REMARKS TO VANCOUVER CITY COUNCIL
CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN
November 3, 2020

Members of the City Council my name is Dan Moskovitz, I am the Senior Rabbi of Temple Sholom a 900-household congregation here in Vancouver. I speak today on behalf of my congregation and more than two dozen other Vancouver faith leaders and clergy in support of the Climate Emergency Action Plan that is currently before you.

I want to express gratitude for the land on which we live, pray and serve our community which is the traditional, ancestral (and unceded) territory of the Coast Salish People.

I think much of what I hope to impress upon you today is captured in that statement of acknowledgement. We know that this land is not ours its merely on loan to us, we are its care takers and its guardians.

A parable is told in Jewish tradition and I have learned similar versions exist amongst other faith traditions and the first nations. As the story goes two farmers are arguing over the ownership of a piece of land. One says it belongs to them because they water it, plant it and cultivate it. The other says it belongs to them because they bought it, built a house upon it and pay taxes for it. They go to an elder, in the Jewish version it's a Rabbi. They make their case, each arguing their side with passion. The rabbi holds up her hands asks them to stop bickering, then kneels down, puts her ear to the ground and listens to the earth. Moments later the Rabbi looks up and proclaims, "the land says you belong to it".

We don't own any of this, if anything the earth owns us; and like our opening acknowledgement we are indebted and morally bound to not abuse this sacred gift, but to guard and protect it, because it's not really ours.

The Climate Emergency Action Plan is a courageous and crucial step in honouring this sacred responsibility. I am so incredibly proud and inspired by our City staff and planners that have worked with myself, faith colleagues and hundreds of stakeholders and partners in developing this plan. I am proud of you, our city council for embarking on this initiative, recognizing the very real climate crisis we are in and the urgency of now that demands our city take the bold and necessary steps, to play a leadership role amongst major cities around the world to protect the only home we have.

I know the plan is complex and the financial and economic implications are dramatic; as I shared on CKNW this morning when I was asked to comment on our faith leader's support for this plan and the letter that we sent to each of you in advance of this meeting; we cannot afford not to make this investment in the health of our planet and our community.

We see the real impacts of our rapidly changing climate, we know through the lens of COVID that we must be proactive and prepare for the crisis that is already here, and MAYBE, MAYBE if we are bold and decisive, we can prevent the worst of possible outcomes.

I ask you today to honour our sacred responsibility to be caretakers of this gift which is not ours.

I ask you today to show the courage and leadership that I know you have within you to vote for a future that our children and grandchild will inhabit.

I ask you today to continue the work and example this city has set since the early 1990s to be shining example of what is possible when we come together as a community to confront climate change.

You will not be acting or standing alone. My colleagues in faith and our tens of thousands of congregants are standing with you, praying for you, urging you to do what is right and good and necessary. If you adopt this plan, we will have your back, you will have our support.

This unique moment calls upon each of us to learn the lessons of the concurrent crises of a Global Pandemic and a Climate Crisis. To recognize that we are all connected to one another and to the earth. That we have a shared responsibility, a moral obligation, to do all we can to care for one another and the home we share together.

The actions we must take now to prevent catastrophe worldwide and here in Vancouver may be expensive or inconvenient, but we must take them. Our budgets will not be able to cover the inevitable cost of not taking these actions, and our hearts, minds and souls will not be able to bear the weight of inaction.

I urge you, elected leaders of our beloved and beautiful city in the name of all of our faith traditions and out of our collective responsibility to be guardians of the earth to vote to approve the Climate Emergency Action Plan and to continue Vancouver's commitment to and leadership in addressing the climate crisis and restoring balance to our global ecosystem and our communities.

May God bless you and keep you
May God's face shine upon you
May God grant you, our city, our country and our planet – shalom, peace and wholeness in an increasingly fractured world.

With your vote you can make that blessing true, you can begin to repair what we have broken and restore the earth to its natural balance and glory.