



SAXE FACTS

Dianne Saxe
416.962.5882
SaxeFacts.com
dsaxe@saxefacts.com
@envirolaw1

Monday, June 3, 2019

Erika Lougheed
Municipality of East Ferris
390 Hwy 94
Corbeil, ON P0H 1K0

Dear Councillor Lougheed,

Re: climate emergency declaration

This letter is to express my strong support for the proposed climate emergency declaration by the Municipality of East Ferris.

As a result of the largest scientific collaboration in human history, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the climate and environmental crisis that humanity faces is now beyond reasonable doubt. A generation after they were first predicted, the impacts are now increasingly visible in Canada and around the globe. Fires, floods, droughts, storms, wind and extreme heat are becoming increasingly severe. Canada is particularly affected, because it is warming significantly faster than the rest of the world. Insured damage to property and infrastructure in Canada averaged about \$1.7 billion per year from 2008 to 2017, up from \$200 million per year from 1983 to 1992. In Ontario alone, insured losses from extreme weather events, each one of which cost over \$25 million, exceeded \$1.3 billion in 2018.

On top of that, the Insurance Bureau of Canada reports that governments incur about \$3 billion in damage to infrastructure and other public services, for every billion dollars of insured losses. Plus, uninsured financial losses by individuals, companies, and institutions are often estimated to be one to three times as large as the reported insured losses. And all these figures only cover losses measured directly in money, omitting health damage and a wide range of environmental losses. The North Bay Health Unit is already starting to see the impacts of climate change, with much more ahead.

In its Financial System Review—2019, the Bank of Canada has recognized that the global climate is changing and that this has growing implications for the economy. Climate change creates important physical risks both in Canada and globally. And the move to a low-carbon economy is underway. This

“involves complex structural adjustments, creating new opportunities as well as transition risk...Both physical and transition risks are likely to have broad impacts on the economy... The necessary adjustments are complex and pervasive and might lead to increased risk for the financial system. In addition to insurance companies, many other parts of the financial system are exposed to risks from climate change....Limited

understanding and mispricing of climate-related risks could potentially increase the costs of transitioning to a low-carbon economy.”

In the face of this crisis, it is beyond tragic that the current Ontario government has retreated so far from the climate commitments and climate action that Ontario had belatedly begun. Our climate law has been revoked; our ambitious (but not strong enough) climate targets have been slashed, and virtually all programs to significantly cut greenhouse gas emissions in Ontario have been greatly weakened or abandoned. With a federal election looming, the future of federal climate action is also uncertain.

In these dispiriting circumstances, municipal climate leadership is of great importance. Municipalities are at the front line of much climate damage. Municipalities, as the owners and operators of most of Ontario's infrastructure, quickly feel the impacts of physical damage from extreme events. They are also much more vulnerable to liability lawsuits than senior levels of government. Climate change also exacerbates inequalities, disproportionately affecting the poorest and most vulnerable, often increasing social welfare needs just when the municipality itself is least able to meet them. In many ways, it is municipalities, rather than the senior levels of government, that have the most to lose from climate inaction and paralysis.

Municipalities can also do something about it. They have a substantial role to play in both climate adaptation and mitigation. **Municipalities have a lead role in land-use planning, the major driver of climate pollution in Ontario** as documented in chapter four of my 2019 energy conservation report. (As I have also reported to the Legislature, urban sprawl also increases flood risks and the polluted runoff that feeds toxic algae). Municipalities also have large direct fossil fuel footprints, and play a highly visible leadership role in their communities.

It is therefore exciting to see so many large and small Canadian municipalities joining others around the world to declare climate emergencies. Of the 594 declarations reported,¹ 398 come from Canada. This includes 366 in Quebec including Quebec City and Montreal, plus Halifax, Vancouver, Greater Sudbury, Ottawa, Kingston, Hamilton, West Nipissing, Richmond, New Westminister, Victoria, The Islands Trust Area, London, Nanaimo, Burlington, Halton Hills, St. Catharines, Capital Regional District, Central Kootenay, Edmundston, Islands Trust, Mahone Bay Town, Moncton, Powell River, Sooke District, Old Crow and Wolfville. Others have recognized a “climate crisis”. Vancouver is leading the way in showing how a climate emergency declaration can be turned into meaningful municipal action, in terms of what municipalities directly control, in terms of their collaboration with others, and in terms of the importance of their leadership by example.

A municipal climate emergency declaration is wholly justified on the science and by the current “do almost nothing” approach of our provincial government. A declaration will not, of course, be enough by itself. It has to be followed by real action, action that can help make East Ferris a more sustainable place to live and a more welcoming place for green businesses. I encourage the council of East Ferris to collaborate with other municipalities and health units across Canada who

¹ <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>

are facing up to the reality of our climate crisis, and exploring what they can most effectively do about it.

Yours very truly,

Dianne Saxe

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "D Saxe". The "D" is large and stylized with a loop, and "Saxe" is written in a cursive script.