, yet in the 2020 Climate Change Accountability Report (December 2020), B.C. reported spending 8% of that amount in 2019/20 on climate related initiatives (\$803 million) and projected a comparatively modest increase of “up to \$1.341 billion” in 2020/21.

4. Implement a ‘whole-of-government’ approach.

Climate change impacts every part of our province and all areas of government, and needs to be a priority in all decision making and government services. A commitment to preparation, adaptation, and mitigation across government would ensure that every sector identifies targets, creates and implements comprehensive plans, and assesses progress. It would also mean changes to legislation, regulation, requirements, and industry.

As with our public health response to the pandemic, our response to climate change must involve implementing significant changes across all sectors. These coordinated efforts would also provide co-benefits and minimize the costs of adaptation and mitigation as well as the future costs of climate change impacts.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to the draft Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Strategy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Mundle", followed by a period.

Todd Mundle
BCLA President

Cc: Lisa Nathan and Helen Brown, Co-Chairs, BCLA Climate Action Committee