

Delegation to Trust Council, March 14, 2018

*David Denning, on behalf of Salt Spring Community Energy Group
and Transition Salt Spring Climate Action Group*

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Title: Two Achievable Steps toward a Trust-wide Culture of Transitioning to a Lower Carbon, Sustainable Future.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Council about climate change and the importance of strengthening climate action within the Islands Trust.

To begin, we recognize that climate change policies and targets as well as sustainability goals are present in the individual OCP documents of our Islands, and that many Trust Council and LTC actions have been aimed toward helping to address the complex issues of Climate Change. Our organizations appreciate these efforts.

Despite these initiatives, we believe that, with relatively small additional commitments, our Islands Trust can create a much more significant regional impact on this immense challenge, and in doing so, draw attention to our region for its leadership on Climate Action. Vancouver is recognized globally as a city taking decisive action toward a low carbon future – there is a real opportunity now for the Islands Trust to assume a similar leadership role for rural communities.

As we have all have observed, Climate Change effects are highly regional, and have not seemed as consequential here in the Islands as they have elsewhere. We have not yet experienced the extreme events fueled by climate change such as major flooding, catastrophic wildfires, debilitating droughts, or monster storms, that are growing in frequency and impact in other parts of Canada and around the world.

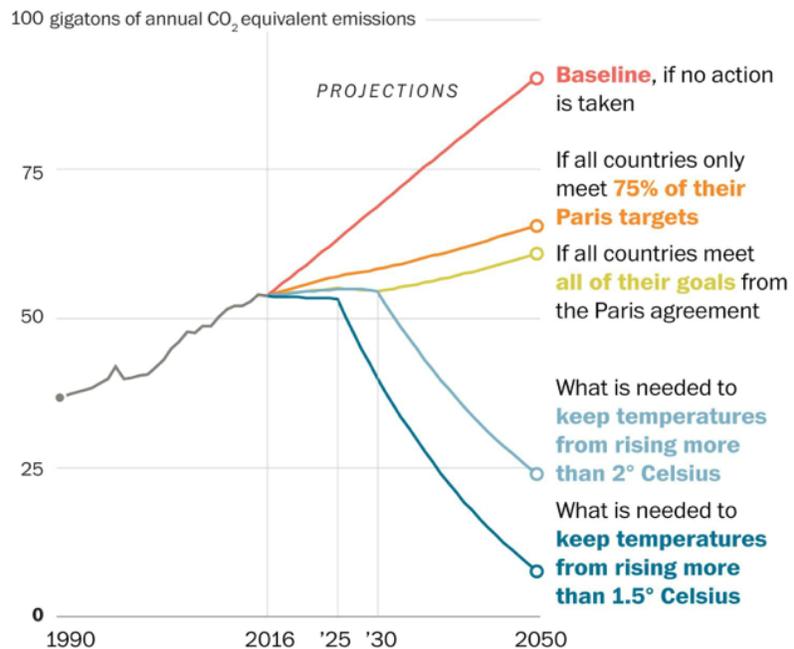
But there is no longer any question that human-caused climate change is happening, that it is increasingly threatening our region, and that the risks are likely to have increasingly greater economic and health impacts in the years ahead. Modeling studies from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions at UVic indicate that we will experience: 1) warmer winters, 2) fewer days of freezing, 3) more days of extreme heat in summer, 4) more and longer periods of summer drought, 5) more rain in the fall, winter and spring, and 6) more intense weather and storm events.¹

Adaptation is the process of planning and acting to minimize risks from climate change to our communities and to take advantage of new opportunities such as agricultural benefits from increased growing periods and temperatures.

Science- and economics-based studies of short-term (30 years) climate change call for a much more concerted effort in Trust area land use planning actions²:

- At every opportunity, plan for changes to by-laws and land use approaches that are consistent with current and emerging adaptation strategies.
- Explain the need for adaptation strategies to the public and build understanding of risks from climate change and the rationale for adaptation in land-use proposals.
- Promote adaptation in land use approaches in all relevant communities such as the agricultural communities throughout the Islands.

But adaptation alone is far from sufficient. Science- and economics-based studies of long term (80-200 years) climate modeling for even modest GHG emission reduction scenarios paint a picture of overwhelming climate, ecological, social, and economic disruptions. These will become much more costly and more likely the longer we delay reaching a low carbon society. Even if all countries reached their Paris



Data is based on scenarios from Climate Interactive.

Source: Climate Interactive

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COP 21 GHG reduction commitments (highly unlikely without drastic change) these studies effectively predict dangerously increasing world temperatures.

The science and the economics call for unprecedented action on the part of all governments and communities to act quickly – in a matter of years, not decades. To avoid a 3°C to 5°C hotter world, we must move to net-zero GHG communities. We must actively engage in purposeful, directed, economic, social, and behavioural activities to lower our carbon footprints. This approach is called **mitigation**. *Without mitigation, adaptation at best will only delay some of the adverse health and economic effects of climate change.* We must act at all jurisdictional levels, but action at the local level provides the social foundation and inertia for strong provincial and federal measures, which must also come soon. The world has already used over 75% of the allowable total carbon budget for a 2°C world. The time for action is now.

*We propose two bold, quickly achievable, steps for the Islands Trust to **make climate change adaptation strategies and mitigation strategies central to all Trust area land use planning in a climate changing world:***

1. We suggest that a *champion* be identified within existing (or proposed new) staff to coordinate a *Program of Planning/Transitioning to a Low Carbon Future* in all Trust activities. The Program would involve planning/ action around both Adaptation and Mitigation Strategies, with a goal to make them central to all Trust activities.
2. We propose that Trust Council take a *Leadership Role* in creating a *Culture of Transitioning to a Low Carbon Future* throughout the Islands Trust Region. This would start with an intense, well-funded effort to educate staff and Trustees about the resources and actions needed to create a Low Carbon Future in the Islands, especially the mitigation strategies that have been largely overlooked.

Accordingly, we ask that Council agree to amend the proposed 2018/19 budget, as necessary, to support these initiatives.

As further support and justification of these proposed initiatives, we provide the attached analysis of the Policy Statement Goals as articulated in the Islands Trust Strategic Plan, 2014-2018, showing their clear agreement with the imperative to create a climate of planning/transitioning to a low carbon future.

1. Vines, G. A. 2017. *Climate Projections for the Capital Region*, CRD, Victoria, B.C.
2. Diffenbaugh, N.S., D. Singh, & J.S. Mankin. 2018. *Unprecedented climate events: Historical changes, aspirational targets, and national commitments*. Science Advances, 2018:4:eaao3354
3. Harris, J.M., B. Roach & A-M Codur, 2017. *The Economics of Global Climate Change*. Global Development and Environment Institute, Tufts University, Medford, MA.

Low Carbon Future Analysis of the Goals from Islands Trust Strategic Plan 2014— 2018

1. Protect the natural environment of the Islands Trust Area

It will be impossible to protect the natural environment of the Trust Area beyond the next decade without a rapid shift of Islands Trust corporate culture to one that embeds a low carbon future along with climate change adaptation in all its actions and decision-making. Local communities, large and small, are already making these changes. We are all on the front lines. What will be left to protect when wildfires have destroyed the forests, and rainstorms and mudslides have ravaged the soils and polluted the lakes?

2. Preserve, protect and advocate for coastal shorelines and marine areas

How can shorelines and marine areas be preserved and protected when sea levels are rising and ocean acidification is destroying marine life? Marine life in the Trust Area has been degraded and decimated over the last hundred years to the point where our elders find it difficult to comprehend the losses.

Without a radical shift to a low carbon future, our coastlines and marine areas will be unrecognizable by the end of this century.

3. Reduce community ecological footprints

This goal is essential to a low carbon future. Land use planning requirements and decisions have a central role to play in establishing a regulatory framework and a culture that supports and enables low carbon development.

4. Protect quality and quantity of water resources

Climate change is already adding to the stressors affecting drinking water quality and quantity in the Trust Area. Yet average temperatures globally have risen little more than 1° C over pre-industrial levels and approaching 1°C locally. CO₂ already released into the climate system will push temperatures closer to the +1.5°C mark. In the Trust area, we've seen little of what is predicted, but last year's wildfires in BC gave us a taste of things to come. Fresh water cannot be protected without a shift to a low carbon future.

5. Enhance (protect / restore) community character, socio-economic diversity and economic sustainability

This goal is the bedrock of a low carbon economy, which creates local employment, values community and personal well-being, and conserves and recycles economic, and other, resources. A low carbon economy embraces high-tech and low-tech solutions and provides opportunities for a broad range of skills, and a range of innovation and investment opportunities. Green tourism, for example, can flourish in a low carbon economy.

6. Strengthen relations with First Nations

First Nations enjoyed a low carbon economy in this area for thousands of years. We have much to learn from First Nations about our relationship with the natural environment and how to heal it. The Parks Canada National Marine Conservation Area initiative will embrace First Nations adaptive co-management and will be a vital step in land/sea use planning in our region.

7. Improve organizational cost effectiveness and resilience

The importance of a low carbon future in achieving the first six strategic goals indicates that its adoption is a primary objective within the Islands Trust corporate culture. It will help streamline decision-making and thus improve organizational cost effectiveness. Improved organizational resilience is a given when appropriate action is taken.

8. Improve cooperation and integration with other levels of government

Lack of jurisdiction on the full range of issues facing our communities is no excuse for inaction in those areas where the Islands Trust does have jurisdiction. Cooperation with other levels of government to achieve common goals can dramatically increase the impact of measures taken. Multi-agency initiatives involving several levels of government are common, if not essential, in communities embracing a low carbon future.

9. Improve community and agency understanding and support of the Islands Trust

The adoption of the low carbon future as a guiding principle in the delivery of the Islands Trust mandate can serve to clarify the role of and build support for the Trust.

10. Improve community engagement and participation in Islands Trust work

Many individuals and groups in the Trust Area seek climate leadership from the Islands Trust and are more than willing to engage with the Trust and develop projects that support overall objectives. Through the leadership they show, Trust Council can inspire all Island communities to move more rapidly toward the low carbon future that is really the only sustainable future we can predict.

