

Calgary



# Climate Change Strategy Focus Groups

## Final Report

Prepared for The City of Calgary by:

**ENVIRONICS**  
RESEARCH

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# Executive Summary

- ❖ This research is based on focus groups conducted with Calgarians that segmented them based on their attitudes towards climate change: Allies (concerned and taking action), Neutrals (less concerned and need information about how to take action) and Opponents (least concerned and believe other - primarily economic - issues should take priority)
- ❖ Calgarians recognize that climate change is taking place, and that it is having an impact on their city. Even though there is disagreement about whether this is a new and serious problem, Allies, Neutrals and even some Opponents acknowledge that extreme weather is more common today and that climate change may lead to other impacts in the future.
- ❖ Most Calgarians also take steps in their personal lives to reduce their environmental footprint, even if the reason for changing behaviour is driven more by other factors (such as cost savings) than environmental consciousness. Many of those more inclined to consider other individual and collective actions to reduce their emissions have not done so because they are unaware of what they can do, or practical limitations stand in the way.
- ❖ The information tested in these sessions is impactful, with Allies likely to take this information to heart and Neutrals/Opponents more likely to reflexively reject arguments about climate change. Notably, pieces of information not framed as being specifically about climate change and emissions were more easily taken at face value.
- ❖ **It's Time To Lead** was identified as the most compelling argument for a City climate change plan. This message was viewed as speaking most to a perception that Calgary is a confident, leading, forward-thinking city. The financial argument for investing in climate change mitigation encapsulated by **Climate resilience just makes financial sense** was also seen to be compelling.



## Executive Summary - Continued

- ❖ Even among those inclined to believe that climate change is real and that something should be done about it, there is widespread skepticism about government motives in addressing climate change. However, the City of Calgary is perceived as having a great deal of credibility on this issue, although some Opponents question what impact the City can have when this is a global/national issue.
- ❖ Participants were interested in hearing from a wide range of individuals and community organizations (including scientists and academic experts, public health and emergency management bodies, and other community stakeholders) about the climate change strategy, because they are considered "independent" without a direct financial interest in the issue of climate change.
- ❖ When they think about the effects of climate change on future generations, Allies and Neutrals are likely to express pessimism and regret that more was not done to deal with this issue sooner (although some did express hope that steps are being taken now to solve this issue). Opponents, on the other hand, were more likely to express faith that future technological will solve any problems created by climate change, with few if any further actions required today.



- ❖ Environics Research conducted six focus groups with Calgary residents regarding their perceptions of the City of Calgary's efforts to mitigate and adapt to impacts related to climate change. This included:
  - ❖ An exploration of their personal perceptions and values related to climate change
  - ❖ Participants' assessment of messaging related to the effects of climate change on the City
  - ❖ Perceptions of the City's overarching climate strategy, including approaches and stakeholders who could support this effort.
- ❖ A total of six (6) sessions were conducted from December 8-10, 2016 at a dedicated focus group studio (Qualitative Coordination, 707 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue S.W.).
- ❖ All discussions lasted approximately 110-120 minutes, and each participant was provided with a \$100 incentive in exchange for their contribution.



# Profile of Participants

- ❖ Nine participants were recruited from existing lists for each session. All sessions included a mixture of people from different socio-economic backgrounds (age, gender, income, education level, ethnicity...).
- ❖ Participants were segmented according to their perceptions of the seriousness of climate change and the extent to which they are taking action to address the issue. The following table provides an overview of the different segments:

Group Number	Date	Time	Population
1	Thursday, Dec. 8	5:30 PM	"Active Allies" (Concerned about climate change, taking action to deal with it)
2	Thursday, Dec. 8	8:00 PM	"Active Opponents" (Not concerned about climate change, think it isn't worthwhile for people to do something about it)
3	Friday, Dec. 9	5:30 PM	"Passive Allies" (Concerned about climate change, require more information about what to do)
4	Saturday, Dec. 10	10:00 AM	
5	Saturday, Dec. 10	12:00 PM	"Neutrals" (Less concerned about climate change but willing to take steps to deal with the issue if provided with more information)
6	Saturday, Dec. 10	2:00 PM	"Passive Opponents" (Concerned about climate change but believe economic concerns need to be addressed first or that it isn't worthwhile to take steps to deal with it)



## Perceptions of Climate Change's Impact on Calgary



# How Climate Change Is Impacting Calgary

- ❖ Virtually all participants – including those who are highly skeptical about, and hostile towards, efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - acknowledged that climate change is taking place, and that it is having an impact on Calgary.
- ❖ Most participants linked climate change to extreme weather events such as the 2013 flooding and the 2014 “Snowtember.” However, Neutrals and Opponents were more likely to believe that these events happened because they are part of a naturally occurring process. They would frequently comment that there has always been significant fluctuation in river levels, for instance. Those more inclined to be concerned about climate change, however, were more likely to share the feeling that these sorts of extreme weather events happen more frequently than they did in the past.
- ❖ Working in pairs, participants identified some of the other ways in which climate change may be having an impact on Calgary. Beyond extreme weather, the most common concerns that were identified included:
  - ❖ Fluctuations in the seasons, including the perception that winter is arriving “later” than it used to, and that summers are more rainy and humid than in years past;
  - ❖ Additional haze/smog over the City, which was mainly attributed to additional vehicles being on the road;
  - ❖ Different and more persistent strains of viruses/illnesses that may be linked to a changing climate and poorer air quality;
  - ❖ The amount of food that can be produced, particularly if extreme weather impacts crops/livestock in rural Alberta (although some Opponents did indicate that a changing climate may mean new and different crops can be grown in the area);

*The snowpack is full of particulate from forest fires, carbon monoxide and pollution. And that affects our water quality.*

**- Active Ally**

*You see that brown haze during a chinook a lot more now, from all the fumes and stuff.*

**- Active Opponent**

*We will keep seeing crazier and crazier events as we go forward. The 2013 flood was said to be a one-in-100 year flood, but I don't think anyone believes that. I think we will see another in 10 years.*

**- Passive Ally**



# Individual and Collective Actions

- ❖ The vast majority of participants – including Opponents – indicated that they do take steps in their personal lives to reduce their carbon footprint. Most of these behaviours that were mentioned related to household energy consumption (turning off lights, turning down the thermostat) or transportation (walking, cycling or taking public transit; buying a smaller/more fuel-efficient vehicle). Many participants, particularly those who were Neutrals or Opponents, were also quick to highlight that they recycle their household waste.
- ❖ Allies were more likely to take steps to reduce their respective environmental footprints because they were conscious of their emissions. For them, their impact on the environment was a key consideration in shaping their lifestyle choices and behaviours. Neutrals and Opponents tended to be more motivated to make choices regarding energy consumption (in particular) to save money rather than because of the impact their activities may have on the environment.
- ❖ Those in the Allies groups were far more likely to say they have considered other behaviours to reduce their carbon footprints. Active Allies were more likely to have considered further actions, such as installing solar lights or buying an electric car, but the reason they have not yet done these things is because it is perceived to be too expensive or it simply was not practical. Several Allies indicated they were simply unaware of these opportunities, but would be interested in them if they had an opportunity to learn more about what they can do to reduce their emissions.
- ❖ Participants in all groups struggled to identify collective actions they could take to reduce their emissions. When they were presented with examples (such as joining a solar cooperative or community gardening) both Active and Passive Allies reacted favourably and said they would be open to doing these things, but would want more information first. Neutrals and Opponents generally were not interested.

*I do a lot, but it's mostly financially motivated.*

**- Active Opponent**

I'd love to have solar panels and a plug in electric car.

**- Active Ally**

I don't know what I should be doing.

**- Passive Ally**

In general I don't like wasting things. It's not because I worry about greenhouse gases, that's what I do.

**- Neutral/Passive Opponent**



# Message Evaluation





# Content Piece Evaluation

Participants were provided with two pages of information regarding how climate change is impacting Calgarians today, and how it will do so in the future:

- ❖ Overall, the messaging proved to be quite memorable for participants. In the Allies groups, participants tended to agree with many of the points that were made, with some remarking that even though they had an idea about these facts, they still learned a great deal of information from this piece. Most Allies felt it is appropriate to educate citizens about all of the problems climate change is currently causing in Calgary and what some of those future impacts will be. Some argued that causing people to be concerned about the impacts of climate change is a useful and necessary approach if it convinces people of the need to address this issue.
- ❖ Neutrals and Opponents were more likely to doubt the veracity of the claims contained in this piece, with many refusing to believe certain facts (or else demanding to know the source of the information). Several Opponents, in particular, described the information as “scaremongering” or “propaganda.” Interestingly, though, certain pieces of information provided (such as bacteria killing fish) were perceived to be credible even though a source was not given for this information either.
- ❖ Participants in all groups were intrigued by the claim about seven out of 10 of Calgary’s most damaging events have occurred in the past five years. Both Allies and Opponents wanted to figure out which events these were, with some indicating that this is likely reflected in higher insurance costs in recent years.
- ❖ Many Allies liked the way that the piece described the “surplus” of carbon left after some emissions are absorbed by forests and plants. They felt that providing this information in the form of a percentage helps them better understand how this process works. Opponents, meanwhile, tended to simply reject this information out of hand.
- ❖ An overview of additional comments about the content piece can be found on the following page.

It gives a concise overview that this is what we’re doing... talking about that build-up of carbon around the earth, it gives a good visual of keeping the earth warm.

- Active Ally

The entire piece to me says we are trying to scare you.

- Active Opponent



# Content Piece Evaluation Results

Allies found this to be useful information; Opponents questioned whether this was true.

Allies described this as being a useful metaphor for understanding the issue

Many participants found this sentence confusing and did not know what it was referring to.

**Climate change: a system out of balance**  
Each year, we put 33 billion tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere, mostly from burning fossil fuels when we travel, heat and cool our homes, and produce and consume goods. About 18 billion tonnes of carbon are absorbed by the earth's systems, like forests and plants, but the rest, about 15 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (or 45 per cent), is added to the atmosphere each year.

When carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) is emitted into our atmosphere, it hangs around for a very long time, from decades to centuries. The more carbon pollution in the air, the more the sun's energy gets trapped in our atmosphere as heat. Think about it like this: a build-up of carbon in the atmosphere is acting like a blanket around the Earth. As more heat gets in, and less is able to escape, things keep getting hotter.

Climate change is a change in the typical, average or normal weather of a region. Rising temperatures impact every element of our climate system, which then cascades into our environmental, built and social systems too.

**Climate change is here in Calgary.**  
Climate change is already affecting Calgary. Our average local temperatures have increased, local weather is more extreme and seasons are shifting. According to Environment Canada, Calgary's average temperature has already warmed 1.8 degrees Celsius in the past century, with most of that happening over the past four decades.



According to NASA, 2015 was earth's hottest year on record. Nine of the 10 warmest years on record have occurred since 2000.

In Calgary, eight of the worst 10 natural disasters recorded have occurred since 2012.



As with much of this content, Allies were very likely to believe these claims and describe these as eye-opening facts; Opponents were more likely to reject this information out of hand.

Many participants wanted to know which specific disasters these were.

Calgary's future holds increasingly volatile weather and shifting seasons—more of what we're already experiencing.

Climate change isn't just about warming. When Calgary's climate moves into uncharted territory, it will become increasingly more volatile. The extreme weather we already experience—hail, intense rainfalls, flooding, high winds, heavy, wet snow—will become more frequent, more severe, and less predictable. Shifting seasons, severe heat waves and drought will become pressing new issues that require new approaches and planning.

Calgarians already know that one extreme storm can shut down our water supply, transportation routes and power supplies for days. These disruptions can cause costly, even irreparable, damage to homes and public infrastructure and services.

One or two degrees may not sound like much, but rising temperatures and shifting seasons interrupt natural cycles that have developed over thousands of years, stressing local fish and wildlife, while making way for new pests and diseases such as pine beetles or Lyme-disease-infected ticks.

Climate impacts cascade across our way of life, livelihoods, economy, health, culture, services, infrastructure, and the natural areas we enjoy and cherish. Warming temperatures will contribute to the loss of water stored as ice and snow. This will affect the timing and level of water flows in the Bow river and will influence water supply and delivery in Calgary.

Heat waves and drought drive wildfires, like the one we just saw in Fort McMurray. Small changes in water temperature interrupt fish spawning and allow harmful bacteria to flourish, such as we've recently seen in Southern Alberta.



Although Opponents disputed many of the other claims in this content piece, they were more likely to accept this fact about bacteria killing fish to be true.



According to the Prairie Climate Centre, Calgary's average temperature, number of hot days, frost-free days, and annual precipitation levels, are all projected to increase significantly.

Climate prediction models show that over the next six decades Calgary's temperatures will warm another 1.4 to 3.7 degrees Celsius.

For example, within the next five decades, the climate of Medicine Hat, Alberta, will resemble that of Antonia, Texas.

Extreme heat events are responsible for more deaths annually than hurricanes, lightning, tornadoes, floods, and earthquakes combined.

Several participants wanted a more statistical comparison between southeastern Alberta's future climate and the current climate in Texas.



# Message Evaluation

Participants were then shown seven messages explaining why Calgary should take steps to deal with climate change. They were asked to select which one they felt made the most compelling case for what the City of Calgary is doing and (if they had one) to select a second choice

- ❖ Across the board, participants were most likely to select Message 4 (“It’s Time To Lead”) as their top choice. Allies, Neutrals and Opponents tended to gravitate towards this message because it was seen as speaking to Calgary’s “can-do” attitude. Many Allies highlighted the city’s historic economic strength based on energy, and liked the idea of being at the leading edge of a low-carbon economy.
- ❖ Many participants also liked the financial arguments for adaptation and mitigation found in Message 7 (“Climate Resilience Just Makes Financial Sense”). This message was most often selected as the second choice message across all groups. There was a perception among many Passive Allies, in particular, that because Calgary is seen as a fiscally conservative, business-oriented city, the economic arguments for addressing climate change should be highlighted.
- ❖ The more emotionally resonant arguments regarding how climate change will impact future generations (Message 6) tended to resonate more with Opponents. Message 2, regarding the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, also resonated with some Opponents. However, Allies tended to dismiss these messages as being too sentimental.
- ❖ Message 5 (“Calgary: A home worth protecting”) was identified as a second choice option by several Neutrals and Opponents. However, it should be noted that many of these participants struggled to select any message to like, as they were skeptical of the underlying motivation for these messages.
- ❖ Message 3 (“Our City. Our Future”) was also a message that enjoyed some degree of popularity across all groups, as it was described similarly to Message 4 as evidence of Calgary proactively planning for the future.

(Message 4): Calgary has a pioneering spirit and that is always nice. But because of our energy wealth, we have disproportionate wealth in the country and worldwide. If we aren’t going to lead, who will? – **Passive Ally**

(Message 2): I’m always driven by any community that is marginalized. That will get me to listen to almost anything you have to say. – **Active Opponent**



# Message Evaluation – Messages Tested

The following are the seven messages that were evaluated by focus group participants:

<p><b>1. Ahead of the storm: taking action today to protect our community tomorrow.</b> Climate change is already being felt by Calgarians. Our city’s worst natural disasters have occurred since 2012—the 2013 flood, the 2014 ‘Snowtemper’, recent hailstorms. In fact, Calgary is the hail capital of the world. As temperatures rise, our weather will become increasingly severe and volatile. We must take steps now to reduce our vulnerability, build our resilience, and address the underlying causes of climate change. Waiting to act will only make it more difficult and more costly. We must act today to protect tomorrow.</p>	
<p><b>2. Imagine: no one left behind.</b> Not all Calgarians will experience climate change the same. Our most vulnerable—children, elderly, sick and disabled—will suffer the health impacts of heat and disaster more than most. Our most disadvantaged will be least able to respond to rising costs of food, housing and disasters. Our biggest opportunity may be to care not only for our climate, but to care for each other. We must ensure that our climate actions don’t leave anyone behind.</p>	
<p><b>3. Our City. Our Future.</b> We cannot wait for others to solve our problems. Smart cities face challenges head on and turn them into opportunities—and a changing climate is no exception. Cities around the world are planning ahead for severe weather and climate changes. They are taking sensible, practical actions to transition to new energy and steps to better withstand the shocks and stresses of disasters like the ones Calgary has already experienced. They are creating the ability to be even stronger. It’s our city and our future.</p>	
<p><b>4. It’s time to lead.</b> Calgary has always been a yes-we-can kind of place. We’ve led our country’s growth for decades. Today, the next big thing is efficiency and clean energy: less energy waste and locally made energy from the wind and sun. We know there will be a long transition period to a low carbon economy, and with that comes opportunities. The world needs innovation, efficiency, and sustainable energy. We can create jobs, build better communities, and make profitable investments. We are an energy city and we can lead.</p>	
<p><b>5. Calgary: a home worth protecting.</b> Calgarians know that our city is a great place to make a home. Our quality of life is among the best in the world. Unspoiled wilderness, wildlife and nature are right in our backyard. Our air and water are clean. But many of the things that we love and depend on are vulnerable to rising temperatures and increasingly extreme weather. A climate resilient future is within our grasp, if we act now to reduce carbon pollution, prepare for change and build capacity.</p>	
<p><b>6. For our children.</b> We all want the best for our children. Calgarians want the kind of community where they can raise their families and have a good quality of life for generations to come. We want clean air and water. We want good opportunities. We want smart investments in transportation, buildings, nature, and sustainable energy to build a stronger community for the long-term. If we take action now, we can be proud of what we have created for the generations to come.</p>	
<p><b>7. Climate resilience just makes financial sense.</b> The costs of adjusting to climate change in the future will only continue to increase if we don’t take action now. We already know that natural disasters and extreme weather have cost Albertans more than \$10 billion dollars in the past five years. As carbon becomes increasingly expensive, low-cost, reliable wind and solar power for our homes, businesses and communities will make us energy independent and our lives more affordable. Preparing for change and preventing escalating damage to our climate just make sense—for our wealth, our wellbeing, and our world.</p>	



# Message Evaluation - Results

Message	Number	Active Allies	Passive Allies	Neutrals/Passive Opponents	Active Opponents	Total
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPANTS/CATEGORY*</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>46</b>
1. Ahead of the storm...	First Place	2	2	-	1	5
	Second Place	-	4	2	2	8
2. Imagine: No one left behind	First Place	-	-	1	1	2
	Second Place	1	-	-	2	3
3. Our City. Our Future	First Place	1	3	1	2	7
	Second Place	3	1	1	1	6
4. It's time to lead	First Place	4	6	3	1	14
	Second Place	-	2	1	1	5
5. Calgary: A home worth protecting	First Place	-	2	-	1	3
	Second Place	-	-	5	1	6
6. For our children	First Place	-	-	7	1	8
	Second Place	1	-	-	-	1
7. Climate resilience just makes financial sense	First Place	-	4	2	-	6
	Second Place	3	8	3	-	14

\*NB: In some groups, not all participants completed the exercise because they were unable to pick a top message



## Perceptions of the City's Role in Addressing Climate Change Impacts





# Perceptions of the City's Role

- ❖ Although some wondered how much difference these efforts will make in the end, most recognized the City of Calgary should address the effects of climate change. Allies, in particular, felt strongly that the City lags behind other municipalities in dealing with this issue. Some Allies indicated they require more education about how they can do their part, and several expressed frustration that this information is not readily available to them.
- ❖ Neutrals and Opponents tended to be less receptive of the need to build a municipal climate strategy, as many of them felt that whatever the City does, it will not have a great impact globally because the emissions produced in other countries (particularly India and China) dwarf emissions produced by Calgarians. They were more likely to feel that the City already does many things already to address climate change, such as installing downtown bike lanes and improving public transit.
- ❖ When thinking about government responses to climate change, Neutrals and Opponents were more likely to raise the issue of federal and provincial carbon taxes, and to express skepticism about governmental motives for dealing with this issue. However, Neutrals and Opponents tended to express less cynicism about the City of Calgary and seemed to be somewhat more accepting of the idea that the City would develop a plan to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

The City tends to effect change on a more personal and individual level.

- **Passive Ally**

I like what the city is doing, absolutely. But I'm frustrated with the City because I feel they are 35 years behind other cities.

- **Active Ally**

As a city I think we are making changes. In the past 20 years, we've been more forward thinking rather than reacting. We are thinking about the future.

- **Neutral/Passive Opponent**



- ❖ Participants were asked to generate a list of individuals and organizations that they feel have credibility when it comes to speaking about the issue of climate change. The actors that immediately came to mind in most groups included:
  - ❖ **“Independent” scientists** (scientists whose research is not funded by either the energy industry or government): There were strongly held views in all groups about the claims of experts regarding climate change. Opponents were more likely to question those whose research is funded by government (which they perceive as having a fiscal interest in the issue of climate change), whereas Allies were skeptical of scientists who dismiss the impact of climate change and whose research is funded directly by energy companies, or by industry organizations.
  - ❖ **Representatives of local universities:** Although universities in general were seen as being credible, there was some debate about which organizations fund research at universities
  - ❖ **Churches/faith groups**
  - ❖ **The City of Calgary**
- ❖ Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they would trust certain local organizations if they were involved in a city climate plan. Participants indicated they may be more open to messages about climate change if they come from other community-based organizations that are not the “usual suspects” in this debate (e.g. environmental groups or energy industry representatives). These other organizations (which included disaster management organizations like the Red Cross, public health officials and other community NGOs) were perceived to have credibility because they are not regarded as having a specific agenda related to climate change.
  - ❖ However, many Passive Allies and Neutrals said they expect energy and environmental representatives to be involved in the City’s climate strategy, but to ensure that the approach taken is not skewed too far towards one side’s interests.
- ❖ Planners and developers were also identified as being integral to any discussion about a local climate strategy as their work has a significant impact on emissions from transportation and household energy usage.



## Perceived Impact on Future Generations





# Perceived Impact on Future Generations

- ❖ When thinking about future generations and the impact of climate change on them, many *Allies and Neutrals* tended to express **sadness** and **regret**. In the letters these participants wrote to their great-grandchildren, several **apologized** to members of these future generations for not doing more to address climate change, with some expecting that their descendants will experience a much worse quality of life, and others **cautiously optimistic** that improvements will take place because steps are being taken today to change behaviours.
  - ❖ In terms of values and emotions, Allies tended to express **fear** that Calgary and the world will be much worse in the future because of climate change, as well as **determination** to change their own behaviours and do more to deal with this problem. They also expressed some **skepticism** towards government efforts to deal with climate change, but this sentiment was muted compared to that of Opponents.
- ❖ *Opponents*, on the other hand, tended to express a strong belief that technology will somehow solve the problem, with little to no need for their own personal involvement or action. This **“techno-optimism”** was also mixed with the expectation among some Opponents that any changes in climate will, in fact, be beneficial to Calgary, even if other areas of the world are worse off or if certain species of animals (such as polar bears) become extinct.
  - ❖ Opponents tended to hold a mixture of **optimism** that technology will solve problems; **fatalism** regarding the long-term effects of climate change and **skepticism** towards government efforts to address the problem.

What it makes me want to do is prepare people, and the kids, for a world that will not be about how many facts you know, but how you can adapt.

- **Passive Ally**

I'm like everyone else - I have faith in the fact that technology will resolve any problems Earth has to face.

- **Active Opponent**



# Letters To Their Great-Grandchildren

## Allies

*I hope as you look back to the future I live in now, you will see the tremendous efforts made by my generation to leave you a legacy where you can prosper and live a healthy and happy life.*

*So every effort was made by me so you, my great-grandchildren, would have clean water, healthy clean food, a safe place to live. A natural environment to enjoy recreationally and minimal pollution so you have clean fresh air to breathe.*

*It all starts with intention then implementation.*

*Just wondering how things are going in 2116? I am hoping we didn't screw up so badly that you have some quality of life beyond the struggle. I imagine it must be more primitive in some ways – although perhaps some wonderful experiences come with your simpler lifestyle.*

*Perhaps as humans we found solutions to water and climate change ... I hope in some way we prepared you for such a different world. I wonder if you care more for your fellow man than we do?*

*I'm feeling hopeful because there are many people around me that realize the changes we need to make to ensure a healthy planet for you.*

*First off, my apologies. We totally ruined the environment for you. I could site here and blame the boomer generation (and they certainly bear a lot of responsibility) but the fact is that a lot of my generation did a lot of harm too. Deep down, we knew what needed doing, but it was so much easier to just ... not do that. Selfish, I know. But we figured we'd all be dead long before it was an issue. That part of our plan worked pretty well, actually. Sorry about that.*

*I hope you are living in a world where your needs are met and your wants are pursuable. I hope you are safe and loved and that food, water, air quality are human rights as much as 2016 human rights are valued and hopefully more respected.*

*You descend from my grandfather, a farmer and rancher that was doing environmental stuff when it was academic science fiction (windbreaks, water management). I hope in your time you are pushing the same boundaries, hard.*

*Please be kind to our memories, we did the best we knew how to do at the time.*

*I'm hoping in the Calgary of the future that you'll still have the opportunities I've had to get outdoors and experience nature – we're lucky to have relatively clean air and water especially when it comes to the mountains and the national parks. Hopefully the changes to the climate we've contributed to haven't caused irreparable damage.*



# Letters To Their Great-Grandchildren

## Neutrals/Opponents

*We are sorry. Sorry for the fact that your world is falling apart even more than ours is now. We are sorry for the fact that we know what is happening and we have done nothing about it. We are sorry that we put corporate profit margins ahead of our environment and the world we leave to our next generations.*

*Hi cuties. I am wondering what your environment is like. Do you have clean water? The most important resource is life. Is it expensive? It seems we use it like it is and will always be a tap that will never run dry. I apologize for any impact our generation had on making your life on this earth worse than it should be.*

*I hope we left you with enough developed land to be able to grow your own garden. Play in the dirt. Be able to hike pristine mountain ranges and enjoy the beautiful land around us. I hope you can still eat fish that comes out of the river.*

*You might not know much about how I lived my life and I am only guessing what yours will be like. But I hope that you will be able to enjoy parks and backyards. We ate beef at barbecues. Do you still? Is Calgary still really sunny?*

*When you read this, polar bears have been extinct for 50 years. Too bad. They were so cute! But you can visit the virtual reality exhibit at the zoo.*

*I'm so glad that technology has found a way to clean your air. For a while people thought we were all going to die from smog and higher temperatures. Technology saved us again and Canada got more prosperous because we invented it and sold it abroad.*

*I hope you're going to school in your driverless electric car. The weather should be nice and warm. Your parents must have a hard time keeping up with all of the energy taxes or carbon taxes.*

*With any luck, you're not subjected to the sort of government we have today, making questionable decisions based on pseudo-science. The Rocky Mountains will not have eroded by the time you read this and I hope that you are taking every opportunity to hike and ski whenever the weather is favourable.*

*You might find that a much broader selection of crops are grown in the Calgary area than during my time. If the climate is warmer than during my lifetime, summer will be longer. If all has gone well, water will not be in short supply.*



## Conclusions and Recommendations





# Conclusions from the Research

- ❖ Calgarians want to see their city as a leader and pioneer rather than a follower, and this is reflected in their preference for messaging that advocates for Calgary playing a leading role in the fight against climate change. Messaging that incorporates economic reasons for addressing climate change are also well received. While the importance of the energy economy to Calgary is regarded as being a potential factor that may have delayed the City's efforts towards developing a climate change strategy, many Calgarians in these focus groups were most likely to respond to messaging that reflected Calgary's economic leadership.
- ❖ Allies, in particular, are impatient for the City to show leadership in the area of climate change, and want to know what they can do to help. They had very little awareness of collective efforts to address climate change, but seemed fairly receptive when specific ideas were presented to them.
- ❖ There is a significant amount of cynicism about government-led efforts to address climate change, with much of this directed towards the federal and provincial government. Even among Passive Allies and Neutrals, there was a strong feeling that governments are not being clear about why they need to raise revenues to deal with this issue. However, there was less cynicism expressed about the City of Calgary, which is seen as having a significant amount of credibility on this issue, particularly among Allies and Neutrals.
- ❖ "Unexpected" stakeholders may have more credibility when it comes to speaking about the impacts of climate change and the City's plan. There is an expectation that both the energy sector and environmental organizations will be an integral part of the discussion, but many do not want to see a municipal climate plan skewed too heavily to one side's interests.
  - ❖ Organizations that can speak to specific impacts of climate change may have more credibility, particularly among Opponents. The City should seek to leverage these partners as much as possible to speak to these issues so that the local impacts of climate change can be described through multiple lenses.



# Recommendations

- ❖ The most appealing messages explaining why the City should act on climate change are consistent with how Calgarians view (or want to view) their city:
  - ❖ It would position Calgary as a **leader and pioneer** rather than a follower, thus giving the City more opportunity to succeed in a world impacted significantly by climate change; and
  - ❖ There are strong **economic arguments** to be made for adapting to and mitigating against climate change.
- ❖ Regardless of each citizen's perspective on climate change, there are strong emotions attached to the issue. Perhaps for this reason, reactions to the emotional messaging are more complex and may require different approaches for each segment:
  - ❖ For **Allies**, there is already substantial fear and concern about this issue. This concern and desire to do something leads to frustration about not having enough information regarding additional actions they can take to address climate change.
  - ❖ **Neutrals** appear more open to emotional messaging, perhaps because it provides the motivational factor in the absence of true belief in and understanding of the issue.
  - ❖ To a certain extent, **Opponents** shut down at the mention of climate change by downplaying the whether the effects of climate change are caused by humans, whether anything can be done when it is a global issue, and by rejecting information presented to them. This reflexive resistance requires the City to communicate messages outside the "climate change" frame – for example, by making changes for broader environmental reasons, to save money, or because it is a technological innovation.
- ❖ The City of Calgary has buy-in from citizens to act on this issue because it is perceived to be a credible actor. Among Allies, it is even seen as being a bit behind the curve on this issue. Although the City enjoys credibility compared to other levels of government and other energy/environmental interests on this issue, the risk is that cynicism towards federal and provincial initiatives like carbon taxes will affect views of City initiatives. For this reason, Calgary's climate plan should be as transparent as possible about any fiscal impacts on residents, and make a strong economic case for mitigation and adaptation efforts.