

What is the Extent of Adaptation Integration in Strategic Planning Documents: The Case of Vancouver Island

N Bonnett^a

^a *Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, Canada*

Mounting evidence points to continued climate change, with predicted global impacts that include significant temperature increase, a rise in sea level, and an increase in intense weather events. Local governments are at the forefront of climate risks with challenges from an infrastructure and asset management, human safety, and resource allocation aspect. Recent policy discourse increasingly recognizes the critical role of local governments in addressing climate impacts, and strongly argues that a robust solution requires elements of both mitigation and adaptation. The Province of British Columbia (B.C), has emerged as a climate action leader within North America, largely through the passing of Bill 27, *The Local Government Statutes Amendment Act*, in 2008. The Act requires that all municipalities with an official community plan (OCP), incorporate actions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions within their OCPs. While this planning mandate has facilitated the widespread incorporation of climate change considerations within strategic documents, mitigation remains the major focus while adaptation receives minimal attention. Adapting to the current, and potentially damaging impacts yet to come, is imperative if local governments are to reduce costs, remain resilient, and fulfil their role in protecting residents and assets. Because some degree of climate change is inevitable, it is critical that local governments shift their political agenda from one that largely prioritizes mitigation, to one that stresses the need to adapt to the unavoidable consequences of climate change. Much research has been conducted on the adaptive capacity and plan quality of local governments. However, a gap exists in the literature as to how local governments are specifically incorporating adaptation into strategic planning documents. To help bridge the gap in the literature, this research aims to analyze the extent of adaptation inclusion in local policy and plans on Vancouver Island; examine the effectiveness of local plans in responding to climate impacts; and, propose recommendations that will assist with integration of adaptation into strategic planning, which in turn will strengthen local government adaptive capacity and preparedness for climate variability.

Corresponding author: nbonnett@ualberta.ca