

Climate Change

“Climate change is causing lasting and devastating problems for our world right now. As a hub for information and community-building, the Library is a critical part of the response to this emergency.”

West Vancouver Memorial Library, *Climate Future*

“The people in power are still acting as if there was no tomorrow ... We young people are telling them to stop doing that, to stop ignoring the consequences of their actions and inactions.” Greta Thunberg, *CBC News*, British Columbia, October 25, 2019

Board Discussion

Trustees bring a breadth of experiences, skills, knowledge, and questions to public library board work. Board policies and practices vary across the province and BCLTA is focused on issues of common concern for board development. We support trustees with the “why” and “how” of governance so that each board can respond with the best “what” for their public library and their community.

Your board chair, your library director, and BCLTA all have a role in helping you find further resources specific to your needs. The Libraries Branch staff are available for all questions regarding the *Library Act*.

The resources found in this Discussion Starter are just a small sample of what is available. How scientists, policy makers, and the media discuss climate change and how we each understand this issue is evolving as new research and information becomes available. This discussion starter will hopefully inspire generative

conversations, open ended and curious questions, further exploration on the issue, and support your board meetings to be a place and time for learning.

Your board’s climate change discussions will be ongoing and might cover a wide range of topics such as:

- The board’s governance role and fiduciary responsibility to the public library and specifically what this might mean in regards to floods, forest fires, severe weather, and other localized situations.
- Board policies regarding staff safety in times of crisis such as floods or forest fires.
- Board policies regarding:
 - The delegation of authority to the library director (ongoing authority and extraordinary authority and what to do when the board is not immediately available)
 - Emergency board meetings
 - Facility closure and/or threat of facility destruction
 - Organizational record storage (HR, legal, and other key documents)
 - Operational management of risk to collections, furnishings, and capital assets
- The role of the board and the role of the library director in decision making and communications.
- The inclusion of climate change awareness in policies, strategic plans and other board level reports.
- Building renovations and projects that are energy efficient or LEEDs certified.
- Support of the library director so that they are successful with their day-to-day work of managing and overseeing the operations of the library as a place of community learning regarding climate change and their work in managing the operations during a time of local climate crisis.

Resources

Government

Government of Canada

- [Climate Change](#)
- Includes links to federal programs, reports, and news on climate change.

BC Provincial Government

- [Climate Change](#)
- Includes information on the Clean BC Plan, climate adaptation, and the importance of sustainability in public sector organizations.

[BC Climate Action Charter](#)

- Voluntary agreement between the provincial government, the UBCM, and local governments who have chosen to participate in acting on climate change.
- Includes information on local government commitments and the Green Communities Committee.

Local Government

- Consult your community's Official Community Plan (OCP) or recent program and planning documents for statements regarding the climate, plans for local response, and goals for community resiliency.
- Discuss what the public library might do, through its unique mandate and role in the community, to support community resiliency and local climate change response plans.

Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC)

- [Canada: Climate Change and the Cultural Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), May 1, 2020
- [Indigenous Peoples Must Be Partners in Canada's Climate Change Discussions](#), n.d.

Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM)

- In 2019 the UBCM formed a Special Committee on Climate Action
 - Committee [Terms of Reference](#) provides a brief overview of the challenges that local governments may experience in discussing and planning actions to address the climate crisis.
 - On July 22, 2020 the committee released their [recommendations](#) to be discussed by UBCM members via a series of webinars.
 - Watch for updates from UBCM.

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

- The FCM has many resources and updates that while aimed at municipal officials and staff, will help public library boards better understand how to talk with your local government about the importance of including the library in climate discussions and action planning. Available resources include:
 - [Video series: Climate Resilience and Asset Management](#)
 - [2019 National Measures Report](#) (Case studies of municipalities that created action plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions)
 - Changemakers Climate Adaption Resources (Case studies of community-based action plans which includes the District of Ucluelet, the Town of Qualicum Beach, and the City of Prince George)

Library World

[A Race to Save the Planet: Public Libraries Lead Climate Change Effort](#)

- Kendra Morgan, WebJunction, February 13, 2020

[Crisis Communication Information and Resources](#)

- American Library Association
- U.S. oriented.
- Recommended use as a jumping off point for creating a crisis communication plan that meets the needs of your library and community.
- Useful tips such as not over reacting, the need to speak with one voice, and delegating communication roles.

Palaces for the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life, by Eric Klineberg (2018).

- This has been a popular read for BC public library trustees who are strengthening their understanding of the unique role of the public library in building resilient communities.
- For more about the book see this [2018 Library Journal interview with the author](#).
- Ask at your public library for a copy.

99% Invisible

- [Podcast episode with Eric Klineberg](#), author of *Palaces for the People*.
- From the website, referencing Klineberg's research on the role of social infrastructure in saving lives during the 1995 Chicago heat wave:
 - "Klineberg started spending time in the neighborhoods, and what he observed was that the places that had low death rates turned out to have a robust social infrastructure. They had sidewalks and streets that were well taken care of. They had neighborhood libraries and community organizations, grocery stores, shops, and cafes that drew people out of their home and into public life. What that meant was that on a daily basis, people got to know each other pretty well and used the social infrastructure to socialize. When this heat wave happened in Chicago, neighborhood residents knew who was likely to be sick and who should have been outside but wasn't. This meant they knew whose door to knock on if they needed help."

[Not Victims but Vectors of Change: Libraries, Climate Action and Peace](#)

- International Federation of Library Associations and Organizations (IFLA), 2019
- Report highlights include:
 - Libraries as places for equitable access to research and information
 - Libraries as places for innovation and leadership

[Resilient Communities: Libraries Respond to Climate Change](#)

- American Library Association
- This initiative is focused on library operations and is an example of how library services are responding to community need for resources and programming about climate change.
- The website includes recent news items about US public libraries and climate change.

Governance and Organizational Leadership

[Environmental Stewardship: The Board's Role](#)

- Peter A. Soyka, president, Soyka & Company, LLC
- BoardSource, 2016
- Addresses board uncertainty in discussing environmental stewardship and the role of board leadership in setting goals for a more environmentally aware organization.

[Climate Change Briefing: Questions for Directors to Ask](#)

- Chartered Professional Accountants, Canada, 2017
- While only a few of suggested questions are applicable to public library governance, this resource will help trustees with making the connection between strategic oversight and being aware of the impact of climate change and potential localized crisis such as fires, floods or severe weather on their public library.

[The Board's Role in Crisis Management](#)

- Osler, Hoskins, and Harcourt, 2016
- BC public library boards have a fiduciary responsibility that in its execution is different from corporate or not-for-profit boards. Please review this resource through the lens of being a BC public library trustee and the governance needs of your public library. The following may be of particular interest:
 - Challenges to responding to a crisis such as being informed and timely (p. 17)
 - Role of the board - policies, assessment, support operational leadership (p.18)
 - The importance of post crisis assessment (p. 21)
 - Key steps for managing a potential crisis (p. 23)

BC Public Libraries in Action

Organizations value and assess what they state as important and BC public library trustees are interested in the governance practices and documents of other BC public library boards. Please send us your governance documents (policies, reports, strategic plans) that reflect your board's governance climate change discussions.

Here are a few samples of BC public libraries in action providing services and resources to their communities.

[West Vancouver Memorial Library: Our Commitment to Sustainability](#)

West Vancouver Memorial Library is committed to environmentally sustainable practices. We acknowledge that our natural resources are precious and finite and that each of us is responsible for our stewardship and consumption of them.

With sustainability as a core value of the Library's 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan, we continuously explore opportunities to foster our sustainable site, reduce water and energy consumption and add to the well-being of our building's staff and visitors. We also pursue new ways to better reuse, repurpose and recycle our materials and resources. Moreover, our concern for the environment extends beyond the management of our facility. As a public library whose mission is to connect people with ideas, information and the world of imagination, we disseminate theoretical, factual and innovative information about the ongoing ecological challenges of our era. Through our changes, care and commitment, we hope to inspire others to make healthy choices for our planet.

[Whistler Public Library](#)

Photos and observations from HCMA, the firm that designed the LEED certified Whistler Public Library. The following comment from Anne Townley, who was at the time of the building project the chair of the public library board, reflects the role of the board in this project.

“With the guidance of HCMA, the Whistler Public Library Board had a vision of what we wanted to see and feel in the new library. I am very proud to say when I walk into the new library full of community members enjoying the services it is due to the HCMA understanding our vision and making it a reality.” Anne Townley, Chairperson, Whistler Public Library

[Building a Better Library: 2018 - 2021 Strategic Plan](#)

The Smithers Public Library strategic plan includes the goal to be an “excellent source of information to our community regarding Global Warming” and direction for the library to provide programming and materials that educate the community about climate change and mitigation strategies.

[March LEED Spotlight: Surrey’s LEED Gold City Centre Library](#)

An archived interview with Surinder Bhogal, Chief Librarian of Surrey Libraries, about the green features of the new City Centre Library and how the LEED project was a way to connect with the community.

[Building Sustainability Information](#)

Photos and descriptions of the Salt Spring Public Library’s LEED features such as heating, ventilation, air conditioning, washrooms, lighting, and construction.

Please send any recommended resources or board documents to be added to this Discussion Starter to Babs Kelly at babs.kelly@bclta.ca

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