

Sept 4, 2018. Priorities and Finance Committee Meeting public presentation.
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I am a family doctor, a member of CAPE (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment), and a proud Calgarian. I recognize that you are faced with many competing agendas, but I am here today to remind this city council of its commitments to action under the Climate Resilience Strategy (CRS). As illustrated in the Leeds Report commissioned by the City, there is 'a strong economic case for Calgary to pursue an ambitious and cost-effective low carbon development path'. We have heard today of one small example of cost-savings made through energy efficiency with LED streetlights. I am asking that you ensure the City will embed the CRS and Leeds Report recommendations within the budget across all service plans. As the One Calgary executive summary states: "Making life better every day for Calgarians is our common purpose." That is why I am calling on you to do what is in your realm of power and influence to affect positive change, for the well-being of Calgarians, using a climate lens. The Canadian and American Public Health organizations recognize that climate change is a major public health threat. The World Economic Forum ranks climate change effects highest in global risks and impact. Environmental issues are health issues. And Calgary is not immune. We need clean air, clean water and thriving nature for good health. As physicians we are called to address the social determinants of health, such as poverty, access to clean water and air, nutritional food and social disparities. It's certainly our role and responsibility to advocate for public policy that focuses on prevention of hazards to people and to the natural environment.

For a Well-Run City, we need leadership in citizen engagement to help inform the public openly about the negative health impacts of climate change and the health benefits of pursuing low carbon planning and development. The health benefits are indeed numerous, and can be applied across the Citizen Priority themes: A city that moves, A prosperous city, A healthy and green city. For example, active transportation, walking, using bicycles and public transit, has been shown to decrease mortality and chronic diseases. Have denser urban areas lead to shorter in-car commute times, and decreased pollution from fewer cars on the road means better respiratory and cardiovascular health. Having access to green spaces in communities has been show to improve mental health. Cities that address much needed affordable housing, food security, and that have strong social programs can also positively impact health outcomes.

Economic stability and a low-carbon future go hand-in-hand with good health policy, we just need to seize the opportunities, and as pointed out in the One Calgary exec. Summary: "we need to create a culture that embraces appropriate levels of risk, innovation, experimentation, and embraces lessons learned as opportunities to improve." Let's not learn our lesson about climate health impacts too late. As the Priorities and Finance Committee it is imperative that you provide the funds needed to resource and properly implement the Climate Resilience Strategy within this budget cycle and give the service plans/lines this clear mandate. It can be win-win for city planning, the economy and most importantly for the future of healthy communities.

