

NEWS RELEASE

EARLY WINS to RAMP UP CLIMATE ACTION

Municipalities can lead the way says report from Columbia Institute

VANCOUVER, B.C., June 9, 2016 – A new report titled *Top Asks for Climate Action* spotlights how Canada can ramp up climate action by empowering low carbon communities. Local governments have a crucial role to play in combating climate change. Their decisions directly or indirectly impact sixty percent of Canada’s energy consumption and more than fifty percent of greenhouse gas emissions.

“Our climate is changing. Canada must act and act quickly if we are to meet the climate change commitments we made in Paris alongside other world leaders,” says **Charley Beresford**, Executive Director of the Columbia Institute. “Local governments are central to achieving these goals because their decisions influence so many greenhouse gas emissions and so much of our energy consumption.”

The report, published by the Columbia Institute, a public policy centre focused on inclusive, sustainable communities, sets out the benefits of empowering local governments to take the lead on climate action in their communities.

“Climate change is right here, right now. These recommendations are early wins for achieving the climate change goals we’ve signed on to as Canadians and as global citizens,” says Toronto City Councillor and *Top Asks* advisor **Mike Layton**.

Locally-elected councillors and experts on climate action provided input into the report, building on momentum following the Paris Agreement on climate change in December 2015.

“The benefits for communities shifting to stronger environmental policies are clear. What we need now is action from federal and provincial governments that will put measures in place to ramp up low carbon communities,” says Vancouver City Councillor and *Top Asks* advisor **Andrea Reimer**.

The *Top Asks* report pinpoints what local governments need from the federal and provincial and territorial governments to realize climate action. Top federal, provincial and territorial asks described in this report include:

- Capacity building
- Funding
- Smart growth / Natural capital
- Local energy
- Building
- Transportation

For more detail, please review the full report *Top Asks for Climate Action – Ramping Up Low Carbon Communities*: <http://www.civicgovernance.ca/top-asks/>

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Quotes

“We open the door to faster climate solutions by engaging local governments more actively. For example, we would see an immediate and significant impact with the funding of more retrofit programs in the building sector, with improved active transportation and transit, and with more compact community design and energy innovation.” **Charley Beresford**, Executive Director, Columbia Institute

“The benefits for communities shifting to stronger environmental policies are clear. What we need now is action from federal and provincial governments that will put measures in place to ramp up low carbon communities.” **Andrea Reimer**, City Councillor, Vancouver

“Climate change is right here, right now. These recommendations are early wins for achieving the climate change goals we’ve signed on to as Canadians and as global citizens.” **Mike Layton**, City Councillor, Toronto

“*Top Asks* lays out key climate action points and then tells you how to get it done. It’s a terrific public policy resource.” **Megan Leslie**, former Member of Parliament, Halifax

“Over half of the world’s population and 80% of Canadians live in urban areas with more arriving every day. The efficiency of the built environment, the way people transport themselves, and the shift to a green energy path will be key to keeping carbon emissions low and the planet on a sustainable path. Now is the time to unite, adopt the recommendations put forward here, and turn to a bright green future.” **David Cadman**, Past President, ICLEI Global – Local Governments for Sustainability

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About the Columbia Institute:

The Columbia Institute is a Vancouver-based, Canada-focused public policy think-tank with a mission to foster and support inclusive, sustainable communities. Our programs focus on civic governance, leadership initiatives, responsible investment, and capacity building. Established in 2000, the Columbia Institute is a national charitable organization. Learn more: <http://www.columbiainstitute.ca/>