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Professional Accountability



ASSOCIATION OF
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Joint Statement on Climate Change: Background

Climate change brings with it significant potential risks for the clients of professionals, as well as to the broader public. Professionals have a core responsibility to advise government and industry in mitigating and adapting to climate change impacts and thus play a pivotal role in helping individuals and society at large respond to those impacts.

Despite this work by professionals assisting clients and communities to prepare for current and projected changes in BC's climate, the professional associations that support them have, to date, provided limited guidance to their members on how to incorporate climate change into decision making. This is in part due to climate change mitigation and adaptation being relatively new fields of professional consideration.

Against this background, a number of BC's professional associations – forest professionals (Association of BC Forest Professionals), biologists (College of Applied Biology and Association of Professional Biology), and planners (Planning Institute of BC) – came together at the Professional Leadership in a Changing Climate forum, hosted by West Coast Environmental Law (WCEL) and the Climate Action Secretariat in February 2013 in Vancouver. Subsequently representatives of these professional associations participated in an active dialogue on the implications of climate change for BC's professionals and professional associations.

As a result of this ongoing dialogue, the professional associations agreed upon a joint statement identifying the common needs, opportunities, and responsibilities of their communities of practice related to climate change. The statement has been approved by the Councils of four participating professional associations and reflects their collective intention to advance the response of BC's professionals to the increasing threat that climate change poses to BC's communities, economy and natural resources.

To our knowledge, this is the first example of this type of collaboration on climate change by professional associations. It is our collective hope that the joint statement will serve to bolster other professionals and professional associations elsewhere to also take action appropriate for their locales.