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MEDIA RELEASE

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When reducing GHG emissions isn't enough—prepare for the unavoidable

The need to adapt and prepare our communities and businesses for climate change will take centre stage at this year's annual forum hosted by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) in Vancouver June 14-15.

The "Resilient Communities: Preparing for the Climate Challenge" forum will bring together scientists, planners and decision-makers to learn about the latest climate change projections for British Columbia and to exchange information about best adaptation practices and available resources. Speakers from BC, Canada, the UK and Australia will provide insights on adapting to climate change at the community level and for food producers.

Forum chair Ben Kangasniemi says while reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must remain a top priority for world governments to slow the rate of climate change, we must prepare for the unavoidable changes ahead.

"Global warming is not just about rising temperatures," he says. "It is also about declining mountain snowpacks that lead to reduced river flows in the summer affecting power generation, fisheries and community water supplies. It is about increased water vapour in the atmosphere which is expected to lead to more intense precipitation events, and it is about rising sea levels. Although there is uncertainty about how these changes will unfold we now know enough to manage the risks and ensure that our communities are as resilient as possible."

Part of the forum includes a free public session that explores how climate change may affect food security, being held from 7 p.m. on Tuesday, June 14 at the Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, 149 West Hastings Street. Speakers include: Dr. Francis Zwiers, president and CEO of the University of Victoria's Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium; and the past Chair of British Columbia's Agriculture Land Commission, Erik Karlsen.

One of the forum presenters, Dr. Stewart Cohen from Environment Canada, will outline BC adaptation examples:

- Forest pests thriving in warmer conditions and a longer wildfire season requires new management strategies
- Local governments need to consider climate change in land use plans—e.g., flood plains
- Provincial guidelines for coastal zone development and sea dike standards are now under review in response to sea-level rise projections
- Future extreme rainfall means city engineers need to re-evaluate culvert sizes to handle runoff
- The agriculture sector recognizes a warmer climate can be good for certain crops, but it must also prepare for more intense summer droughts and extreme precipitation events.

Kangasniemi says that the sustainable, livable and low-carbon communities that we seek to establish also need to be resilient to climate change, and, in fact, these attributes are complementary.

Media are welcome to attend the forum, and should contact the PICS communications office in advance. Details on the full program are available at www.pics.uvic.ca. PICS is a collaboration of BC's four-research intensive universities, and is hosted and led by the University of Victoria.

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