



# THE VICTORIA CALL TO ACTION:

## *Building Resilience Through Thriving and Inclusive Communities*

We stand together as local government leaders, acknowledging that wherever we are in Canada we are on Indigenous land, and expressing our highest concern at the climate crisis that the world is now facing.

As we urgently increase our efforts to reduce emissions, we must give equal and increased urgency to build resilience for the future. Wildfires, floods, heatwaves, devastating storms and rising sea levels are just some of the climate impacts already threatening our communities. Our communities are centres of culture, commerce, and innovation, yet these same strengths make us highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

As elected officials we have a unique and important role to play in building resilient and livable communities. We are on the front lines – often the public face of a community's response to a disaster or extreme weather event. Residents and businesses alike look to us for guidance, reassurance, and a calm voice of reason in stressful situations. Building community resilience will help to empower the community to pull together in the face of climate change and related events. At the same time, building resilience will allow us to focus on equity, inclusion, and social justice.

Since the 2017 Livable Cities Forum, we have all experienced the impacts of climate change in a very real way. Communities are declaring climate emergencies. And communities and governments around the world have received a wake-up call with the IPCC's October 2018 1.5 Report, highlighting the need for "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."

It is easy to get overwhelmed by the sense of urgency around these issues, but as local leaders we must use this urgency as an opportunity for action and forward momentum, and most importantly the opportunity to come at these issues with new ways of thinking and acting together.

The steps needed to address climate change necessitate the remaking of society's systems, from energy generation to housing to transportation to education to land use. In that remaking there are powerful opportunities to create healthier, more equitable and more just communities.

To address the climate challenge we call on ourselves and all other locally elected officials to:

1. Ensure that all actions we take are done through a lens of: decolonization, health and well-being, equity and inclusion, racial and social justice, and ecological integrity.
2. Empower and resource our communities and use our role as leaders to create opportunities for education, connection, belonging and community building.
3. Enrich the fabric of our communities by building towns and cities that create a sense of place and a strong connection to neighbourhoods.
4. Leverage the interconnection of issues and look for opportunities to solve complex challenges that generate multiple benefits and solutions.
5. Seize the pockets of brilliance in our communities coming from youth and residents as bottom-up solutions to our collective challenges.
6. Invest our collective resources to deliver short- and long-term solutions that will have the greatest impact and help us go further, faster together.

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This Call to Action was drafted and adopted by local government elected officials at the 2019 Livable Cities Forum: Leadership and Legacy sessions convened by the City of Victoria and ICLEI Canada, held on Lekwungen Territory in Victoria, British Columbia.

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## *What if we Stopped Pretending?*

*“The impending catastrophe heightens the urgency of almost any world-improving action. In times of increasing chaos, people seek protection in tribalism and armed force, rather than in the rule of law, and our best defense against this kind of dystopia is to maintain functioning democracies, functioning legal systems, functioning communities. In this respect, any movement toward a more just and civil society can now be considered a meaningful climate action. Securing fair elections is a climate action. Combatting extreme wealth inequality is a climate action. Shutting down the hate machines on social media is a climate action. Instituting humane immigration policy, advocating for racial and gender equality ... these are all meaningful climate actions. To survive rising temperatures, every system, whether of the natural world or of the human world, will need to be as strong and healthy as we can make it.”*

Jonathan Franzen, *New Yorker Magazine*