

January 14, 2019

Mayor Kennedy Stewart & Council  
City of Vancouver  
By email

Dear Mayor Kennedy Stewart & Council,

Re: [“Ramping Up Vancouver’s Response to the Climate Emergency” Motion](#)

**City of Vancouver: Early Pioneer, Enduring and Influential Leader**

Beginning in 1990 with the adoption of its *Clouds of Change* report, one of the first attempts globally by any level of government to address climate change, the City of Vancouver has long acknowledged a responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Since then, a remarkable and exemplary feature of Vancouver’s response is that successive city councils of diverse leanings have sustained and deepened climate action commitments. This continuity has laid a foundation for leadership on buildings, transportation, waste and beyond.

The city’s consistent ambitious approach has buttressed other priorities in economic development, livability and mobility, of which Vancouver has consistently found success—home to one quarter of Canada’s cleantech firms, a top-ranked place to live in the world, and one of North America’s few municipalities with declining automobile use.

This leadership has catapulted Vancouver to the forefront of municipal climate action, inspiring other jurisdictions and profoundly shaping some of the ambitious senior government policy agendas such as British Columbia’s building energy step code—arguably the world’s most innovative building energy policy frameworks.

**100% Renewable Strategy: Essential to Atmospheric Stability**

In March 2015, Vancouver City Council unanimously adopted a 100% renewable energy target—amongst the first visionary jurisdictions globally to make a commitment consistent with the scientific evidence to avoid dangerous, run-away climate change.

Renewable Cities has been at the city’s side since the conception of the Renewable City Strategy and collaborated with a small group of organizations internationally to strengthen the resolve for equivalent commitments, helping inspire over 120 local, regional, county and state governments throughout North America to follow suit. Vancouver’s bold, pragmatic plan and implementation success has fueled this movement.

The recent IPCC 1.5°C report cements the imperative of a 50% GHG reduction from 2010 levels by 2030 and 100% less by 2100 to protect atmospheric stability and avoid the most serious consequences. This is still not sufficient to avoid significant impacts to local residents and businesses, including sea level rise threatening

billions of dollars of infrastructure, extreme heat waves projected to increase mortality, forest fire risk and water insecurity, and extreme wind and rain events. Because of the collective failure to act, reducing vulnerability is as important as GHG reductions.

### **Climate Emergency & Accelerated Action Opportunities**

Vancouver has the pedigree, council and staff leadership capacity, and supportive collaborators— notably the current BC government, to increase its climate ambitions and sustain its important trailblazing efforts.

Renewable Cities encourages support of the motion *Ramping Up Vancouver's Climate Action in Response to the Climate Emergency*. In accelerating climate action, Renewable Cities recommends consideration of the following opportunities.

1. **CleanBC & Community Action:** Local governments do not have the authority to independently drive a 100% renewable agenda. Success will depend on effective collaboration with senior governments. Details in B.C.'s ambitious, new CleanBC strategy are still under development. There is significant scope for strengthening alignment with local government—this will decisively influence city timelines.
2. **Affordability & Climate Action Integration:** There is significant potential to address housing affordability, accessibility and other equity concerns while continuing to ensure deep GHG reductions. Gentle intensification in single family neighbourhoods with diverse accessory dwelling units can reverse plummeting populations in single family neighborhoods, while addressing steadily rising per capita GHGs. The upcoming update of the city-wide plan can be used to further integrate city planning processes with the Renewable City Strategy.
3. **Integrated Land Use & Transit:** The congestion and carbon management benefits of rapid transit spending may be wasted without intensification around transit stations. Congestion and transportation GHGs—the region's largest GHG sector—are projected to continue rising steadily despite \$8.5 billion in transit spending. Local and regional smart growth policies must be better integrated with transportation infrastructure to reverse these trends.
4. **Zero Organic Waste & Renewable Fuel:** Municipal, commercial and agricultural organic waste are key renewable fuel feedstocks, notably renewable natural gas. Aggregating organic waste regionally will be essential to decarbonize heavy duty transportation and industrial sectors. Vancouver can make an important contribution to these policy agendas.

A 100% renewable agenda is not just an imperative: it is viable and can help build a better community, ensuring equity for current and future generations. As the IPCC 1.5°C report underscores, the earlier we make the deep GHG reductions, the lower the mitigation costs and socio-economic and environmental costs of climate change. Renewable Cities looks forward to continuing to work with the City of Vancouver to sustain a leadership example necessary to decarbonize the global economy.

Respectfully,



Alex Boston  
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Fellow, Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue