

A Proposal for a Seniors' Climate Action Group.

May 20, 2020

Because now we are older, wiser, angrier. Because we know that action builds hope.

Introduction

Climate catastrophe, ecological disaster, new and deadly pandemics and a distorted economic system hell bent on ravaging the planet. That is now our world. But worse, it is what threatens the future of our children and our grandchildren.

An economic system based on rampant growth and greed has pushed us to the brink of survival.

"The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than many scientists expected. It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity" **Alliance of World Scientists**

A sense of urgency and a politics of crisis

Our time is running out. The evidence is mounting and the science is clear. We are already in its grip. We have to act now and we need to do more.

While we need the long term to build a movement for social and economic transformation, we need to buy that time now. Because right now there is no long term.

While we can't transform the economy in the short-term we have to act in the short term to save humanity. And that means decisive action to limit the climate catastrophe.

The Lessons of Covid 19

Covid 19 has exposed the fault lines of an economy built on systemic racism, inequality and poverty. It has hit the hardest those with the least. Those already victims of discrimination and prejudice are now threatened by pandemic illness and death.

Covid 19 has exposed the illogic and the weakness of the economic system. Underfunded health care systems, stressed public services, tattered social safety nets, workers hanging on by a thread and a profit-bloated corporate sector belly up to the trough at the first sign of trouble.

Covid 19 has also shown what is of real value, what is essential, what is actually important in communities. And it is those things which decades of austerity have undervalued and undermined.

Even as those lessons are being learned corporations are using the cover of Covid to set the stage for even more austerity and to attack environmental rules and regulations.

It is worrying that post-Covid austerity might mean a retreat on already inadequate government climate commitments.

But It is also hopeful that what we have learned in this pandemic will be lasting.

That communities will choose to act in solidarity and through mutual support. That we can achieve remarkable things when we choose to act. That governments can intervene dramatically to make changes on our behalf. That what we were told was impossible just a few months ago is actually possible.

And It is hopeful that when we come out of this we will not go back to normal, not even a 'new normal, but instead we will realize that extraordinary times demand extraordinary solutions. We will realize that there is no vaccine for a climate catastrophe. And we will realize that we don't need more diagnostic tests to know what needs to be done to limit a climate crisis.

Why a seniors' climate action group?

Our children and grandchildren are responding. Young people are demanding action now. They are leading global student strikes. Youth groups are confronting those who have power in our society. They are challenging those who maintain the status quo and continue the drive toward ever-increasing global warming.

They need our support. A seniors' climate action group can be another voice in the fight for climate action. We have years of experience and can make a contribution to the fight. We can campaign on our own accord and we can work with other groups. We can initiate and we can amplify.

We're in this for the sake of the future. We won't stand back leaving our children and grandchildren to bear the brunt of a society headed straight toward the cliff of self-destruction.

- **We see the need to support**

Youth are leading on the climate action front. A number of these groups see themselves as "youth" groups. A seniors' group can support them and work with them in broader networks or coalitions. A progressive seniors' action group can help bridge a demographic divide.

- **We see the need to unite**

Climate action threatens jobs and incomes. It can also create jobs and incomes. But that abstract truth doesn't put food on the table. It is the working class and those who are marginalized in society who will bear the brunt of economic measures to change consumption patterns unless there is deliberate and decisive action to support them.

- **We see the need to educate**

There are still too many who, understandably, see their jobs threatened by action to prevent climate disaster. There are still too many who attempt to keep the growing climate catastrophe at a distance from their lives. There are still too many paid climate deniers whose efforts are to lie and confuse. And there are still too few who recognize the incompatibility between global survival and our existing economic system.

- **We see the need for social justice and social rights**

Climate action is equally a call for racial, social and economic justice. That means supporting the national rights of first nations. It means confronting white privilege and challenging the systemic discrimination of women and racialized communities. It means acknowledging our role as one of the globe's major contributors to GHG emissions and expressing our solidarity with those in the world most affected by the climate crisis by fighting for change at home.

- **We see the need to organize**

There is a gap between the recognition that things need to change and the organization of civil society to bring about that change. It is in that space where we propose to organize.

- **We see the need to protest**

The fight for social change and justice has often taken us to the streets. Climate action will probably mean more marches, demonstrations and protests as we help build a larger, more diverse and more united movement.

- **We see the need to propose**

There is still too little consensus on what crisis measures are needed to avoid catastrophe. But we know there can be no more tinkering at the margins. No more stop gap measures, no more luke-warm reforms. We will work to be part of building a radical consensus.

A perspective in the making

We know what has to be done to stop a climate catastrophe. We have to rapidly decarbonize the economy and reduce wasteful consumption. We need drastic and comprehensive government action. We need forceful regulations on industry and a full package of supports for people.

We know that the climate emergency is part of a broader global ecological crisis

We need to reduce growth and we need to restrict irresponsible consumption. We have to change what we produce and how we produce. We have to stop producing useless and wasteful things.

We need more attention to the production of basics such as food, clothing, shelter and health supports. We need to localize and shorten supply chains. We need to provide education, health care as well as social, cultural and recreational supports. We have to go against the logic of the system while living in it. And we need a vision of a world of solidarity.

Our economic system is built for growth. We have to rebuild it for sustainability.
Our economic system is built for accumulation. We have to rebuild it for sharing.
Our economic system is built for extraction. We have to rebuild it for stewardship.
Our economic system is built for exploitation. We have to rebuild it for fairness.
Our economic system is built for inequality. We have to rebuild it for equality.

While we can't transform our economic system over the next ten years, we can work to decarbonize the system and change the amount and patterns of consumption. We can act to buy some time.

An invitation to help create a seniors' climate action group:

We are inviting you to help define the purpose, platform, project and structure of a seniors group focused on climate action.

We propose that a seniors' climate action group be defined by a recognition of the link between climate action and the fight for social and economic justice and that traces the roots of the climate crisis to the current economic system.

Participants in a seniors' climate action group share a growing sense of climate urgency; a concern for the future that awaits our kids and grandkids, a personal desire to be part of the effort to change the current situation, a commitment to use our years of experience as activists in that effort, a recognition that we need to develop a politics of crisis, are inspired by the actions of others and believe that we build hope by working together.

Questions

Do you think a seniors based, climate action group is an idea worth developing? Could a 'seniors grouping' provide an effective way to participate in climate action and be part of a broader environmental network? Is it something you'd be interested in?