

INITIAL CLIMATE ACTION PLAN CLIMATE COUNCILOR SIGNING STATEMENTS

Appendix 16

2021

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Chris Campany, Abbie Corse, Lauren Oates - Climate Council Members

TO: Vermont Climate Council

RE: Qualification for Voting in the Affirmative in Support of the Initial Climate Action Plan

As members of the Council we are committed to ensuring this and future iterations of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) reflect the just transitions framework included in the initial CAP. To do so, just transitions must become a foundational consideration as Vermont reorients its relationship with energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions for the well-being of generations to come and pursues greater adaptation and resilience strategies to protect life, safety, and property from the many natural hazards that are only going to increase in frequency and severity in the decades to come, as a result of damage to the atmosphere already done.

The Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) states the following:

Just Transitions Subcommittee. This subcommittee shall focus on ensuring that strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to build resilience to adapt to the effects of climate change benefit and support all residents of the State fairly and equitably. This subcommittee shall ensure that strategies consider the disproportionate impact of climate change on rural, low income, and marginalized communities and that programs and incentives for building resilience are designed to be accessible to all Vermonters and do not unfairly burden any groups, communities, geographic locations, or economic sectors. This subcommittee may adopt a measurement tool to assess the equitability of programs and strategies considered by the Council.

Ideally, the GWSA would have charged the Council as a whole with this task rather than a single subcommittee thereof. Also, ideally, the just transitions principles would have been adopted by the Council well-ahead of policy deliberations in order to help frame the deliberations from the outset. Given the time constraints of the Council to develop the CAP, this was not possible. Nor was the timely and robust application of the just transitions principles to the policies contained within the initial CAP or the application of the assessment rubric (measurement tool). Statements have been included in the CAP to this effect, but the fact remains that we are attempting to back policies into a just transitions framework rather than have that framework shape the policies from the outset.

We have a chance to get this right as the CAP evolves. This plan must be updated on an ongoing basis as pathways, strategies, and actions are evaluated against evolving conditions, context, and knowledge, as well as success in actual implementation. It is not a bad thing to provide the public with an initial plan to which it can respond. But the Council, administration, and legislature must listen to what Vermonters say about what the CAP and its implementation means for their lives and livelihoods in the present and future, and resist the inertia of “business as usual” when it comes to policy and programmatic solutions. The initial CAP presumes what a just transition could be. It is from robust inclusive, fair, and just public engagement going

forward that we will know what a just transition is and must be. This requires pathways for engagement not only in the development of future iterations of the Plan, but in the related legislation, rulemaking, budgeting, appropriations, program implementation, and program evaluation.

I vote yes.

Vermont's initial Climate Action Plan is a momentous and important first step for advancing serious and equitable climate action. While this Plan will continue to be revised, improved, and added to over time—as envisioned and required by the Global Warming Solutions Act—this initial CAP provides a strong foundation for continued work and progress.

If the recommendations of the Climate Council as outlined in this plan are followed, not only am I confident that Vermont will have the ability to achieve our legal requirements to reduce climate pollution (including a 40% reduction by 2030), I am also confident that we can do so while strengthening the Vermont economy and saving Vermonters money by working to equitably transition away from dependence on imported, high cost, and price-volatile fossil fuels.

It cannot be overstated that, while this plan gives us the *opportunity*, it cannot guarantee that we will meet our legally binding requirements. Crucially, whether and to what degree this plan is effective will depend on the order, pace, and quality of the implementation of its recommendations by the legislature and state agencies. This must include utilizing the benchmarks in the emissions reduction pathways analysis to guide policy and program design so that we achieve the necessary levels of weatherization, electrification, and more (or to identify other measures that would result in equivalent emissions reduction). It is not enough to pass policies and programs – they must actually be designed and funded to achieve the scale and pace of progress as outlined by the evidence and data underlying this Council's work.

In terms of emissions reduction, objectively speaking, the highest impact and single most important recommendation in the Climate Action Plan is the Clean Heat Standard and, to help enable it, its paired recommendation of Weatherization at Scale. If and when implemented effectively, these two policies will ensure that Vermont achieves, at minimum, about a third of the GHG pollution reduction that is required by 2030. They will do so by helping more and more Vermonters weatherize their homes and switch to cleaner, more affordable heating options, while requiring large fossil fuel companies to be responsible for helping to pay for that work. To have a serious chance of meeting the GWSA requirements, the Clean Heat Standard, paired with Weatherization at Scale, should be the first priority of legislative and administration leaders.

The next highest impact policy recommendation would be joining the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program (TCI-P), which was designed to achieve approximately a 26% reduction in emissions for participating states. However, given that Connecticut and Massachusetts recently pulled back from their prior commitments, the future of TCI-P is now uncertain. The recommendation of the Climate Council is for Vermont to join TCI-P if and when regional market viability exists, which at this point would mean at least one or more states coming back to the table, or a new state joining.

Regardless of the future of TCI-P, the Council is committed to identifying one or more primary transportation strategies that can make up for the hole that TCI-P's demise would create in our plan. Specific examples of strategies we will explore include:

- A Clean Transportation Standard, known as low carbon fuel standards elsewhere, including in Washington state, Oregon, and California, where they already exist and are working effectively.
- Joining Quebec and California in their cap and invest program, known as the Western Climate Initiative (WCI), at least to cover transportation fuels.
- A very strong Vehicle Efficiency Price Adjustment program for new vehicle sales (also known as True Cost Pricing or a Fee and Rebate (“feebate”) program).

Once our new transportation recommendations are ready, legislators and the administration will need to move swiftly and determinedly to implement one or more of these policies to ensure that significant emissions and cost reductions from our most polluting sector can actually be achieved by 2030.

In the meantime, the highest impact transportation sector recommendation that Vermont will move forward with (thanks to passage of this CAP) is the Advanced Clean Cars II rule, which will result in a minimum of about 95,000 electric vehicles being made available for sale in Vermont between 2026 and 2030, helping to achieve about 10% of our emissions reduction requirement. However, complementary policies—including vehicle purchase incentives (especially for low and moderate income Vermonters) and charging infrastructure build out (especially for multi-family units and other underserved areas)—will be necessary to facilitate and support Vermonters in being able to purchase and fully utilize that number of EVs, replacing an equivalent number of fossil vehicles on our roads.

There is much work I look forward to continuing as part of the Council.

As co-chair of the Science & Data subcommittee, this will include:

- Working to better assess and transparently present upstream and/or lifecycle emissions beyond Vermont’s borders caused by our energy choices.
- Continuing to refine the pathways modeling and economic analysis that underpins the plan, both at EAN and working in collaboration with the Council’s consultants.

As a member of the Cross-Sector Mitigation subcommittee this will include:

- Developing primary policy recommendations for transportation sector emissions reduction, given that we can no longer count on with certainty having TCI-P as a primary strategy to ensure emissions reductions and investments in cleaner, more affordable transportation options.

As a member of the Steering Committee this will include:

- Working to increase the Council’s public engagement efforts—with a specific interest in advancing deliberative polling—while prioritizing Just Transitions principles and procedural equity.

In the end, this plan isn’t just about emissions and economics. It is also about ethics. Most of all, I vote for this plan because it represents Vermont’s first serious attempt to act at the scale and pace necessary to do our part in meeting the science-based imperative of reducing climate pollution, and thereby acting on the moral imperative to transition beyond costly fossil fuel use.

I want to close on a personal note.

I grew up in a low-income family that sometimes had to live on the margins of our society. I experienced firsthand the anxiety and discomfort that dependence on high cost, price-volatile, and unhealthy fossil fuels creates, as I have shared publicly in greater detail [here](#) and [here](#). Crucially, this plan was designed not just to reduce emissions but also to help end dependence on environmentally and economically harmful fossil fuels by assisting Vermonters in the transition to more efficient and clean energy sources that can save money, strengthen our economy, and improve our health.

I am also a ninth generation Vermonter. A few years ago, I was visiting the cemetery in Barnard, Vermont where at least six generations of my family are buried. It was a beautiful fall day and as I looked at the colors of the old maples along the sloping stone wall, I had a flood of memories of my father who had recently passed away and the Vermont traditions he passed down to my sister and me—from hiking in the fall, deer and partridge hunting, ice-fishing, pond skating, cross-country skiing, and maple sugaring. I thought about how those same Vermont memories probably tied every generation in that cemetery together – that what has united Vermonters together since our founding has been our relationship with the land, the weather, and the seasons.

My wife and I are now raising a tenth generation Vermonter. I am motivated to do this work because I hope against hope that the Vermont we have all been blessed to know and experience can live on for at least another ten generations. Whether you are a tenth generation Vermonter like my son, a ninth generation Vermonter like me, or a first generation Vermonter like my wife, we are all so lucky to be residents and stewards of this beautiful state.

Vermont will not be Vermont without fall foliage, ice-fishing, and maple sugaring. And climate change is the greatest threat – an existential threat to those traditions in the State we know and love. Current projections have Vermont’s climate turning into one more akin to Tennessee or Alabama by the end of the century. Those may be beautiful places, too, but their home and traditions are not ours.

There was a new psychological term coined a number of years back called “solastalgia.” It refers to an experience happening all too often in an age of climate disruption—the feeling of homesickness even when you’ve never physically left home—but you feel it because your home environment has changed so drastically. The stories of people in Australia who had known and loved lush places with unique local plants and animals-- places that they no longer recognized after droughts had turned their homes into desert in the span of a single generation. When you deeply understand what it is to know and love a place, having it taken from you while you are still living there is a special kind of tragedy.

The odds are long, but our future does not have to end up like this. Vermont may be small. And alone we cannot change the course of climate change—no single state or country can. But we can meet our moral responsibility to step up and do our part. Not only does our example make a difference here – especially in reducing energy costs and improving health—it can also serve as a beacon and inspiration for others, casting light beyond our borders, in the same way Vermonters have done throughout our history at times of great challenge.

The history of social and economic change is one of small changes adding up bit by bit, creating sometimes imperceptible momentum that can lead us to pass unforeseen tipping points, culminating in unbelievable progress. The Climate Action Plan is an important and momentous step forward that can help make that progression happen again.

I am voting for this plan—and committing to help improve it going forward, both in terms of process and substance—because we owe our kids and future generations, as well as both people living in Vermont and beyond our borders, serious and moral leadership at this critical moment in history.

Vermont first set statutory goals for greenhouse gas emissions reduction in 2007. We missed those targets year after year for more than a decade because we did not back those goals up with legal requirements and serious, comprehensive policy mechanisms. The Global Warming Solutions Act finally created those legal requirements in 2020. And, with this plan, we are finally putting forward significant policy and programmatic recommendations that, when effectively implemented by the legislature and State agencies, can reduce high polluting, high-cost fossil fuel dependence and meet our responsibility to reduce emissions, improve health, and help protect our state and her people.

Jared Duval

Council member appointed to represent a Vermont-based organization with expertise in energy and data analysis

Co-Chair Science and Data Subcommittee

Member, Cross-Sector Mitigation Subcommittee

Member, Council Steering committee

As the youth member on the Vermont climate council, I voted yes on this plan. Not because I think it is perfect, not because I agree with the process that was followed, but because I understand the extreme urgency with which we must move forward when it comes to addressing the climate crisis.

That said, this process has excluded the voices of the most impacted communities time and time again, rushed through considerations for how we can make sure we build, resilient communities that use this moment of transition to undo past harm, and used equity as a buzzword box to check along the way. We should have been meaningfully engaging impacted communities and Vermonters as a whole from the beginning of this process, but we failed at that over the past year and continue to fail as we move forward without a plan to substantively engage the public in legitimate public engagement moving forward into implementation.

All of that said, I voted to approve this plan because it is important and it is the first step that our state needs. I criticize our process because we must do better going forward; I know that we have the capacity to carry out good processes, but I want us to stop shying away from it, stop choosing the paths of least resistance that have been trodden by past injustices.

I vote to pass this plan with the understanding that we need to be accountable to the people of Vermont, and a call to the council to put out a revised plan in a year, with a process that learns from the mistakes made in the past year and begins with public engagement and co-creation, starting now.

Finally, though, I want to push back on the idea that the legislative purview set out for this council was “overzealous” because while the timeline strained this work, I believe that it was more the time management that created the pressure counselors felt at the end of the process. The timeline was urgent because this crisis is, because I have waited my whole life for action like this, because the lives of my peers and I, and the future depend on these actions and when we decide to take them.

Iris Hsiang

Council member appointed to represent Vermont youth

I believe that, as a whole, the Initial Climate Action Plan is a robust plan and that the pathways it outlines will meet our emissions reduction requirements in a more just and equitable fashion than ever attempted before.

One thing still to be decided about this plan is how it will be funded. That will have the biggest impact on whether this plan will be implemented in a way that doesn't just perpetuate the unjust status quo.

The decisions made by the Legislature and the Executive branch in the weeks and months to come regarding how this plan is funded have the potential to *significantly move the needle* towards creating a just transition, if done in the right way.

Many of Vermont's small business owners and employees are members of frontline and impacted communities, so **a plan that supports and uplifts members of frontline and impacted communities will benefit our state's small businesses.**

I am very pleased that there are a few ways in which this plan specifically supports small businesses. **Programs to help Vermonters switch to electric vehicles will be available to businesses and individuals alike**, and there are provisions for making electric trucks more accessible to businesses when they eventually hit the market.

Businesses will also be able to take advantage of on-bill tariff financing for weatherization and HVAC upgrades to their buildings. This plan has the benefit of tying the financing to the electric utility bill rather than the business, so businesses that rent can realize savings in their energy costs, and they will not be tied to paying off a loan for leasehold improvements if they end up moving to another location.

The council faced challenges in conducting public outreach during the drafting of this plan. The short timeline we were given meant that a lot of the work had to be started before a public outreach plan could be put in place. Going forward, **we must do better to reach all Vermonters, especially those who will be most impacted by climate change.**

The Initial Climate Action Plan includes Guiding Principles for a Just Transition, and it is critical that these continue to guide our work going forward and that we do more to live up to these principles by meeting people where they are, moving at the speed of trust, and making sure our communication is inclusive and transparent. That includes providing materials in translation – something that has not been done to date.

Kelly Klein

Founder CEO of Groennfell Meadery and Havoc Mead
Council member appointed to represent the small business community

Climate change is real and accelerating. We cannot disregard the steps we can and must take to prepare for the effects and impact on our planet. We know we must work to correct our current course. That said, no member of the Administration supports the overzealous process established by the Legislature in the Global Warming Solutions Act nor each and every action in the Climate Action Plan issued today.

Despite significant reservations with many of the recommendations, we all support moving the conversation forward. From the beginning we have expressed concerns about the process, timelines and construct laid out in the Act. As the Governor noted in his initial veto message, the Act rightly should have committed to the Executive Branch the development and implementation of specific initiatives, programs and strategies to carry out legislative policy. Rather, the Legislature created an unelected body, unaccountable to the voters, a majority of which are its own appointees to take on this Executive function.

Further, the Legislature imposed an unrealistic timeframe on the work it expected this body to accomplish which has resulted in an unfortunate lack of transparency into the impact of the Plan, particularly on rural Vermont and disadvantaged communities. Economic impact is human impact, and there simply hasn't been enough time to accurately estimate and understand the cost of the recommended actions, individually and cumulatively. We cannot support proposals which impose a fiscal commitment beyond the means of most Vermonters.

We find ourselves in the untenable position of having to vote up or down on a package of proposals that is overly broad, with many tenets only loosely tied to this work, and lacks detail consistent with the Act's requirement for "specific initiatives, programs and strategies." Despite significant issues with the Act, the Governor committed Executive Branch expertise and significant resources necessary to support the work of the Council. Collectively, our teams, as well as each of us individually, have dedicated hundreds upon hundreds of hours of time participating and engaging in these important conversations. This Administration has always believed in collaboration and working together to find the most effective means to accomplish a common goal: we know our climate is changing and we must take action to address its effects.

Furthermore, we have identified four areas of specific concern (below) where we don't believe there is a path to a successful outcome. In addition, we cannot support policy proposals which are impractical or infeasible. Our concerns with many of these proposals have been made clear during extensive deliberations in an effort to reach consensus and compromise.

Nearly every one of the more than 230 actions identified in the Plan needs some amount of additional study and scrutiny. Fortunately, and perhaps inevitably, the vast majority of the Plan's actions require Legislative process and action – the appropriate course for policy deliberations and appropriations under our Vermont Constitution. Vermonters must understand the impacts and support these ideas as a people. Without the informed and broad support of the people, this must not move.

Our votes today are neither a wholesale endorsement nor a total rejection of the Plan as presented. We reserve the right to support or oppose initiatives once further examined and detailed through the necessary, deliberative legislative process. As individual proposals are taken

up by the Legislature, careful consideration will be given to how each can be structured to support the economy, the workforce and the most vulnerable.

To be clear, we are committed to continuing these important conversations with the Council and look forward to working with the Legislature to flesh out the details, the costs and benefits, and doing so in a public, deliberative, transparent process. We are especially grateful for the enormous commitment of time and capacity that so many Vermonters have invested in bringing us to today.

Kristin Clouser, Secretary of Agency of Administration, Climate Council Chair

Julie Moore, Secretary of Agency of Natural Resources

Anson Tebbets, Secretary of Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

Erica Bornemann, Director of Vermont Emergency Management, Department of Public Safety, Rural Resilience and Adaptation Subcommittee Co-Chair

Joe Flynn, Secretary of the Agency of Transportation

June Tierney, Commissioner of the Department of Public Service

Lindsey Kurrle, Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Sean Brown, Commissioner of the Department for Children & Families, Agency of Human Services