

Don't Be A Bystander in the Fight Against Climate Change

by Mayor Bill Beamish

The Paris Climate Agreement, which was ratified in 2016 by nearly 200 countries including Canada, aims to keep a rise in the average global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius. Failing to meet that target could be catastrophic. In fact, many scientists believe that a 2-degree rise in the average global temperature would push us past a critical tipping point, where climate change would spin out of control and become irreversible.

Stopping warming at 1.5 degrees will require major, sustained global action – by all people, in all places. In other words, it requires action by you and me, right here on the Sunshine Coast.

What does that action look like? First, join the climate change movement. Add your voice to a growing swell of like-minded people that is challenging authorities to act now. Show leadership by taking action locally and organizing events that will communicate, educate or agitate. Support students, both locally and elsewhere, who are demonstrating and taking action on climate issues. Don't apologize for bold action and words.

You can also make personal daily choices. Embrace a zero-waste mentality. Bring your own bags and re-usable containers when shopping or dining out, and refuse to purchase items that are overpackaged. Recycle the packaging you do bring home. Walk, bike, ride share or take the bus as often as possible. Plan to buy an electric vehicle. Purchase locally grown food, locally manufactured goods or recycled items and donate objects you no longer need rather than trashing them. Think about carefully about your water use, all year round.

Local government also has a role to play. In the Town of Gibsons, our natural asset management strategy has gained international attention for its ability to reduce infrastructure costs and mitigate the affects of climate change.

Later this month, members of Council will attend the 2019 Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) conference in Vancouver, where we will debate 28 separate resolutions dealing with climate change, including a **Call For Action on Global Climate Emergency (B139)**. This resolution asks all orders of government *“to adopt climate emergency motions and to take dramatic steps toward the protection of biodiversity and to accelerate the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which are the primary cause of this climate emergency”*. As Mayor, I will support this resolution.

It's time to move beyond studying and discussing climate change and into immediate, local action. Staying on the sidelines simply isn't an option in this vital battle.

