

November 4, 2020

To All British Columbia Municipalities,

On November 3, 2020 Council passed the attached resolution regarding Flood Risk Mitigation through Green Infrastructure and Natural Assets.

Port Moody City Council is requesting that your Council consider supporting the need for flood risk mitigation and reach out to the Minister of Environment & Climate Change Strategy, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Premier of British Columbia.

In the 2020 UBCM convention, a resolution regarding Flood Risk Mitigation through Green Infrastructure and Natural Assets was slated to be NR16. However, because of a new format and timing constraints, members did not get to vote on this critical environmental protection piece, which was sponsored by the LMLGA executive. As BC faces the challenges of a climate crisis and rebuilding the economy in a more resilient manner, the creation of fish-friendly flood infrastructure is a critical part of a just recovery.

Our current flood protections drastically impact the lives of fish and other species and rarely take into account diffusing polluted water runoff before it ends up in our watersheds. And of course, protecting our fish protects ecosystems as a whole, which in turn protects food webs and keystone species, food security and food sovereignty, and protect fisheries jobs. Nature-based flood-control solutions that provide both flood protection and fish passage are currently not required by regulators or by funding programs for upgrades of existing structures, even though they are well proven to be effective. In fact these win-win solutions provide excellent return on investment and can make our communities even safer from flooding, but are severely underfunded here in BC.

A major flood with our current infrastructure would be catastrophic, upgrading flood infrastructure needs to be a high priority for capital spending. The solution can be one that provides multiple benefits that creates green jobs, helps us adapt to climate change, advances reconciliation and UNDRIP commitments, while also improving recreational and aesthetic values and of course, is economically smart.

Expanding on this last point:

- Existing flood mitigation funding can be leveraged for multiple benefits: studies have found that investment in ecosystem services generates significant economic value and helps communities avoid millions of dollars in future costs.
- In addition, investing in natural flood control is often cheaper and more efficient than investing in “grey” infrastructure not just in Canada but across the world.
- And finally, data from the United States show that short-term economic benefits – jobs and other economic spinoffs – from watershed restoration projects are

equivalent to other kinds of public infrastructure works. For example, a \$1M investment in watershed restoration creates between 13 and 22 jobs, and \$2M to \$3.4M in economic activity.

Reducing storm water-related impacts also reduces our communities' exposure to water pollution and flooding-related health hazards and their associated health outcomes, such as waterborne illness, respiratory disease and asthma associated with mold and bacteria, vectorborne disease, stress, injury, and death. Trees, bushes, and greenery have the ability to absorb air pollutants and trap airborne particulates on their leaves, reduce surface and air temperatures. And because it more resilient to climate related impacts it reduces the need to fix grey infrastructure, which saves money for our residents.

Green infrastructure, such as fish-friendly flood infrastructure, also provides a plethora of co-benefits. Such projects increase exposure to the natural environment, reduce exposure to harmful substances and conditions, provide opportunity for recreation and physical activity, promote community identity and a sense of well-being, and provides economic benefits at both the community and household level. These benefits are all known to directly or indirectly benefit public health. The degree to which the environmental, social, economic, and public health benefits of green infrastructure are realized is dependent on a number of factors, including the design, installation, and maintenance of the green infrastructure features.

Evidence is clear that holistic innovative solutions seem more expensive in the short-term, but provincial political will is needed to reap a myriad of co-benefits that far outweigh the upfront costs. Local governments are dedicated to climate solutions; however, with our only means of funding being property taxes, the province needs to come to the table as a funding partner.

We strongly encourage all BC Local Governments to consider the benefits healthier, reconnected ecosystems can have not just in the next year or two, but into the future as we work to build back a better BC. We hope you join us to advocacy to the Provincial Government to support this initiative through grants and funding as part of a just and green economic recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Vagramov', written over a light grey grid background.

Mayor Rob Vagramov  
City of Port Moody