

## **CITY OF VANCOUVER - CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN**

### **CLIMATE AND EQUITY WORKING GROUP SUMMARY**

#### **COUNCIL DIRECTION**

As part of the Climate Emergency Motion, Council directed staff to:  
*establish a “Climate and Equity” working group to provide guidance and support for the City’s efforts to transition off of fossil fuels in ways that prioritize those most vulnerable to climate impacts and most in need of support in transitioning to renewable energy.*

#### **SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS**

The City needs to incorporate reconciliation into all work and needs to have Indigenous voices shape and illuminate what that looks like. Climate Emergency Action Plan development and the opportunity to work together was shared with Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations via Project Referral forms from the City’s Indigenous Relations Manager and through a presentation at the Intergovernmental Relations meeting between staff from Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish Nation, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations’ government bodies and staff from the City of Vancouver.

A mix of organizations and individuals with lived experience was sought for the Climate and Equity Working Group. Organizations were invited because of their expertise and experience working for Indigenous communities, communities of colour, low-income populations, or other disproportionately impacted communities the City typically fails to involve in policy development. No experience in climate change subject matter was required, though some participants did bring this knowledge. In some cases, individuals stepped forward to participate and were included on the Climate and Equity Working Group. These individuals had a strong interest in equity and brought a specific perspective to the group that was otherwise under-represented.

The resulting participating organizations and individuals covered a rich mix of perspectives including new immigrants, people with disabilities, people with low income, urban Indigenous. The majority of participants were racialized people. It is important to note that not all voices were present. There were no participants from Musqueam, Squamish or Tsleil-Waututh Nations. Seniors were not represented. The youth perspective could have been stronger. The majority of participants were from non-profit organizations; business perspectives were not as strongly represented. Voices from the LGBTQ2+ community were not explicitly present. While the majority of participants were women, there was no voice specific to gender equity. These gaps need to be addressed in future engagement as part of implementation work and in the reformation of the Climate and Equity Working Group.

The names and organizations of participants are listed on the following page. Note that participation in the Working Group does not indicate any kind of endorsement of the Climate Emergency Action Plan by the individuals or organizations listed.

| NAME                            | ORGANIZATION  |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Rhiannon Bennett (Facilitator)  | Hummingbirds Rising Consulting                                      |
| Eda Ertan                       | Collingwood Neighbourhood House                                     |
| Justina Loh and Cynthia Minh    | Disability Alliance BC  |
| Ekaterina Ungvitskaya           | Downtown Eastside Women's Centre                                    |
| Amy Hennessy and Nabila Hussein | Empower Me  |
| Anthonia Ogundele               | Ethos Lab   |
| Dr. Love-Ese Chile              | Grey to Green Sustainable Solutions                                 |
| Kevin Huang                     | Hua Foundation  |
| Saleem Spindari                 | MOSAIC  |
| Jolene Andrew                   | Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House - Indigenous Community Developer |
| Rita Steele                     | Offsetters  |
| Louise Schwarz                  | Recycling Alternative   |
| Adriana Laurent Seibt           | UBC Climate Hub   |
| Sean Green                      | Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society                      |
| Nicole Montgomery               | Individual – built environment sustainability consultant            |
| Jake Chakasim                   | Individual - Indigenous Architect (intern) & SCARP PhD student      |
| Ayaan Ismail                    | Individual – 2019 RISE Ambassador                                   |

## MEETINGS AND TOPICS COVERED

The Climate and Equity Working Group met monthly for six months starting in January 2020. In April, meetings shifted to an online video conference format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members had scheduling conflicts due to increased demands on their time during the pandemic, but the majority of the group did wish to and was able to finish the scheduled series of meetings online. Staff are very grateful for their commitment and flexibility in making the shift to online dialogue work. Their feedback has been invaluable in shaping the final Climate Emergency Action Plan.

| SESSION                 | DESCRIPTION  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Jan 2020</b>         | Overview of climate change in Vancouver, projected impacts, carbon emissions sources, progress made so far, the Climate Emergency Response's Six Big Moves.  |
| <b>Feb 2020</b>         | Presentation of proposed actions related to buildings, small-group discussions with Green Buildings staff.   |
| <b>Mar and Apr 2020</b> | Presentation on proposed actions related to transportation, small-group discussions with Engineering staff.  |
| <b>May 2020</b>         | Joint meeting with the City's Collaborative Leadership Advisory Group—discussion of how to amplify climate work, mapping of organizations working in this space, understanding barriers organizations face to doing more climate work.   |
| <b>Jun 2020</b>         | Open space for group to select topics for discussion (focused on engagement, how to specifically address racism in climate/city planning work, how to give more power to equity work). Discussion of an Environmental Justice Charter and what that might look like for the City, advice on how the City should approach developing a charter. |

## FUTURE EQUITY WORK

### CHARTER

The Climate and Equity Working Group members were excited by the idea of the City developing an Environmental Justice Charter and provided their input on what this charter could do to make advances on equity and racial justice within sustainability work.

Staff are proposing starting with a Climate Justice Charter that can be expanded over time into a broader Environmental Justice Charter when the City renews its broad environmental sustainability plan (Greenest City).

As currently imagined, the Charter would be a guiding document for staff working on climate-related work. More work needs to be done to scope the Charter, but anticipated features/functions include:

- An articulation of climate equity and justice objectives and the fundamental imperative to make changes to meet these objectives (possibly articulate equity outcome objectives for each Climate Emergency Big Move).
- Tangible process changes and actions for staff to undertake when doing policy or program development to ensure equity is at the forefront.
- Measures for accountability and transparency (with integration into the Climate Emergency Action Plan monitoring and reporting framework).
- A methodology to analyse climate budget spending with an equity perspective to understand the portion of funding spent on policies and programs that benefit Indigenous people, racialized groups, and/or other disproportionately impacted communities. This information can then be used to inform prioritization of future work.

Staff will hire a consultant experienced in systemic racial justice and equity work to inform the scope and process. Working collaboratively with disproportionately impacted communities will be a key part of the process to develop this charter. Understanding how this work fits within the City's Equity Framework will be important to ensure it aligns with and does not duplicate other equity initiatives across City departments.

### MONITORING AND REPORTING

Determining how to appropriately measure progress on equity is a challenge but one the Working Group highlighted as important. For the Climate Emergency Action Plan, staff have identified next-step Equity Milestones, but identifying a way to track progress over the many years the implementation of this plan still needs to be done. The Charter will assist with this—identifying relevant, meaningful metrics with disproportionately impacted communities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

### GREEN BUILDINGS DISCUSSION (BIG MOVES 4 & 5)

*Staff summary of Climate and Equity Working Group – February 2020*

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

- What opportunities are there to create employment for Indigenous people—in design of buildings, in trades, in new supply chains?
- Important to look globally for sustainable examples and inspiration; not always looking to western Europe. Indigenous culture has been doing “sustainability” and “passive design” for centuries.
- Decolonizing and de-capitalizing housing. How to create more cohousing and communal homes? How can we talk more about shared housing and shared goods as a way of cutting carbon?

#### ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND THEMES

##### a) Retrofits of existing buildings to cut carbon emissions

Training will be important to plan thoughtfully

- Which language-speakers have access to information and training? Who benefits most from training and incentives?
- The City should analyze who is typically missed during consultation/education/training efforts and address those gaps. What partnerships can help the City address the gaps?

Affordability impacts of retrofits is a critical concern

- Who bears the cost? How to allocate funds to those most in need of support with retrofits?
- How to avoid displacement, particularly of renters?
- Can we create incentives for marginalized groups, so they have the opportunity to make improvements?

Cultural considerations are important in implementation

- Need to ensure retrofit technology matches resident or business cultural needs (e.g., restaurants that need woks), build in time to find appropriate solutions.

##### b) New building regulations to cut carbon emissions

Affordability and displacement are concerns

- Market demand vs. what residents need—the City needs to prioritize the needs of residents vs. a market targeting global investors/consumers.
- Concerns re: gentrification; what, who bears the up-front costs, operating costs?

Thinking beyond building performance and efficiency standards is important

- Need to include public space design, architectural design considerations—as we replace old buildings with new, how are we mindful of the culture/community that exists and that will use the building? Does it fit in; does it meet community needs?

Fair regulation

- Why blanket-regulate all building forms with the same policy? Can we meet our emissions targets in a way that gives affordable housing forms more time, for example?

Higher priority on ongoing maintenance

- What levers does the City have to ensure buildings are maintained over time?

### c) Embodied carbon of building materials

Affordability and displacement are concerns

- Who bears the costs? How to lower costs?

Health matters

- Can the city encourage developers to approach buildings from a health or people-centred lens?

Need to educate

- City needs to improve messaging around embodied carbon—it surrounds us but we do not understand it.

## TRANSPORTATION DISCUSSIONS (BIG MOVES 1, 2 & 3)

*Staff summary of Climate and Equity Working Group – March and April 2020*

### GENERAL COMMENTS

- What areas or neighbourhoods will be prioritized for the different actions? How are these areas chosen, using what measures or indicators (population growth, density, traffic counts, existing vs. limited active transportation infrastructure)?
- How will a zero emissions parking plan be equitable to lower-income people who cannot afford to switch to a zero emissions vehicle?
- Persons with disabilities may be unable to walk, cycle, and/or take transit, so how can they be accommodated and not penalized for owning a vehicle (specifically with reference to the zero emissions parking plan)?
- Less central areas of Vancouver have less access to good transit and cycling options. There is an inequitable distribution of services in more affordable areas. Important to note that Musqueam has no transit service.
- Need improved active transit infrastructure including increasing separated bike lanes, safe bike parking areas, end-of-trip facilities at work, rest areas and benches (for those with health issues, disabilities), railings, public washrooms, and wayfinding.
- The sequencing of the implementation of these actions will greatly impact equity—need to ensure people have viable low-carbon transportation options that meet their needs before implementing costs/penalties for carbon-intensive choices. Participants emphasized the importance of developing adequate public/active transit infrastructure.
- What is the role of the City to address equity and transportation in a regional/provincial context? How can this work be connected with other cities and throughout the province—especially considering that many people commute to and visit Vancouver? Where can the City exert

authority to require other agencies to apply the City's equity considerations to their transportation investments?

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS AND THEMES**

### **a) Complete communities are key [Big Move 1]**

- Land use planning is the best transportation planning as transit choices are inextricably connected to housing affordability, work, proximity to daily needs, available services, safety, and income.
- Emphasis on the importance of developing complete communities through land use planning to reduce reliance on vehicles, which requires establishing partnerships with regional and provincial organizations to ensure there are adequate, reliable and safe transit options, as well as services, such as childcare and schools.
- Important to remember the needs of shift workers, and individuals working in the informal economy.

### **b) Regional connectivity and partnerships**

- Partnerships are required with different regional and provincial bodies to implement this transformation. How can the City of Vancouver ensure equity is embedded in other organizations? How can the City ensure all neighbourhoods are serviced by good public transit?

### **c) Who actions apply to first**

- Exemptions for certain groups; situations will be important to include when implementing new pricing mechanisms to consider those who would be disproportionately impacted by transportation or parking pricing. Do not financially penalize those who have few options or who lack the ability to comply with zero emissions goals because solutions (e.g., EVs) are expensive.
- Consideration for people accessing spaces such as hospitals and courts. These are places people access when they are experiencing trauma, and staff should consider how transportation pricing might worsen that trauma.
- Affordability is a critical consideration. For some, transit is currently not an affordable option.
- Make sure that plans always keep questions of equity in mind when rolling out, instead of always allowing those in more privileged positions to benefit first.

### **d) An equitable transportation system looks like:**

- Affordability of transit and housing.
- People are able to safely move and access services for their daily needs: work, leisure, school, daycare, healthcare.
- Road space use: decrease on-street parking for private vehicles to create more space for people, pedestrians, cyclists. Prioritize space on the roads for those who must use vehicles (while those with other options use other options).
- Regional connectivity.
- Consideration for seniors, young people, and people with disabilities.

- Consideration for health disparities and poverty (fixed income and seniors).
- Cycling feels welcome to all, including those going slowly (not fitness-focused or like an elite activity requiring expensive gear).
- Revenue from transportation pricing used to improve transit infrastructure or to fund community benefits with community driving decision-making on how to invest.
- In-language programs to support education and awareness about active transportation options and public transit routes.
- Affordable public bike share with electric bike options.
- Safe cycling infrastructure that is so present that you do not need to map your route out in advance; you can always get where you want to go via separated paths.

**e) Impacted groups that need to be considered**

- Persons with disabilities or health issues who may not be able to walk, cycle, or take transit; families accessing childcare and schools; commuters living outside of Vancouver; low-income people not able to afford electric vehicles; people working in areas without adequate transit service.
- Consider how parking costs contribute to gentrification and displacement for those unable to afford parking permits.

**f) Data the City should consider tracking for transportation and equity**

- Trips beyond daily commute (shopping, weekend activity, etc.). Consider how data can capture any trips, especially in underserved communities.
- Types of transportation that newcomers engage with more to understand their travel patterns.
- Intersectional data that reflects not only modes, but also gender, income, age, race, nationality, etc.
- Percentage of people/jobs within a five-minute walk of great transit.
- Percentage of people who feel that they can safely bike: (a) in their neighbourhood, (b) for shopping and everyday destinations, (c) to work. Ask questions separately for walking and biking.
- Parking permit costs per neighbourhood against neighbourhoods with higher densities of people with lower incomes, or people living on income or disability assistance.
- Measuring a culture shift is not easy. Changing behaviours, and evaluating and monitoring for sustained change will be reflected in how communities feel respected and included.
- Focus on qualitative data: use quotes, success stories, highlight things that are not working so well. Qualitative techniques can capture information from large groups. Storytelling and real human narratives can portray complex ideas.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CHARTER DISCUSSION**

*Staff summary of Climate and Equity Working Group – June 2020*

The Working Group discussed what an Environmental Justice Charter could look like, what its function could be; noting that this work would have to be situated with the context of the Equity Framework<sup>1</sup> being developed for the City as an organization.

**a) Scope.** The Charter should:

- Connect to global context and climate impacts, UNDRIP, environmental racism, encompass the interconnection of land systems and the remediation of harm done to the immediate ecosystem, how can the community most impacted by climate change be centred and central to preparedness planning.
- Enforce a framework to ensure that equity considerations are taken into account for any City planning project.
- Provide guidelines for safeguarding and caring for our environment in ways that are fair to all groups. Some environmental measures are too costly for some groups. Some may not be culturally appropriate. It is so important to consider all of these things.
- Have a clear path to address specific environmental injustices that communities have identified.
- Embolden staff to take courageous actions that benefit communities and close existing gaps.

**b) Process.** Suggested process to develop charter:

- Co-developed with the community. Not simply engagement, but having ownership by the community and ensuring accountability.
- Include guidance on how to connect with folks from the start.
- Important that this charter focus on changing the process, rather than just being a document that no one might read.
- Justice in the process, not just in the outcome. Process needs to be different in order for the outcome to be meaningful.
- Iterative. Recognize that doing something the right way will involve mistakes. Correct and move forward. Openness to revisiting the charter because things change.

**c) Features.** Suggested important features the Charter should include:

- It must be intersectional across the board and hold clear steps for accountability.
- The First Nations perspective and voice must be overarching and underpinning principles.
- It should be inclusive—it should involve and pertain to all Vancouver communities.
- Practice of inclusion, relationship building, and participatory decision-making.
- There are important metrics that should be captured, and checklists that promote tangible, measurable outcomes to occur, however, there

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<sup>1</sup> The City's Equity Framework will be a central document and shared language about what equity means at the City of Vancouver. This Framework takes an Indigenous-centred, race-forward, intersectional approach and outlines what practices we want to see, and metrics to hold ourselves accountable to the goals that we set. It will include five commitments including: spaces for learning, reflecting equity in leadership, fostering relationship, adequately resourcing work. Importantly, this framework will recommend that each department develop a complementary equity document that identifies targets, desired outcomes, and required resources to carry out equity framework.

should also be a focus on PROCESS—how to do things, who to engage, how people are engaged, and what to do once engaged. Recognize that every community, initiative and project is different, and there will be a different way that each initiative will elevate equity.

- The City has to be willing to change its own internal policies and by-laws that infringe on the charter being successful.
- Do things differently—different process is just as important as the outcome.
- Require regular reporting to Council, communities and the public.
- There needs to be a section in the charter that gives folks the agency to speak up. Some kind of protection for folks for speaking up (so people do not get kicked out of meetings for calling out racism).
- Firm language that recognizes that radical systemic change needs to happen and that it is a process we need to take. Name how current structures are not just.

## OTHER IMPORTANT DISCUSSIONS

*Staff summary of Climate and Equity Working Group – June 2020*

At the June meeting the Working Group selected topics that had not yet been covered and met in breakout groups to discuss.

### **a) Specifically addressing racism, anti-blackness and anti-indigenous racism in climate and city planning**

- City of Vancouver has long history (since day 1) of displacing Indigenous, Black, Chinese people, and other POC through city planning.
- Climate and environmental movements have a short memory, forget the racist origins of environmental climate movements (e.g., creating parks to “enjoy nature” but doing it via displacing Indigenous Peoples off their land).
- When talking about transportation think about where people are displaced to, where city planning directs services, and the disconnect between those. How can we change frameworks for how the City prioritizes funding/services/planning efforts for communities?
- Fundamentally need better representation from these communities among City staff—need to address the systemic problem of lack of representation at City Hall, particularly in decision-making roles.
- There should not be a limited engagement phase, people should always have an opportunity to provide input to work that has an impact on them. Particularly for marginalized groups.
- The efforts the City is making to reach people to invite them into engagement events are not reaching all communities, and communities of colour. Need to build community connections.
- Have a specific, ongoing effort to engage with Black and Indigenous communities.

- b) How to name and address institutional racism.** In particular, what we saw in the Houses of Commons and how do we give more power to equity work?
- How ready are the people who have the power to hear this and do this work?
  - A lot of people working in equity institutions have challenges re: whether or not they can call things out (safety).
  - Equity work has been happening for a long time—but the policies put in place are not effective—how do we something different that will hold the institution accountable?
  - How do we implement meaningfully? Acknowledge how racism is affecting others. Do some individual work first at the management level. Create safe spaces for people to speak up.
  - Who has the power and why? Ensure that advisory groups and other community groups are given the power. Institutions often call on community advocates to provide advice on different plans/policies, but their advice is not always “given” adequate value or power to make meaningful change to those policies.
- c) How to engage more people in the topic of equity and climate.** Including people from the newcomer communities and surrounding First Nations, and other underrepresented communities

Disseminating information, lived experiences and knowings from other places

- In language(s).
- In places where people gather (e.g., places of worship and places of ceremony).
- In places people call home.
- The role of Indigenous art is important—perhaps a piece of commissioned art that is lasting and speaks to equity and climate.
- Communication: use simple and concise information graphics, display info where people gather. Recognize that it is not possible to translate into all languages. For example, COVID-19 messaging used simple, easy to understand, key messages, and graphics.
- Social media: be mindful of the different social media channels that communities use.
- Need to target the youth, tech-savvy generations.
- Before we are able to communicate impacts of climate change, understand the barriers that make it difficult for people to get involved.

Getting community actively involved

- Provide different ways to get involved in same planning process/city initiatives, more times, more methods.
- Foreground the issue of ALL cultural displacements and migration.
- Community-based endorsement letters: incorporate the feedback, ensure their voice is included in the planning and development process.

Engagement that translates into action

- Awareness: let people know about the issue and why it matters.
- Action: encourage people to take action, and be a part of the plan by taking individual steps

- Help people feel like this is their home and help them take care of it.  
Empower people.