

CLOH Council Presentation

- We often think of climate change as affecting other people or populations far away, but as you know, every community in BC is dealing with climate impacts that are imminent and ongoing.
- MetroVan \$9.5 bn, \$100mil per year for rising sea levels alone.
- Much of Richmond is low-elevation and climate scientists have warned us that large portions of our City are vulnerable to rising sea-levels, extreme storm events and other climate-related impacts. The Province of British Columbia has estimated that the costs of preparing Richmond for a sea-level rise of one metre by 2100 is Cdn\$3.9 Billion,¹ or an average of about Cdn\$47 million per year. Some climate scientists warn that the actual sea-level rise could be far greater.
- We need to recognize that a relatively small number of fossil fuel companies have played a major role in causing the climate crisis, have made hundreds of billions of dollars in the process – they are some of the wealthiest companies in the world – and that they do not plan to pay a dime for costs of preparing our communities for climate change.

The path to a climate-safe economy is not compatible with an industry that has no incentive to pay for the costs it incurs. Renewables, for example, can't compete if the industry doesn't have to pay to clean up after itself.

Just 20 fossil fuel companies are responsible – through their operations and their products – for almost 30% of the human-caused greenhouse gases in the global atmosphere today and they've known since the 1960s that their products would cause global climate change.

- On 25 January 2017 West Coast Environmental Law and more than 50 other BC-based groups wrote to each of you asking you to take action to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for their fair share of your local climate impacts. The groups behind this letter are prepared to talk about the climate impacts your community is already suffering and will suffer and then start a conversation about the role of the fossil fuel industry.
- In the short term, taking action involves sending public letters to those 20 fossil fuel companies outlining local climate impacts and asking the companies to confirm whether they will pay their fair share as costs are incurred. Sample letters and addresses for the companies are available on-line at www.climatelawinourhands.org.
- The act of publicly demanding accountability starts a crucial conversation about whether our taxpayers alone should have to pay for climate impacts, or if fossil fuel companies bear some of the costs. It's a conversation that these companies desperately want to avoid – because they know that their products are harming your communities.

In the longer term, we hope that you will consider working with other local governments to bring a class action lawsuit to confirm the legal obligation of these fossil fuel companies to pay their fair share of your climate costs. These costs are only going to rise – and it is critical that we get legal clarification on our right to compensation as soon as possible. However, sending a letter is a cheap and easy first step – and in no way commits you to participate in a lawsuit.

As you will see in the handouts, West Coast has prepared a template for the "Climate Accountability" letter I mentioned earlier. We are proposing that city councils will send this letter to a subset of fossil fuel companies, requesting a fair share of the costs associated with climate adaptation in their community. We're not asking that you take this to a motion today, but rather requesting your consideration of this tactic for the near future.

- Demanding that the fossil fuel companies pay their fair share for climate impacts, rather than simply paying for them with taxpayer dollars, is fiscally responsible. But it's also absolutely critical in terms of fighting climate change. It's about making sure that the true costs of the fossil fuel economy are on the table. We hope you will take this next step to send a climate accountability letter.