

Candidate: Michael Baxter

Riding: Colwood

- 1. Many communities don't know how much climate change is costing them at present, and will cost in the future. Will you commit to putting systems in place to identify and track those costs?**

There are some costs that Colwood understands well, including the cost of moving a sewer pump station away from the waterfront, and potential loss of the road along Coburg Peninsula—used extensively as a tourist, commuter route. This is a cost that is easy to define as the pump station could be made secure where it is were it not for sea level rise. There are many other costs that are impossible to define. For instance, when the winds blow, how can we know how many trees that fall would have fallen anyway in “normal” weather?

What I will commit to is ensuring that we are planning for climate change and the changes that it will bring. We also need to be taking action to make sure that the City and its residents are each doing their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible. As the former City Engineer, I introduced the first electric vehicle to our city fleet (one of the first in BC) and led the Solar Colwood program. My wife and I also drive EVs and have solar photovoltaic panels on the roof and a solar hot water system.

- 2. Will you work to develop and implement climate adaptation plans to reduce the harm that climate change causes in your community? How will you fund climate adaptation?**

Yes. It is far cheaper to prepare for climate change impacts than it is to ‘clean up’ after the fact. As an example, we have forested lands that are increasingly at risk of catastrophic wildfire with impacts on neighbouring homes. We could take advantage of government grants for FireSmart communities to reduce the fuel load on the forest floor and perhaps even look at prescribed burns in some areas. When moving the pump station, for instance, we can move it much further than to simply protect it from the Province’s one metre sea level rise but rather at least 2 metres above current sea level and preferably further.

- 3. Will you commit to protecting taxpayers by seeking to recover a fair share of climate costs from the fossil fuel companies who profit from selling products that result in greenhouse gases? Specifically, if elected, would you ask your Council to:**

- a. Send Climate Accountability letters from your community to major fossil fuel producers demanding that they pay their fair share of local climate costs caused by their activities and products?**

The City of Colwood has already done this

- b. Press the province of BC to enact Liability for Climate-related Harms laws to give municipalities and others greater legal certainty, lower costs and**

timely resolutions if they sue to recover climate damages from fossil fuel companies?

Yes. The Province needs to be a partner if this is to be successful.

c. Explore legal action against fossil fuel companies to recover a share of local climate costs?

Again, this needs to be a collaborative effort through the Province and UBCM – it is not effective or affordable for a municipality our size to act alone. However, I would certainly propose that Colwood join or try to initiate such action.

4. In your view, why is it important (or not) to hold fossil fuel companies accountable for your community's climate costs?

Two reasons. We need to do a better job of helping people to understand the costs of climate change – and a high profile lawsuit will help to do this. Plus, at least some of the extraordinary profits that have been made from sale of fossil fuels – without accounting for the “free” use of air as a dumping ground – need to be reinvested in avoiding a catastrophic future.