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Premier Christy Clark
PO Box 9041 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, BC
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Dear Premier Clark,

RE: Climate Leadership Team and Action Required

Sierra Club BC welcomes the announcement that you have convened a Climate Leadership Team to provide advice and recommendations to your government on an updated Climate Action Plan. We are hopeful that this long-overdue development signals a genuine shift in your government's approach to the urgent challenge of climate change.

Concrete, meaningful steps to combat climate change could return B.C. to its former position as a global climate leader, a position the Province has relinquished in recent years. Sierra Club BC encourages your government to be bold in developing a Climate Action Plan that will genuinely restore B.C.'s leadership position both in Canada and throughout the world.

While the creation of the Climate Leadership Team is a positive step, Sierra Club BC remains concerned by your government's insistence that B.C. can act meaningfully on climate while promoting the export of massive quantities of LNG to foreign markets. Building three LNG terminals would result in an extra 36 million tonnes per year of greenhouse gases (representing more than 50 per cent of B.C.'s officially reported emissions). Five terminals would produce 75 million tonnes—almost 20 per cent more than B.C.'s entire 2013 reported emissions. Simply put, the development of an LNG export industry is incompatible with any serious approach to tackling climate change.

Sierra Club BC believes that the following actions would meet the test of true climate leadership. Our judgement of the success of the Climate Leadership Team will be based on the manner in which these recommendations are addressed by your government:

Legislate a coherent 2030 B.C. emissions reduction target to inspire global action

In 2007, the B.C. government committed in law to reduce emissions 33 per cent by 2020 - compared to 2007. The province needs to ensure that this legal goal is met by stopping those projects that interfere with achieving this goal (such as LNG), and supporting those projects that would assist with achieving this goal (such as improved forest management).

In addition, the province must set a 2030 legal target, as requested by the UN in advance of the Paris climate summit at the end of 2015. We recommend that B.C. follow the European Union example and adopt a target of 40 per cent emissions reduction by 2030 compared to 1990 (equivalent to approximately 50 per cent reduction compared to 2007). This target would be a coherent follow-up to the current 2020 target and translate to a similar commitment recently announced as part of the China-U.S. agreement.

Increase and expand B.C.'s carbon tax

B.C.'s carbon tax is supported by British Columbians and it played a key role in the context of BC's initial emission reduction progress. Increasing and expanding the carbon tax will further motivate business and consumer choices that benefit the climate, while increasing the price polluters pay for damaging our climate. While lower and middle income British Columbians should be provided relief from the impact of carbon tax increases, we believe incremental revenue increases to government should be used strategically to support specific low carbon solutions – such as public transit.

Sierra Club BC recommends resuming the annual \$5 increase paused since 2012 and to increasing the tax to \$35/ton by December 31, 2015, followed by annual increases of \$5/ton to at least \$60/ton by 2020. In light of today's historically low oil prices, it is urgent to increase the carbon tax to address the risk of increasing emissions associated with increased gas consumption due to poor choices (e.g. low oil price making cars with poor gas mileage look more favourable).

In addition, it is essential that the application of the carbon tax be expanded to those resource industries which to date have been excluded. Greenhouse gas emissions have the same effect on our climate, whether they result from combustion or other means. Industrial process emissions, such as those from aluminium, cement and lime production, should be subject to the carbon tax. Similarly, venting from the oil and gas sector should be taxed as fracked gas is mostly methane, which traps 86 times as much heat as CO₂ over a 20-year period. Not only would these measures make the carbon tax more equitable, they would also provide an incentive for these industries to reduce emissions, while increasing the competitiveness of renewable, climate-friendly alternatives.

Subject fossil fuel exports to the carbon tax or an equivalent levy.

Climate change is a global concern and the impacts will be felt in B.C. regardless of where fossil fuels are burned. Fossil fuels originating in B.C., such as coal and fracked gas, should be subject to the carbon tax when they are exported. Appropriate provisions should be put in place so that if the importing jurisdiction in which they are combusted applies a similar tax, it can be reduced commensurately here in B.C.

Redirect fossil fuel subsidies to the low carbon economy; support a transition strategy for workers

A report by the Blue-Green Alliance shows that by redirecting fossil fuel subsidies to clean, renewable energy, six to eight times more jobs could be created. According to British Columbia's Auditor General, the Province provided approximately \$1 billion in fossil fuel subsidies in the past two years. Sierra Club BC recommends that a significant portion of fossil fuel subsidies should be redirected to support a transition strategy for workers to clean energy jobs, which in turn would help to reduce emissions and build a healthy and sustainable economy.

Establish a 'climate test' for major fossil fuels projects and other industrial project proposals

To help meet emission reduction targets the province must introduce what Sierra Club BC is calling a 'climate test': a mandatory assessment of total greenhouse gas emissions for any proposed energy

infrastructure project. This will involve consideration of the proposals' emissions, from extraction to transportation to eventual consumption, whether there are more climate-friendly alternatives and whether the proponent can demonstrate offsetting emissions reductions in their overall operations. If a proposal doesn't meet the test, it doesn't go ahead.

Designate permanent carbon sink reserves for 'unburnable carbon'

Climate scientists are clear that in order to avoid catastrophic warming there are two critical measures that must be undertaken: i) the vast majority of fossil fuel must not get extracted and burned and, ii) we need to increase the protection of our best natural carbon sinks (e.g. carbon rich forests, peatlands, eel grasses and salt marshes). Sierra Club BC recommends that the province legally designate carbon sink reserves, in which a number of economic activities are allowed, as long as fossil carbon and carbon stored in ecosystems remains safe and off limits. Numerous scientific assessments indicate that the majority of Canadian coal, oil and gas must remain in the ground in order to stabilize the climate below two degrees of warming.

Addressing climate change in a serious fashion will necessitate bold moves, which in turn will bring significant positive change in the economic, environmental and social approach to the management of this province. To assist with these changes it is important to conduct adaptation and mitigation research and to develop climate plans that apply this research. The protection of critical lands for food production, and fresh water and wildlife conservation is dependent on the ongoing implementation of this research – for example the ability to address food security may require additional lands be added to the ALR.

Sierra Club BC is confident that, in implementing the initiatives outlined above, British Columbia will indeed be restored to its position of global climate leadership. Again, we strongly encourage your government to be bold in tackling the challenge of climate change and we thank you for establishing the Climate Leadership Team.

Yours sincerely,



Bob Peart
Executive Director
Sierra Club BC

cc Mike Bernier, Chair Climate Leadership Team
Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, Head Climate Action Secretariat