



# CONFRONT THE **CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

AN URGENT CALL TO THE BC GOVERNMENT

**November 2023 Progress Report**

The Donnie Creek wildfire is the largest ever recorded in British Columbia at 6,190 km<sup>2</sup>.

Photo: BC Wildfire Service





“Nobody is safe from  
climate change.”

Andrew Pershing  
Climate Central

Firefighters respond to the McDougall Creek wildfire near West Kelowna BC. Our hearts are with the families of the six firefighters that lost their lives fighting wildfires in BC in 2023.

Photo: BC Wildfire Service

# CONFRONT THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

AN URGENT CALL TO THE BC GOVERNMENT

November 2023 Progress Report

In September 2021, a broad coalition of 200 organizational signatories published an open letter calling on the BC government to commit to ten urgent climate actions to confront the climate emergency.

Two years later, the open letter has more than **550 signatories** representing over **2.2 million British Columbians**.

This report evaluates the BC government's progress on implementing these ten urgent climate actions over the last year.

We are encouraged by initial progress to develop plans and policies. Implementation must accelerate to immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop burning fossil fuels.

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**“Half-measures will not prevent  
full climate breakdown.**

**Today I urged the G20 to  
demonstrate far more ambition  
on reducing emissions and  
supporting climate justice.**

**We have one planet. Let’s save it.”**

António Guterres  
Secretary General of the United Nations

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As residents and firefighters evacuated Scotch Creek, Lee Creek, Celista, and the Secwépemc community of Skwlāx, one of two highway escape routes was described as “a wall of flame.”<sup>1</sup>

Photo: Mike Graeme

# Overall assessment of BC's Climate Emergency Response

## Destructive. Disruptive. Deadly.

Hundreds of thousands of people across BC were directly impacted by fires, floods, drought, and severe storms in 2023 as the climate crisis rapidly escalates.<sup>2,3,4,5</sup>

BC's response to these unprecedented climate-induced disasters has been mostly reactive—focused on emergency response, adaptation, and community resilience.

While necessary, this continued focus on adaptation is failing British Columbians, and costing taxpayers billions. The 2021 heat dome, wildfire season, floods, and landslides cost BC up to \$17.1 billion.<sup>6,7</sup>

We need urgent action to immediately reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and end our reliance on fossil fuels to minimize future harm for people and the planet. Every fraction of a degree matters.<sup>3</sup>

## Incremental change lacks the urgency required

BC is not on track to achieve its climate targets, and is failing to demonstrate adequate progress for the goals and targets embedded in CleanBC.

While some progress has been made to develop plans or policies to confront the climate emergency, implementation must accelerate to meet the *"fierce urgency of now."*<sup>8</sup>

BC's Climate Change Accountability Reports<sup>9</sup> overwhelmingly focus on positive aspects of government action with limited scope, and downplay or ignore the big challenges that will prevent BC from meeting its targets.

In contrast, the 2022 Report of the BC Climate Solutions Council identified thirteen *"pitfalls in climate policy implementation"* that must be addressed.<sup>10</sup>

## LNG is a carbon bomb

The continued expansion of fracking and LNG represents the core incoherence in BC's climate plans. This new fossil fuel infrastructure will lock in climate pollution for decades and make it impossible for BC to hit its climate targets.

To tackle this problem, BC is considering massive public subsidies to electrify the oil and gas sector. This risks diverting BC's limited energy resources away from other sectors to greenwash fossil fuel extraction. Woodfibre LNG alone will require 40% of the energy from Site C dam to electrify its export facility and fracking operations.<sup>11</sup>

## Citizens are mobilizing for climate action

Everyday people across BC are standing together to demand urgent climate action. From rallies to stop old growth logging, to citizens holding fossil fuel companies accountable, to youth and their parents organizing climate strikes—the climate emergency cannot be tackled by individuals alone. This is an extraordinary challenge that requires extraordinary climate leadership. Will the BC government step up?


# 2023 PROGRESS REPORT FOR BC's CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**1**  **FAIL**

Set binding climate pollution targets based on science and justice

**2**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Invest in a thriving, regenerative, zero emissions economy

**3**  **FAIL**

Rapidly wind down all fossil fuel production and use

**4**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

End fossil fuel subsidies and make polluters pay

**5**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Leave no one behind


**6**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Protect and restore nature

# 2023 PROGRESS REPORT FOR BC'S CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**7**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Invest in local, organic, regenerative agriculture and food systems

**8**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Accelerate the transition to zero emission transportation

**9**  **MINOR PROGRESS**

Accelerate the transition to zero emission buildings

**10**  **FAIL**

Track and report progress on these actions every year

## About the grades

- **FAIL:** No substantive policies or actions implemented to support this climate action, and the BC government is not on a path to succeed.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Some policies or actions are in progress to support this climate action.
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Significant policies or actions are in progress to support this climate action.
- **COMPLETE:** Success! Policies or actions have been implemented.
- **UNKNOWN:** Data currently unavailable or policies / actions pending.





# Set binding climate targets based on science and justice

Reduce BC's greenhouse gas emissions by ~7.5% per year below 2007 levels. Set binding reduction targets of 15% by 2023; 30% by 2025; 60% by 2030, and 100% by 2040 (below 2007 levels). Review and update targets regularly as climate science evolves.



Thousands of youth, parents, teachers and community members attended the 2023 Global Climate Strike in Vancouver.

Photo: Jimmy Jeong



# 2023 progress report for BC:

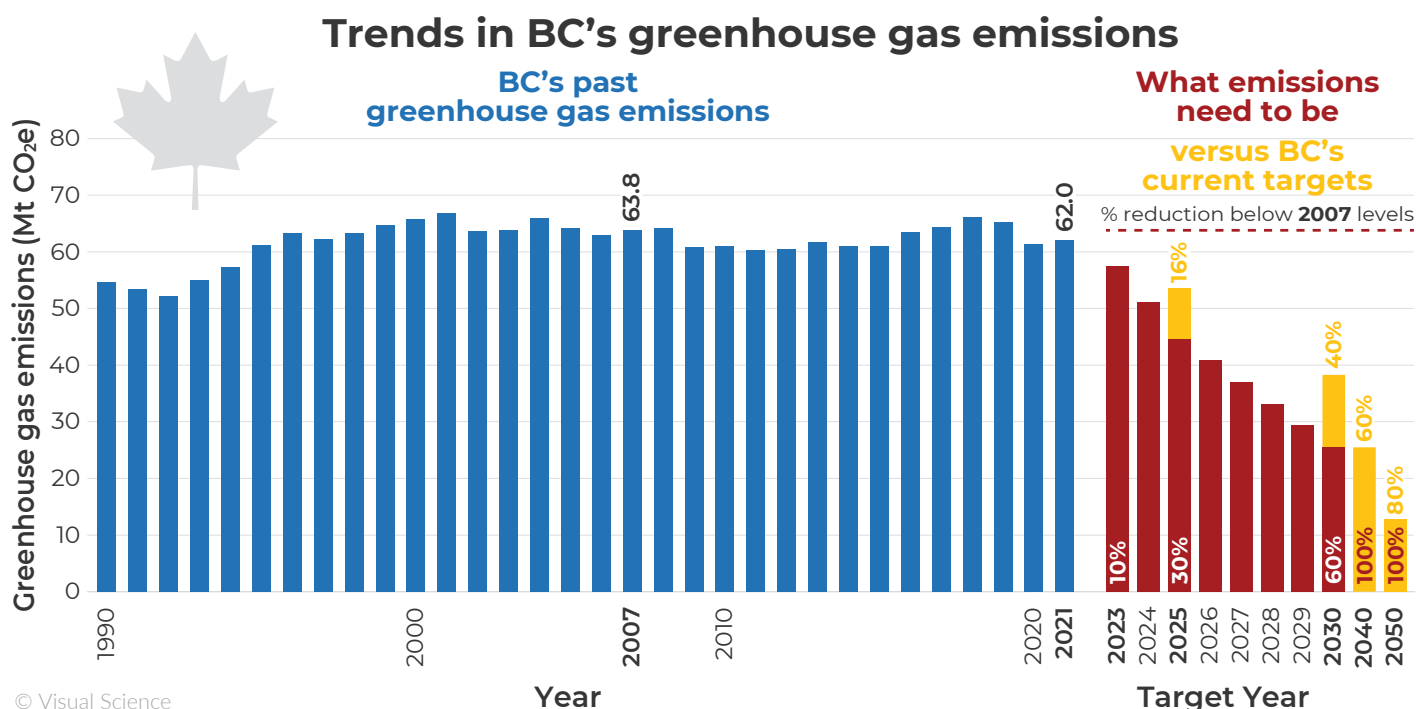
## Current status: **FAIL**

To limit temperature rise to 1.5°C, British Columbia now needs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by roughly 8.6% per year until 2030 (up from 7.5% per year if action had started just one year earlier). To hit the interim target of 30% by 2025 now requires a 10% reduction per year. Every year that BC delays on urgent climate action means that we must cut emissions even more rapidly over shorter timeframes.<sup>3</sup>

British Columbia has failed to meet its emission reduction targets for over a decade. Despite a slight decrease in emissions in 2020 due to the pandemic, emissions increased again in 2021. Current policies are unlikely to result in the urgent reductions required.

## Rationale

- **FAIL:** Did not reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6.7% in 2021.
- **UNKNOWN:** Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7.5% in 2022 and 8.6% in 2023.
- **FAIL:** BC's legislated greenhouse gas reduction targets of 16% below 2007 levels by 2025, 40% by 2030, 60% by 2040, and 80% by 2050 are inadequate, and not aligned with science or justice. The targets are not binding.
- **FAIL:** Policies in CleanBC's Roadmap to 2030 do not extend past 2030. There is no plan to achieve the legislated 2025, 2040, or 2050 greenhouse gas reduction targets.
- **FAIL:** CleanBC's Roadmap to 2030 committed to net-zero by 2050; this target is yet to be legislated.



© Visual Science

Left panel: Trends in BC's greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 to 2021 in million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent (blue). Right panel: Comparison of what BC's greenhouse gas emissions targets need to be (red) versus BC's current targets (yellow). Data source: Provincial Inventory of Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990–2021.

# 2

## \$ Invest in a thriving, regenerative, zero emissions economy

Invest 2% of BC's GDP (\$6 billion dollars per year) to advance the zero emissions economy and create tens of thousands of good jobs. Spend what it takes to immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create new economic institutions to get the job done. Ensure that the economic component of Aboriginal Title is recognized through the sharing of benefits and revenues that result.



BC Hydro will issue a call in 2024 for new sources of renewable, emission-free electricity to power BC's growing clean economy and create new jobs throughout the province.

Photo: Province of British Columbia



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

Former World Bank chief economist, Nicholas Stern, has recommended governments to spend two per cent of GDP on climate-mitigation efforts.<sup>12</sup> For BC, this now translates to about \$8 billion per year.

While spending on climate adaptation and mitigation has increased in the past year, budget 2023 dedicated approximately \$1.6 billion to reduce emissions, which is one-fifth of what is recommended.<sup>13</sup>

A recent analysis shows BC has the economic means to increase public investments in urgent climate action, and fund the critical public services and infrastructure needed to rapidly reduce emissions and tackle worsening inequality.<sup>14</sup>

## Rationale

- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Invested ~0.4% of BC's GDP to advance the zero emissions economy and create tens of thousands of good jobs. More investment is needed.
- **FAIL:** No new economic institutions created to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Minimal advancement to the Crown's recognition of the economic component of Aboriginal Title. The economic self-determination of First Nations remains hindered by the lack of redress for historic extraction of wealth from First Nations lands and the continuity of deeply colonial resource policy and legislation.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Created a BC Hydro task force to accelerate the electrification of the economy with \$140 million allocated to the B.C Indigenous Clean Energy Initiative to support Indigenous-led power projects.<sup>15</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** New Energy Framework commits to establish a clean-energy and major projects office to fast track investment in clean energy and technology and create good, sustainable jobs.<sup>16</sup>
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Budget 2023 boosted the Climate Action Tax Credit, targetting big polluters while making it more fair for British Columbians.

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**“Climate change became very real for West Kelowna on August 16... Over \$20 million was spent reacting to my fire... We're spending the money on the wrong end of the problem.”**

Jason Brolund  
West Kelowna Fire Chief

# 3

## Rapidly wind down all fossil fuel production and use

Immediately stop all new fossil fuel infrastructure including fracking, oil and gas pipelines, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and fossil fuel-derived hydrogen. Rapidly phase out and decommission all existing fossil fuel production and exports.



Citizens in Vernon call for an end to fracking and LNG exports in BC.

Photo: FrackFreeBC



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **FAIL**

BC has still not developed adequate policies to limit the expansion of fracking or liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports, and approved a third LNG export facility in 2023.<sup>17</sup> If LNG Canada, Woodfibre LNG, and Cedar LNG are built and become operational, it will be impossible for BC to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The New Energy Action Framework appears promising but needs to be strengthened to ensure meaningful emissions reductions in the oil and gas sector, not greenwashing.

## Rationale

- **FAIL:** Approved Cedar LNG, locking in fracking and LNG exports for decades. The LNG produced by Cedar LNG, once burned, will emit about 8 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per year—more than the entire city of Vancouver.
- **FAIL:** No policies to stop new fossil fuel infrastructure.
- **FAIL:** No plan to rapidly phase out and decommission existing fossil fuel production and exports.
- **FAIL:** Focus on false solutions such as hydrogen; renewable gas; liquid biofuels, carbon capture, utilization, and storage (CCUS), and carbon offsets, all of which prop up and greenwash fossil fuel extraction.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Draft methane regulations to achieve the 2030 target are under development and show promise, though improvements are still needed.
- **FAIL:** New LNG facilities must have a credible plan to be net zero by 2030,<sup>16</sup> however “net zero” plans are often meaningless<sup>18,19</sup> as they fail to include Scope 3 emissions, and rely on unproven and costly technology (CCUS)<sup>20</sup> or carbon offsets which a recent analysis revealed are mostly worthless.<sup>21</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Intention to implement a provincial oil and gas emissions cap that includes LNG, however much more needs to be done.
- **FAIL:** BC’s plan to electrify the oil and gas sector risks diverting limited energy resources away from other sectors to greenwash ongoing fossil fuel extraction.

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“Removing carbon from the atmosphere  
is costly and uncertain. We must do  
everything possible to stop putting it there  
in the first place.”

International Energy Agency

# 4



## End fossil fuel subsidies and make polluters pay

End all fossil fuel subsidies and financial incentives by 2022. Ensure that those industries that profit from fossil fuel pollution pay their fair share of the resulting climate damage.



Local governments are signing on to a class-action lawsuit to Sue Big Oil. Will BC follow California's lead to recover the costs of climate change from big oil and gas?

Photo: Tracey Saxby



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

While BC canceled the province's largest fossil fuel subsidy in 2022, BC is still the second largest provider of fossil fuel subsidies in Canada, second only to Alberta.

The December 2022 mandate letter for the Minister of Energy, Mines, and Low Carbon Innovation<sup>22</sup> directed the Minister to *"Review and identify opportunities to transition fossil fuel subsidies to the clean tech and clean energy sectors."* This is the first time that the Provincial government has committed to any kind of phase out of fossil fuel subsidies.

Fossil fuel subsidies are expensive, incentivize pollution, and disadvantage cleaner energy like renewables or geothermal by creating market distortions. Ongoing subsidies and tax breaks for fossil fuel companies mean there is less funding available to support critical social services like healthcare, education, and housing.

## Rationale

- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC committed to review and phase out fossil fuel subsidies. This is a critical opportunity to eliminate remaining subsidies and financial incentives, and redirect public funding.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** The 2023 review of industrial carbon pricing has resulted in a commitment to transition to an output-based pricing system,<sup>23</sup> a model that encourages emissions reductions and minimizes competitiveness risks.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Budget 2023 increased BC's carbon price to \$65/tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emissions, rising by \$15/tonne each year until it hits \$170/tonne in 2030. Putting a price on carbon pollution is one of the most effective and economically efficient ways to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.<sup>24</sup>
- **FAIL:** Oil and gas companies are not paying their fair share for the climate harms caused by burning fossil fuels. BC has an opportunity to follow California's lead and Sue Big Oil to recover the costs of climate change.

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**"For more than 50 years, Big Oil has been lying to us... California is taking action to hold big polluters accountable."**

Gavin Newsome  
Governor of California

# 5



## Leave no one behind

Ensure a just transition for fossil fuel workers, resource-dependent communities, and Indigenous and remote communities impacted by fossil fuel production. It will be critical to collaborate in true partnership with Indigenous peoples in climate action. Prepare our communities for the impacts of the climate crisis to minimize human suffering and infrastructure damage. Support those most vulnerable to climate change impacts.



Premier David Eby met with wildfire evacuees in the Central Okanagan, as well as emergency volunteers, fire chiefs and crews.

Photo: Province of British Columbia



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

The climate emergency is deepening existing inequalities for the most vulnerable in our communities. To minimize human suffering, we must prioritize climate action in ways that promote equity, anti-racism, and social justice; support those that have been directly affected; and implement the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

While big steps have been taken to better support those most vulnerable to climate change impacts, BC needs a comprehensive plan for a just transition as we rapidly transition away from fossil fuels.

## Rationale

- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** BC has established a new Ministry of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness and is modernizing emergency management legislation.
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** The Emergency and Disaster Management Act will update BC's emergency management procedures and definitions, and give First Nations self-governing authority over disaster response and prevention.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC has committed to implement all 20 recommendations from the 2023 BC Ombudsperson report that found emergency support programs for people displaced by extreme weather emergencies are outdated, inaccessible, under-resourced, and unfair.<sup>25</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC invested \$180 million<sup>26</sup> in the Community Emergency Preparedness Fund to help communities prepare for climate-related disasters—but this falls far short of the \$13 billion required for flood and wildfire protection.<sup>27</sup>
- **FAIL:** No plan to support fossil fuel workers, resource-dependent communities, or Indigenous and remote communities in a just transition.
- **FAIL:** BC is implementing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, but its application is incoherent and inconsistent, especially when in conflict with resource extraction interests.

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**“Climate change has resulted in more frequent and more extreme weather emergencies, and government is trying to respond with a framework that is decades old and insufficient to meet current reality.. The time to act is now.”**

Jay Chalke  
BC Ombudsperson





## Protect and restore nature

Protect 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030; support and invest in Indigenous-led conservation initiatives; restore natural ecosystems to enhance ecosystem functions and services, preserve biodiversity, increase carbon sequestration, and improve human and ecosystem resilience to climate impacts. Impose an immediate moratorium on the industrial logging of all old growth forests which are critical carbon sinks.



Citizens gather outside Premier Eby's office to call for an end to old-growth logging in BC.

Photo: Siobhan Williams



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

The Federal government's pledge to protect 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030 and BC's commitment to protect 30% of BC's land base by 2030<sup>28</sup> are now reflected in a Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation with the First Nations Leadership Council.<sup>29</sup> The agreement outlines a pathway to achieve the 30x30 goal, and protect biodiversity and at-risk-ecosystems (especially old growth) in a manner that supports Indigenous Rights and builds on Indigenous Knowledge.

## Rationale

- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Tripartite Framework Agreement on Nature Conservation dedicates \$1 billion to protect and conserve biodiversity, habitats, and species at risk in BC, recognizing First Nations leadership in ecosystem stewardship.<sup>29</sup>
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Launched a new \$300-million Conservation Financing Mechanism to fund conservation measures led or supported by First Nations.<sup>30</sup>
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Adoption of the Northern Shelf Bioregion Marine Protected Area network action plan by First Nations, Federal, and Provincial governments is a big step towards meeting marine conservation targets.<sup>31</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC's first Coastal Marine Strategy is being developed in partnership with First Nations and will be released in 2024.<sup>32</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC's Watershed Security Strategy is being developed in partnership with First Nations and will be released in 2024.<sup>33</sup> \$100 million was invested in healthy watersheds.<sup>34</sup>
- **FAIL:** The Old Growth Strategic Review (OGSR) process has not yet translated to change on the ground. Old-growth logging increased by about a fifth in 2021 compared to 2020, contrary to BC's claims of record lows. More than half of the most at-risk old-growth forests recommended for deferral in 2021 remain open to logging.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** A framework to prioritize ecosystem health and biodiversity is in development, but the timeframe to enact legislation is uncertain.<sup>35</sup>

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**“Conservation financing is a core tool that can help us... to properly manage, maintain, and conserve ecosystem health, biodiversity and our oldest and rarest trees.”**

Garry Merkel  
Co-author, Old Growth Strategic Review

# 7



## Invest in local, organic, regenerative agriculture and food systems

Incentivize carbon storage in soil, restore biodiversity, and ensure food sovereignty and food security across the province. Increase consumption of plant-based foods, and reduce food waste. Support Indigenous communities that wish to maintain traditional food systems and enhance their food security.



The Fraser-Valley flood-mitigation program is intended to increase food security, and reduce flood risks by restoring local ecosystems and wetlands.

Photo: Province of British Columbia



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

Climate change is a major threat to food security in British Columbia, for example: heatwaves, floods, severe drought, extreme storms, and wildfires are damaging crops; warmer stream temperatures and low water levels in streams and rivers continue to impact salmon spawning; and increasing ocean acidification is impacting coastal fisheries.

While some progress has been made to invest in local, organic, regenerative agriculture and food systems, ongoing and systemic inequality continues to undermine action.

## Rationale

- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Substantial new investments in food security,<sup>36</sup> farm-to-school nutrition and food hubs,<sup>37</sup> Indigenous food system support,<sup>38</sup> and salmon restoration.<sup>39</sup> \$300-million Conservation Financing Mechanism<sup>40</sup> will enable many First Nations to switch from reliance on logging revenues to instead protect forests and maintain access to traditional foods.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Commitment to enhance agricultural carbon sequestration, and improve soil health and biodiversity through regenerative agriculture. Consultations are complete for Regenerative Agriculture and Agritech.<sup>41</sup>
- **UNKNOWN:** Incomplete and inadequate analysis and reporting of agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and sequestration.<sup>42</sup>
- **FAIL:** Water restrictions due to extreme drought unfairly targeted small farmers and crops had to be abandoned.<sup>43</sup>
- **FAIL:** No plan to increase consumption of plant-based foods or reduce food waste.
- **FAIL:** Least affordable housing in the country contributes to growing food insecurity.<sup>44</sup>
- **FAIL:** Least affordable farmland in the country contributes to eldest farm operators, lack of young farmers, farm consolidation, shift away from soil-based farming, and increasing dependence on temporary foreign workers on BC farms.<sup>45,46,47,48,49</sup>

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**“In my region alone thousands of Indigenous peoples are actively wanting to participate in our food economy, and want to do it the way our ancestors did—regeneratively.”**

Jacob Beaton  
Indigenous Farmer and Food Sovereignty Champion

# 8



## Accelerate the transition to zero emission transportation

Invest in affordable, accessible, and convenient public transit within and between all communities. Reallocate infrastructure funds from highway expansion to transit and active transportation (cycling, rolling, and walking). Mandate zero emissions for all new light vehicles by 2027, and all medium and heavy duty vehicles by 2030.



Minister Josie Osbourne at the EV Drive and Ride Day outside the BC Legislature in Victoria.

Photo: Province of British Columbia



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **MINOR PROGRESS**

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in BC and emissions in this sector are rising.<sup>50</sup> The Clean Transportation Action Plan will be released soon, and aims to reduce vehicle distance traveled 25% by 2030; shift to active transportation and transit; improve vehicle efficiency; and adopt zero-emission vehicles.

While BC made progress on electric vehicles, charging stations, and transit in 2023, highway expansion continues to induce increased traffic. A rapid mode shift is possible if we reallocate funding from highway expansion to public transit and active transportation within and between all communities.

## Rationale

- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Zero Emissions Amendment Act moves up the goal for all new light-duty vehicles to be electric by 2035, with interim goals of 26% by 2026 and 90% by 2030. This transition can and should be accelerated.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Consultations are complete on a Clean Transportation Action Plan.<sup>51</sup> New standards for medium and heavy duty vehicles are in progress,<sup>52</sup> which if enacted, could be amongst the most ambitious in North America.
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** Budget 2023 included a major increase in capital funding for BC Transit (but no similar increase for operations), plus ~\$3.5 billion in capital funding for TransLink projects in Metro Vancouver over the next three years. \$100 million was allocated for building active transportation networks,<sup>53</sup> and \$40 million for the Go Electric Commercial Vehicle Pilot Program.<sup>54</sup>
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Amended the Motor Vehicle Act to allow wheelchair and mobility scooters use on bike and roll routes and to protect vulnerable road users, but has been slow to create the necessary new regulations.
- **FAIL:** Billions of dollars of infrastructure funds continue to be spent on highway expansion projects in areas with public transit service.

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**“Providing safe and affordable transportation services is essential not only to reduce transportation emissions but also to act on the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.”**

Chief Marilyn Slett<sup>55</sup>  
Secretary-Treasurer, Union of BC Indian Chiefs

# 9

## Accelerate the transition to zero emission buildings

Ban new natural gas connections to all new and existing buildings by end of 2022. Create a Crown Corporation to mobilize the workforce to retrofit all existing buildings and eliminate fossil fuel heating by 2035, and to build new affordable zero emissions buildings.



Concerned residents hold signs saying “Stop FortisBC: Fracked gas at work” at a public information session hosted by FortisBC in Squamish in March 2023.  
Photo: Caroline Routhier



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status **MINOR PROGRESS**

Emissions from buildings represents 12% of BC's total greenhouse gas emissions, primarily from space and water heating using fossil fuels. Local governments such as Vancouver, Victoria, and Nanaimo are demonstrating climate leadership by eliminating fossil fuel heating, and requiring new buildings to be carbon zero. BC has yet to match these goals. While new affordable housing is being built, it is not all zero emissions, but in a welcome move BC is requiring municipalities to increase density.

In the meantime, FortisBC continues to aggressively increase its customer base, with over 10,000 new customers in 2022. In contrast, only 5,050 households claimed the BC government's heat pump rebate in 2022. If these trends continue, BC will never hit its target to reduce emissions 59–64% in Buildings & Communities by 2030.

FortisBC is also promoting the false solution of “renewable natural gas” and has faced accusations of peddling misinformation after the for-profit utility was caught altering a government report to delete key recommendations that threaten their profits.<sup>56</sup>

## Rationale

- **FAIL:** No commitment to end natural gas heating in new buildings until 2030.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Released the Zero Carbon Step Code—a voluntary tool for municipalities to expedite the timeline for new buildings to be zero-emission (sooner than the provincial target of 2030),<sup>57</sup> but no new regulations or mandatory policies from the provincial government.
- **FAIL:** No plan to phase out fossil fuel utilities.
- **FAIL:** No Crown Corporation created to mobilize the workforce to retrofit existing buildings, or to mass produce and install heat pumps or renewable energy.
- **FAIL:** No plan to eliminate fossil fuel heating by 2035.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Approximately 200,000 heat pumps are installed in homes across BC (mostly in new builds), roughly equivalent to 10% of homes.
- **MAJOR PROGRESS:** New emissions cap for natural gas utilities by 2030.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** Appointed new leadership and reviewing BC Utilities Commission role to better align climate goals and affordability objectives.<sup>58</sup>

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“Climate action poses an existential threat to this [gas] industry.”<sup>59</sup>

Kathryn Harrison  
Professor of Political Science, University of British Columbia

# 10



## Track and report progress on these actions every year

Embed all of these actions in legislation to ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusion. Establish rolling 5-year carbon budgets that decline over time towards zero emissions by 2040 or sooner.



Doctors and nurses gather outside Premier Eby's constituency office to issue a public health advisory to connect fracking and LNG exports to climate change.<sup>60</sup>

Photo: CAPE



# 2023 progress report for BC:

## Current status: **FAIL**

In January 2023, the BC Supreme Court ruled on a landmark climate case brought by Ecojustice on behalf of Sierra Club that the BC government failed to adequately report on its progress to reach its climate targets, as required by the province's climate law, the Climate Change Accountability Act.<sup>61</sup>

The Court ruled that the reporting requirements of BC's climate law, including the provision to report on plans to reach its climate targets, are enforceable by the court.

The Court agreed that BC's progress to date on meeting its climate targets has been "disappointing" and that the province has a "consistent history of missing its targets."

Unfortunately, the Court found that the legislation does not require the government to tell the people of BC whether it is on track to achieving our climate targets. However, the Court did agree that this type of information "may be useful and may contribute to [BC] actually meeting one of the enumerated targets in a break from the consistent history of missing its targets."

This demonstrates that, as currently drafted, BC's climate accountability legislation is not fit for purpose since it does not require the Minister to provide the type of information necessary for the general public to hold the government accountable and track progress on its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

## Rationale

- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC has not embedded a majority of the climate actions from this open letter in legislation. While some plans and policies are underway, many of these are yet to be implemented and lack the ambition required.
- **MINOR PROGRESS:** BC has improved transparency and accountability in its Climate Change Accountability Report to include 2025 targets and the 2030 sectoral targets. However greater detail is still required.
- **FAIL:** BC's 2022 Climate Change Accountability Report<sup>9</sup> focuses on partial progress and largely omits risks on the path to targets (e.g. more fracking and new LNG terminals). From "Insufficient implementation of compulsory policies to reduce GHG emissions," to "Approval of new high-emission industrial projects," BC's 2022 Climate Solutions Council report highlights thirteen "Pitfalls in climate policy implementation" that need to be considered and addressed in BC's climate accountability reports.<sup>10</sup>
- **FAIL:** The Climate Change Accountability Report still fails to explain how BC's climate plans will achieve all legislated targets on the path to 2050. The 2030 oil and gas sector target makes assumptions based on plans and policies that are still in development. This leaves the public unable to hold BC accountable for its progress (or lack of progress) to these targets.
- **FAIL:** BC has not established rolling 5-year carbon budgets.

“The pace and scale of climate action are insufficient to tackle climate change.”

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2023 AR6



Burned remains of the gas station at the First Nations community of Skwłāx te Secwepemcúl'ecw on August 19. Indigenous communities comprise 5% of the population but 42% of wildfire evacuations over the last decade in Canada.

Photo: Mike Graeme



# BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan

First Nations have been on the front lines of the climate impacts across British Columbia. Heat, fires, and floods are disproportionately affecting Indigenous peoples, and the colonial jurisdictional gaps in emergency services have created circumstances of greater vulnerability to climate extremes.

For many First Nations, the climate emergency is disrupting the foundations of traditional ways of living, destroying habitat for species they have harvested for thousands of years, and causing their very lands to be lost or damaged. The current situation was created by years of subsequent governments failing to effectively prioritize or support First Nations-led initiatives for emissions reduction or adaptation.

British Columbia has much that it could learn from First Nations community leaders on mitigating and adapting to climate change. Traditional insights are being applied in forest management and renewing cultural burning practices in forests at risk of wildfire. Indigenous approaches are leading the way in conservation and protection of habitat. Communities are developing genuine clean energy alternatives to high-carbon fuels that are suited to the resources and limitations within their own territories. First Nations are demonstrating bold climate leadership – British Columbia must recognize the rights of First Nations to govern in their own jurisdictions in principle and practice, and work with First Nations to provide the resources that will lead to transformative change.

The [BC First Nations Climate Strategy and Action Plan](#) presents a bold vision for climate action articulated by First Nations leadership and communities from across the province. The strategy focuses on ensuring that First Nations' inherent title, rights and treaty rights are recognized and affirmed as foundational for meaningful climate action.



The gas station at the First Nations community of Skwlāx te Secwepemcúl'ecw burning on August 18.

Photo: Mike Graeme



Skeletons of homes and vehicles the day after a wildfire in Scotch Creek on August 18.

Photo: Mike Graeme





Tsleil-Waututh Nation and Fisheries and Oceans Canada set nets and dig a channel to rescue tens of thousands of pink salmon stranded in the Indian River due to extreme drought.<sup>62</sup>

Photo: Jennifer Gauthier



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**“After experiencing a year of wildfires like this one, there is no denying the harms that climate change is doing to our communities and our lands.**

**The climate emergency is in the process of destroying our ways of life and we’ve consistently shown that we’re not ready—not ready to protect people from the impacts of climate change, and not ready to rapidly transform the extractive economy that got us here.**

**Piecemeal and incremental action is no longer enough.**

**Everyone must act on their responsibilities to these lands and work to create a safer future, and support First Nations leadership in climate action.”**

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip  
President of the  
Union of BC Indian Chiefs

**CONFRONT THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY**  
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**CONFRONT THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

# Another year... of devastating climate impacts in BC

From November 2022 to October 2023, BC continued to experience the **destructive and deadly** impacts of rapidly accelerating climate change. For example:

- **Extreme rainfall** combined with high tides, **flooding** downtown Squamish businesses in December 2022.<sup>63</sup>
- In early May 2023, half of BC was under flood watches, warnings, or advisories as late snowmelt combined with heavy precipitation, leading to **flooding** in Cache Creek, Fruitvale, Grand Forks, Midway, Oliver, West Kelowna, Vernon, and several Indigenous communities.<sup>64,65</sup>
- On May 14, thirty-three heat records were broken across BC during a “scorching” **heat wave** that broke previous temperature records by up to 6.6°C.<sup>66</sup>
- From June to August 2023, BC was a global hot-spot, experiencing **record-shattering summer temperatures 1.5°C higher than normal**, with Western Canada ranking seventh-highest in the world during Earth’s hottest summer.<sup>67,68</sup>
- More than 80% of BC’s water basins are experiencing **severe drought** conditions with adverse impacts on communities and ecosystems, increasing the risk of wildfires.<sup>69,70</sup>
- Hot, dry weather led to the **most costly and destructive wildfire season on record in BC**, with over 2,246 fires burning over 2.85 million hectares since April.<sup>71</sup> Firefighting is projected to cost BC close to \$1 billion in 2023,<sup>72</sup> and six firefighters lost their lives while protecting our communities.<sup>73</sup>
- In July, a nine-year-old boy died due to asthma exacerbated by **wildfire smoke**.<sup>74</sup>
- In August, BC declared a **provincial state of emergency** due to wildfires.<sup>75</sup> 140,000 people across BC were impacted by wildfire evacuation orders and alerts, with at least **33,000 people evacuated** from their homes.<sup>76</sup>
- **Wildfires destroyed approximately 400 homes**, making the 2023 wildfire season the most costly insured event recorded in BC at an estimated \$720 million.<sup>77</sup>
- Two years later, **residents of Lytton are still displaced** after record-breaking temperatures of 49.6°C sparked a wildfire that burned most of the town.<sup>78</sup>
- Water restrictions were in place across the province due to extremely **low water flow** in rivers and streams that are impacting threatened salmon populations.<sup>79,80</sup>
- **Severe windstorms** knocked out power for 100,000 homes on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the Lower Mainland in October 2023.<sup>81</sup> BC Hydro is warning that the dry summer and widespread wildfires may lead to more weather-related power outages this storm season due to damaged soil, roots, trees, and vegetation.<sup>82</sup>
- Indigenous communities in Canada continue to experience the **disproportionate impacts of climate change**, making up 42% of wildfire evacuations over the last decade, while comprising only 5% of the population.<sup>83</sup>





“We fought 100 years worth  
of fires all in one night.”

Jason Brolund  
West Kelowna Fire Chief

The McDougall Creek wildfire was one of the fastest moving wildfires in BC's history, growing from 64 hectares to 6,800 hectares in 24 hours, destroying 190 homes in West Kelowna.<sup>84,85</sup>

Photo: Shootthebreeze

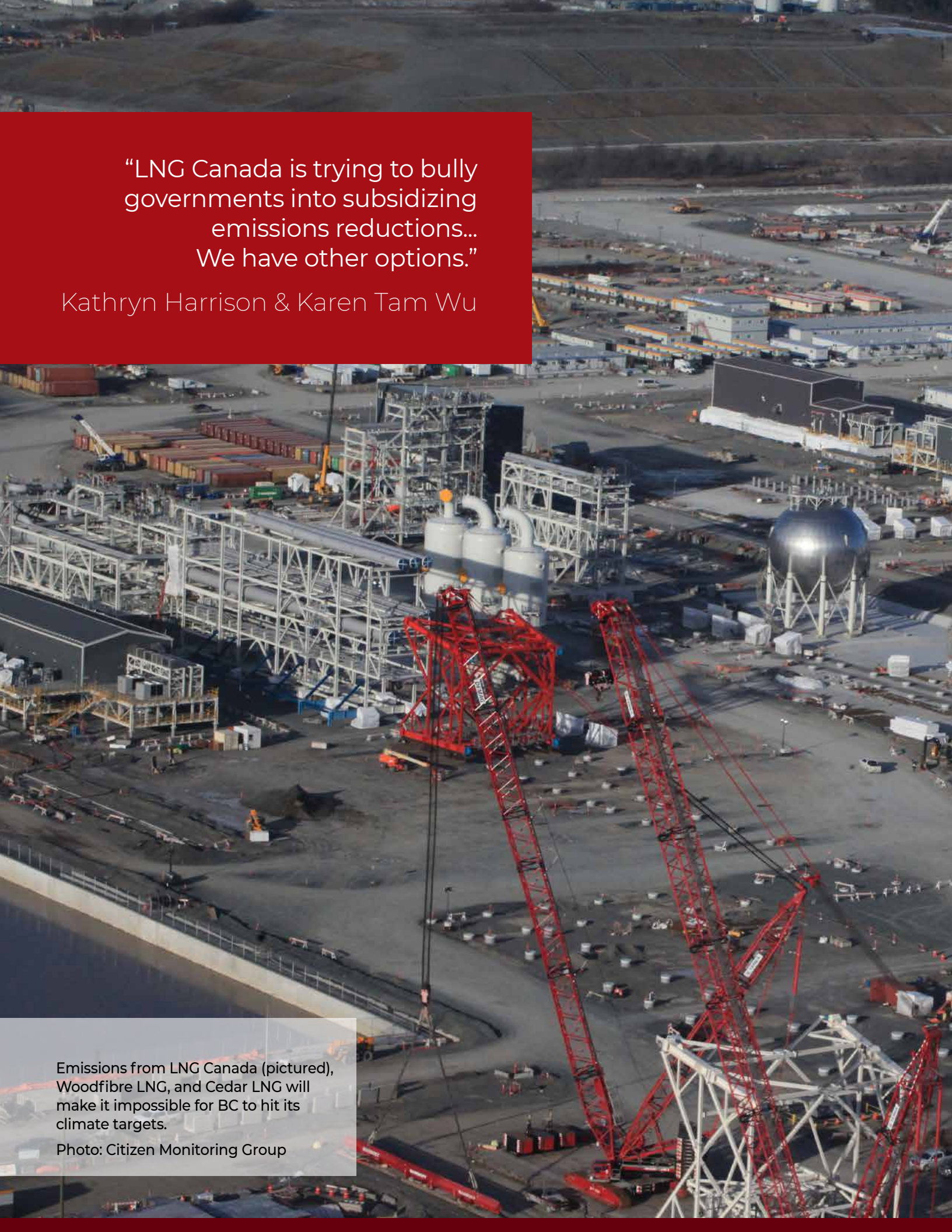


“LNG Canada is trying to bully governments into subsidizing emissions reductions... We have other options.”

Kathryn Harrison & Karen Tam Wu

Emissions from LNG Canada (pictured), Woodfibre LNG, and Cedar LNG will make it impossible for BC to hit its climate targets.

Photo: Citizen Monitoring Group





# Now is the time to act:

## An urgent need for climate leadership

We reiterate the urgent calls for climate action outlined in the 2021 open letter, which has now been signed by 550+ organizations, businesses, labour unions, and faith groups representing over 2.2 million British Columbians.

We hold onto hope that the BC Government will demonstrate the bold leadership that is required to confront the climate emergency and transform CleanBC into a genuine climate emergency plan.

Greenhouse gas emissions released now and over the next ten years will determine the severity of the climate crisis for future generations. Scientists are warning that the pace and scale of climate action are insufficient to tackle climate change<sup>3</sup> and worsening existing inequalities.<sup>86</sup>

But scientists are also holding out hope, as effective and equitable climate action now will reduce future losses for people and nature. We already know what we need to do: stop burning fossil fuels. The solutions we need already exist.<sup>3</sup>

The severity of recent extreme weather events in BC create a political opening—the conditions exist for the BC government to be the climate leaders our children need you to be. This is a moment to confront both the climate crisis and the corporations who are fueling it.

*“Our choices will reverberate for hundreds, even thousands of years.”<sup>3</sup>*

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**“We cannot continue to subsidize fossil fuels and expect clean energy to manifest somehow. We cannot continue to expand fossil fuel infrastructure and hit our climate goals. Our legislated climate targets are of significant importance; targets I want our province to hit.”**

David Eby  
Premier of British Columbia

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Eagle Bluff wildfire prompted  
widespread evacuation orders  
in Osoyoos BC, on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Photo: Kristine Fujita



# 550+

agriculture, arts, business, community, education, environment, faith, food producers, health, housing, Indigenous, labour, local government, outdoor recreation, research, seniors, tourism, and youth organizations, representing over

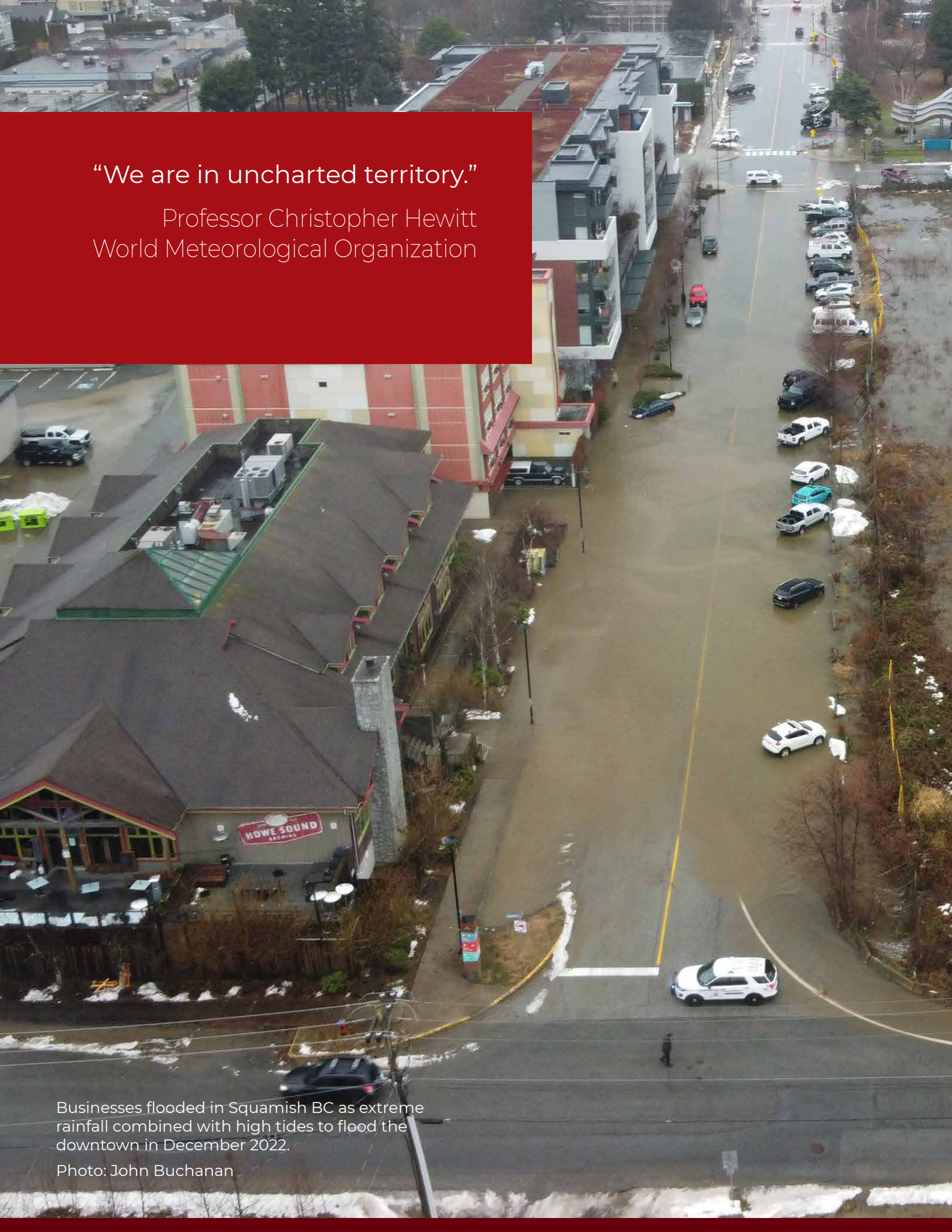
# 2,200,000

British Columbians  
call on the BC government to:

**CONFRONT THE  
CLIMATE  
EMERGENCY**

“We are in uncharted territory.”

Professor Christopher Hewitt  
World Meteorological Organization



Businesses flooded in Squamish BC as extreme rainfall combined with high tides to flood the downtown in December 2022.

Photo: John Buchanan



# CONFRONT THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

## AN URGENT CALL TO THE BC GOVERNMENT

Updated November 2023

Dear Premier Eby and the Government of BC,

We write on behalf of more than 550 diverse agriculture, arts, business, community, education, environment, faith, food producers, health, housing, Indigenous, labour, local government, outdoor recreation, research, seniors, tourism, and youth organizations who collectively represent over 2.2 million British Columbians.

We call on the BC government to recognize the urgency and alarm that people all over the province are feeling as the climate crisis directly impacts our communities and our health: deadly heat waves, wildfires, drought, floods, crop failure, fisheries collapse, and costly evacuations and infrastructure damage. These climate-related impacts are unprecedented and intensifying. Indigenous peoples stand to be disproportionately impacted by climate events despite successfully taking care of the land since time immemorial.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is a 'code red' for humanity. The International Energy Agency has called on world governments to immediately stop investments in and approvals of new oil and gas projects.

The provincial government's CleanBC climate action plan is insufficient to limit warming to 1.5°C and will not keep British Columbians safe from the worst impacts of climate change.

We therefore urge the BC government to develop and implement a transformative climate emergency plan that recognizes the interconnected climate, ecological, and social crises; embeds equity, anti-racism, and social justice at its core; and upholds Indigenous Title and Rights, and Treaty Rights.

To implement the rapid systemic change that is required, we call on the provincial government to demonstrate the leadership necessary to confront the climate emergency, and immediately undertake the following 10 actions:



# CONFRONT THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

**1 Set binding climate targets based on science and justice**  
Reduce BC's greenhouse gas emissions by ~7.5% per year below 2007 levels. Set binding reduction targets of 15% by 2023; 30% by 2025; 60% by 2030, and 100% by 2040 (below 2007 levels). Review and update targets regularly as climate science evolves.

**2 Invest in a thriving, regenerative, zero emissions economy**  
Invest 2% of BC's GDP (\$6 billion dollars per year) to advance the zero emissions economy and create tens of thousands of good jobs. Spend what it takes to immediately reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create new economic institutions to get the job done. Ensure that the economic component of Aboriginal Title is recognized through the sharing of benefits and revenues that result.

**3 Rapidly wind down all fossil fuel production and use**  
Immediately stop all new fossil fuel infrastructure including fracking, oil and gas pipelines, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and fossil fuel-derived hydrogen. Rapidly phase out and decommission all existing fossil fuel production and exports.

**4 End fossil fuel subsidies and make polluters pay**  
End all fossil fuel subsidies and financial incentives by 2022. Ensure that those industries that profit from fossil fuel pollution pay their fair share of the resulting climate damage.

**5 Leave no-one behind**  
Ensure a just transition for fossil fuel workers, resource-dependent communities, and Indigenous and remote communities impacted by fossil fuel production. It will be critical to collaborate in true partnership with Indigenous peoples in climate action. Prepare our communities for the impacts of the climate crisis to minimize human suffering and infrastructure damage. Support those most vulnerable to climate change impact.





Photo: Gavin Phillips @ItsGavP

**6 Protect and restore nature**  
Protect 30% of terrestrial and marine ecosystems by 2030; support and invest in Indigenous-led conservation initiatives; restore natural ecosystems to enhance ecosystem functions and services, preserve biodiversity, increase carbon sequestration, and improve human and ecosystem resilience to climate impacts. Impose an immediate moratorium on the industrial logging of all old growth forests which are critical carbon sinks.

**7 Invest in local, organic, regenerative agriculture and food systems**  
Incentivize carbon storage in soil, restore biodiversity, and ensure food sovereignty and food security across the province. Increase consumption of plant-based foods, and reduce food waste. Support Indigenous communities that wish to maintain traditional food systems and enhance their food security.

**8 Accelerate the transition to zero emission transportation**  
Invest in affordable, accessible, and convenient public transit within and between all communities. Reallocate infrastructure funds from highway expansion to transit and active transportation (cycling, rolling, and walking). Mandate zero emissions for all new light vehicles by 2027, and all medium and heavy duty vehicles by 2030.

**9 Accelerate the transition to zero emission buildings**  
Ban new natural gas connections to all new and existing buildings by end of 2022. Create a Crown Corporation to mobilize the workforce to retrofit all existing buildings and eliminate fossil fuel heating by 2035, and to build new affordable zero emissions buildings.

**10 Track and report progress on these actions every year**  
Embed all of these actions in legislation to ensure accountability, transparency, and inclusion. Establish rolling 5-year carbon budgets that decline over time towards zero emissions by 2040 or sooner.

# A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

The climate emergency offers an unprecedented opportunity to generate new, vibrant economic and social wealth as we transform where our energy comes from and how it is used. It offers an opportunity to achieve energy security, ensure food security, develop more sustainable local economies and jobs, transform our buildings, redesign transportation, reduce pollution, improve human health and wellbeing, and enhance our quality of life. The transition from fossil fuels to a zero emissions economy has clear benefits for people and natural ecosystems, and is an opportunity to create a more prosperous, just, and equitable society.

Every person, every business, every industry, and every government has a role to play as we coordinate individual and collective actions to create a thriving, resilient, and regenerative society that respects its interdependence with healthy ecosystems and a safe climate.

British Columbia is positioned to become a visionary world leader and demonstrate that innovative and rapid change is possible as we transition to a zero emissions economy.

We urge you to seize these opportunities, and demonstrate to British Columbians that our government is indeed a true climate leader by implementing the 10 climate emergency actions set out in this letter.

**We must act now.**

Global temperature trends  
from 1850 to 2022.

Image: Ed Hawkins



# ABOUT

## 2023 PROGRESS REPORT

The urgent call to Confront the Climate Emergency was developed and issued by a broad network of 200 organizational signatories across British Columbia in September 2021.

The 2023 progress report evaluates the BC government's progress on implementing these ten urgent climate actions from November 2022 to October 2023, with input from key experts and signatories to the open letter.

The original open letter now has over 550 organizational signatories. To become a signatory to this open letter, or for more information about the joint BC Climate Emergency Campaign, visit:

<https://bcclimateemergency.ca/>

**BC Climate  
Emergency  
Campaign**



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Fire suppression for the Donnie Creek wildfire in northeast BC, in June 2023.  
Photo: BC Wildfire Service

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Wildlife can experience the same smoke-related health impacts as humans. Bighorn sheep after the McDougall wildfire near West Kelowna BC.

Photo: BC Wildfire Service



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**“The very future of humanity depends on the creativity, moral fiber, and perseverance of the 8 billion of us on the planet now.**

**Rather than lose hope, we must equitably reduce ecological overshoot and immediately pursue massive-scale climate change mitigation and adaptation.**

**This is the only way we can limit the near-term damage, preserve nature, avoid untold human suffering, and give future generations the opportunities they deserve.”**

World Scientists'  
Warning of a Climate Emergency, 2022

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