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September 20, 2018

To:

Honourable John Horgan, Premier  
Honourable George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy  
Honourable Michelle Mungall, Minister of Energy and Mines

**Re: Provincial climate targets and support for LNG Canada**

Dear Premier Horgan, Minister Heyman and Minister Mungall,

I am the new Executive Director of Sierra Club BC and I am also an environmental lawyer.

I am writing to you on a matter of critical importance to the future of our climate and the livability of the lands and waters we call home here in British Columbia.

“Climate change is now reaching the end game, where very soon humanity must choose between taking unprecedented action, or accepting that it has been left too late and bear the consequences.”

These are the recent words of Professor Hans Joachim Schellnhuber,<sup>1</sup> a leading German climate scientist and senior advisor of German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the European Union.<sup>2</sup>

The reason for his warning: new research<sup>3</sup> highlighting that the world might be closer to dangerous thresholds of uncontrollable climate change than previous studies have suggested.

One of the starkest examples of worsening climate impacts that speed up global warming are BC’s wildfires. As you know, the 2017 and 2018 wildfire seasons have each now burned more than 1.2 million hectares of the province, eight times more than the ten year average.<sup>4</sup> BC’s 2017 fires caused an estimated 190 million tonnes of CO2 emissions,<sup>5</sup> essentially quadrupling BC’s official annual emissions. This year will be similar.

According to a number of recent media reports, a Final Investment Decision by the LNG Canada consortium on its proposed LNG facility in Kitimat is imminent and may come as early as the beginning of October.

In light of the escalating climate crisis, Sierra Club BC is calling on the BC government to demonstrate strong and meaningful climate leadership. This means strengthening provincial targets in line with the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.climatecodered.org/2018/08/take-unprecedented-action-or-bear.html>

<sup>2</sup> For additional analysis, see Jens Wieting, “BC’s climate action must address three elephants in the room,” *The Narwhal* <https://thenarwhal.ca/b-c-s-climate-action-must-address-three-elephants-in-the-room/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pnas.org/content/115/33/8252>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-statistics/wildfire-averages>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/it-s-alarmed-wildfire-emissions-grow-to-triple-b-c-s-annual-carbon-footprint-1.4259306>

needs demonstrated by the most recent climate science and ensuring robust implementation to ensure targets are actually met—which necessitates ending support for the expansion of the LNG industry.

Your government has offered numerous assurances that LNG Canada will have to adhere to legislated climate targets and fit within the Province's climate plan. Sierra Club BC does not believe that current provincial climate targets can be met if LNG Canada goes ahead, given that this would require GHG cuts that are far too drastic in other sectors of the economy.

A September 16, 2018 article by Justine Hunter in The Globe and Mail reported the following:

Whatever the final [emissions] number, LNG Canada will have what Mr. Horgan says is a significant GHG footprint. Which would mean that every other sector – transportation, the built environment (such as home heating) and industry will have to cut far more to make room for LNG Canada – if the project goes ahead.

LNG Canada's GHG footprint is more than significant. In fact, it presents an enormous impediment to achieving the Province's legislated targets. Credible estimates of emissions from the project range from 8.6 to 12 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>. As you know, BC's legislated target in 2050 is 13 Mt.

Is your government saying that every other industry, business, community and individual in BC should be required to drive GHG reductions at a significantly accelerated rate, to accommodate the greatest single source of carbon pollution in our province's history? That—in this age of deepening climate crisis and breakdown—a fossil fuel project of this magnitude should be allowed to take up more than ninety per cent of all emissions?

Given the provincial track record, we will have a hard enough time meeting our existing targets without the addition of LNG Canada. BC is not yet even close to meeting the weak target set by the previous government, reducing emissions by 33% by 2020, compared to 2007.

And here we get to an even greater challenge, one at the heart of why LNG Canada cannot be allowed to proceed in good conscience. The Province's current GHG targets, while stronger than the previous government's targets, are still profoundly inadequate to meeting Paris goals.

Climate scientists estimate that current emission reduction pledges under the 2015 Paris commitments—if met—will result in 3°C of warming by 2100. The Province's current legislated targets will not allow us to meet the Paris goal of limiting global warming to between 1.5 and 2°C.

A report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a draft of which was made public in June and which is expected to be released on October 8, shows that on our current trajectory, the planet will warm by 1.5°C around 2040 and that halting the warming trend will require net zero emissions. The draft states that 1.5°C is achievable, but only with “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in the world economy.

The report draft found significantly more severe climate impacts on health, sea level, droughts, floods and food production at 2°C compared to 1.5°C, demonstrating that limiting warming to the lower figures should be prioritized.

Today, we are at 1°C of warming and we are witnessing unprecedented wildfires here and in many other parts of the world, turbocharged hurricane seasons, and temperatures in some parts of the world that make those places uninhabitable.

One degree is already getting hard to manage; 2°C would be a nightmare; and 3°C or more would likely precipitate a breakdown in the global economy and human civilization as we have known it.

This upcoming report provides a strong rationale for strengthening provincial climate targets. To address the deepening climate crisis and truly be a climate leader, your government needs to legislate much more aggressive GHG targets and meet them through robust monitoring and implementation. The GHG targets that are needed to secure a livable future cannot accommodate any significant fossil fuel expansion, and this includes LNG Canada. Given the most recent science and the stronger targets that are needed, it is unconscionable to be subsidizing the LNG industry and jeopardizing our collective future.

A number of countries have already committed to net zero emissions targets by 2040 or 2050. They include France, Iceland, New Zealand, Costa Rica and Bhutan. Driven by an alliance including Sweden and the UK, the European Union is heading in the same direction. In response to the wildfires, California just committed to total, economy-wide carbon neutrality by 2045.

Canada and BC can—and must—show similar leadership.

The choice your government has before you is clear.

Your government could choose to continue making decisions based on inadequate targets. You can forgo a detailed plan and timelines on how to reduce emissions by how much and by when. This is the path to 3°C or more of warming and the breakdown of systems of life on earth as we know them. It is a path that betrays future generations—our children and grandchildren. This is the scenario under which LNG Canada proceeds.

Alternatively, your government can choose a different pathway: that of true climate leadership. You can set stronger, meaningful targets that heed the prescription of climate science and support the creation of jobs in sectors that will help us meet those targets. You can cancel public subsidies to the LNG industry and invest in alternatives—beyond what is proposed in the provincial climate intentions papers. This is the path that will give us a fighting chance to limit warming to 1.5 to 2°C. This is the path that will give future generations the possibility of a livable planet. This is the scenario under which LNG Canada is cancelled and communities across BC are supported with long-term jobs in alternative energy instead.

There are few jurisdictions in the world with a greater opportunity to lead and inspire others than BC. Premier Horgan, we are calling on your government to act with courage and speed.

I and members of my staff would be happy to meet and discuss these urgent questions with you further, and assist in any way possible.

Sincerely,



Hannah Askew  
Executive Director, Sierra Club BC