



The Corporation of the District of Central Saanich

REGULAR COUNCIL REPORT

For the Regular Council meeting on Monday, April 27, 2026

Re: Climate Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. *Endorse the Climate Risk Framework as a corporate framework to inform climate change adaptation, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery across the organization, as attached as Appendix A; and*
2. *Adopt the Climate Risk Accountability Policy, directing staff to apply the identified priority climate risks in planning and reporting through the District's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, as attached as Appendix B.*

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present Council with a Climate Risk Framework and a companion Climate Risk Accountability Policy that together establish how climate-related risks will be consistently applied, monitored, and reported across District planning, decision-making, and service delivery.

The report also provides Council with an overview of upcoming provincial regulatory expectations under the Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA)¹, which informs the timing and governance approach being recommended.

BACKGROUND:

The District has demonstrated leadership through its Climate Action / Climate Leadership Plan, which has focused primarily on greenhouse gas emissions reduction. While mitigation remains essential, climate science and lived experience clearly demonstrate that climate impacts are already occurring and will continue, even with aggressive emissions reduction.

As a result, local governments are increasingly expected to address climate change as a public safety, infrastructure, service continuity, and governance issue, not solely an environmental one. This evolution is reflected internationally through best practices identified in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and provincially through recent legislative reform under EDMA.

In response, staff undertook a Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction study, supported by technical analysis, climate projections, community engagement and cross-departmental input. That work culminated in the Climate Risk Framework presented in Appendix A.

¹EDMA: <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/23037>

DISCUSSION:**Climate Risk Framework (Appendix A)**

The Climate Risk Framework establishes a corporate, risk-based approach for identifying, prioritizing, and responding to climate-related hazards across District operations. It considers how climate risks affect people, infrastructure, services, and ecosystems, and provides a shared foundation for consistent decision-making across departments.

The Framework:

- Identifies the District's highest priority climate risks based on likelihood, consequence, and projected climate change impacts;
- Recognizes social vulnerability as a key factor that can increase exposure and sensitivity to climate impacts; and
- Aligns with international best practice, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as the updated EDMA legislation, with new regulatory obligations being released in Spring 2026, for adoption in 2027.

Importantly, the Framework is not an implementation plan. It is intended to serve as a common analytical policy that would be integrated into existing operating, planning, budgeting, and reporting processes across the organization.

Climate Change and Mental Health Resilience Strategy (Appendix B)

Climate change is not only an environmental and infrastructure issue. It is also a growing public health concern that affects mental health and community well-being. Mental health is closely tied to people's sense of safety, belonging, and connection to place, all of which are increasingly impacted by climate-related events.

In British Columbia, including Central Saanich, residents are already experiencing impacts such as anxiety during wildfire smoke events, stress during extreme weather, and grief related to changes in local environments. While awareness is increasing, there is still limited local data on the full extent of these mental health impacts.

Effective response requires attention to both risks and protective factors, such as social connection, access to supports and services, and mental health literacy. A strengths-based, community-informed approach is important, recognizing broader social and historical factors while building on existing community knowledge and resilience, especially in identified vulnerable populations.

Within the Climate Risk Framework, mental health is identified alongside physical and community health as a key area of climate-related impact. Appendix B provides further detail on this component.

First Nations

Central Saanich is located within the traditional territories of the WSÁNEĆ peoples, including Tsawout and Tsartlip First Nations. Climate change presents disproportionate risks to First Nations communities due to historical and ongoing land-use decisions, infrastructure gaps, and increased exposure to climate hazards such as flooding, sea level rise, and extreme heat.

The Climate Risk Framework recognizes the importance of collaboration, shared learning, and respect for Indigenous Knowledge Systems in advancing effective and equitable climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. It also acknowledges First Nations-led risk assessments, including Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Assessments completed by Tsawout and Tsartlip First Nations, as complementary, place-based sources of information that support shared understanding and coordinated planning, without altering municipal jurisdiction or authority.

This approach aligns with the intent of EDMA, which emphasizes risk-based planning, cross-jurisdictional coordination, and collaboration with Indigenous governing bodies.

Climate Risk Accountability Policy (Appendix C)

The proposed Climate Risk Accountability Policy translates the Framework into clear Council direction and organizational accountability.

Rather than prescribing actions or projects, the Policy:

- establishes Council's expectation that staff planning and reporting be grounded in the identified priority climate risks;
- confirms that climate risk considerations must be addressed through existing plans, reports, and recommendations brought to Council; and
- embeds accountability through the District's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework, including annual reporting to Council.

This approach ensures climate risk is addressed consistently, transparently, and defensibly, without creating parallel planning processes or additional roadmaps.

IMPLICATIONS:

Governance and Accountability

The proposed Policy strengthens Council oversight by clearly articulating how climate risk outcomes are to be demonstrated through planning and reporting, without constraining future Council discretion.

Legislative

Emergency and Disaster Management Act (EDMA)²

EDMA modernizes British Columbia's emergency management system by shifting toward risk-based disaster risk reduction across all four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

While EDMA is now in force, provincial guidance indicates that new local authority regulations are anticipated in fall 2026, with key requirements expected to take effect in January 2027. Based on information released to date, local governments will be expected to demonstrate:

- risk-based emergency management;
- emergency and business continuity planning aligned with identified risks;
- cross-departmental coordination and readiness; and
- continuous improvement and accountability.

The proposed Framework and Policy position the District to meet these expectations in a coordinated and proactive manner, rather than through reactive or fragmented compliance efforts. Grant funding received

² EDMA: <https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/23037>

by the District to support this work was provided through UBCM and was intended to strengthen local government readiness for these upcoming regulations.

Financial

There are no immediate financial implications associated with adoption of the Framework or Policy. The approach supports fiscally responsible, evidence-based decision-making by ensuring that infrastructure, service, and capital planning are informed by priority climate risks and long-term risk reduction considerations. Transparency regarding implications regarding climate risk mitigation for priority risks will be included as a standing item in staff reporting.

Operations

The Policy does not introduce new operational requirements or standalone workplans, instead clarifies expectations for planning, budgeting, and reporting processes.

Risk

Failure to adopt a coordinated climate risk governance approach increases the risk of inconsistent planning, fragmented decision-making, and reduced readiness for upcoming EDMA regulatory requirements.

CONCLUSION:

The Climate Risk Framework and Climate Risk Accountability Policy together provide Council with a clear, defensible governance structure for managing climate-related risks across the organization. This approach complements existing climate mitigation efforts, aligns with emerging provincial expectations, and ensures that climate risk considerations are embedded into the District’s established planning and reporting systems.

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix A: Climate Framework – Climate Change Adaptation, Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

Appendix B: Climate Change and Mental Health Risk and Resilience

Appendix C: Climate Risk Accountability Policy