



Legislation Text

File #: RES 22-98, **Version:** 1

Declaring a climate emergency in St. Paul, Minnesota and joint climate action with cities and counties across the state

WHEREAS Saint Paul has just this past year experienced numerous climate change related impacts including a record June heat wave, dangerous air quality from drought-fueled forest fires where even healthy people were encouraged to remain inside, and water restrictions from the same drought, making it clear that the climate crisis is not only a future issue - it is affecting us here and now; and

WHEREAS extreme weather will create new challenges for Saint Paul's infrastructure and finances and will pose a threat to the economic vitality of our residents and businesses; and

WHEREAS Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), adopted by the City Council on December 18, 2019 (RES PH 19-416), commits to carbon neutrality by 2050 and reducing emissions 50% by 2030 from business-as-usual; and

WHEREAS Saint Paul City Council has a legacy of asserting climate urgency, including calling for 100% renewable electricity by 2030, and 25% of electricity created within city limits (RES 18-1361); committing to renewable, equitable, and locally-produced energy targets expressed in the Climate Action and Resilience Plan, to submitting official comment in the Public Utilities Commission review process of Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Integrated Resource Plan including opposing proposed new fossil fuel energy infrastructure (RES 19-1870); and

WHEREAS the greatest burden from an inadequate response to the climate crisis will be felt by historically and continuing marginalized or underserved communities as well as the youngest generation, including the children and grandchildren of Saint Paul; and

WHEREAS CARP commits to an energy burden below 4% for all Saint Paul households, and currently for low-income households the median energy burden is 5.11% and is 8.2% for the highest quartile according to the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy's 2016 report; and

WHEREAS in Minnesota, the ten warmest and wettest years ever recorded have all occurred since 1998, warming surface waters are leading to a significant loss of fish habitat for many prominent species as well as increasing the risk of harmful algae blooms, forests are changing as native northern species are strained by warming temperatures, crops are stressed by cycles of drought and floods, home insurance rates are rising far faster than the national average from an average of \$368 in 1998 to \$1348 in 2015, and faster warming winters are leading to new pests as well as shorter winter recreation seasons; and

WHEREAS, the bi-partisan Next Generation Energy Act, passed by the Minnesota State Legislature and signed by then Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2007, committed our State to achieving an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 and with interim goals of 15% and 30% below 2005 GHG emissions levels by 2015 and 2025, respectively, with cities being key drivers of achieving these goals; and

WHEREAS, our State did not meet its 2015 goal, and is not yet on track to reach our future targets; and

WHEREAS, in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries, including the United States, recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to "pursue efforts

to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius”; and

WHEREAS, we have already reached a temperature increase of 1.1 degrees Celsius (nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit) as compared to pre-industrial times and the death and destruction already wrought by this level of global warming demonstrate that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice, as attested by increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts, and extreme weather; and

WHEREAS, in August 2021 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of the United Nations released a report that stated “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere and land,” and that “human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2000 years,” and “with every additional increment of global warming, changes in extremes continue to become larger”; and

WHEREAS, recent scientific research indicates that to achieve the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, carbon emissions must be halved by 2030 and reach net zero global emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, a transition to a clean energy economy, if not carefully planned, would have a disruptive impact on the livelihoods of many in our community while a well-planned transition may provide expanded job, career, and wealth-building opportunities for local residents; and

WHEREAS, jurisdictions in 34 countries including Minnesota leaders Duluth, Minneapolis, and Crystal Bay Township have already declared climate emergencies in order to focus attention on the need for rapid action to address climate change; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, humanity and the natural world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Saint Paul calls on the Minnesota legislature and executive branch to immediately and aggressively take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions statewide and support cities of all sizes around Minnesota to both mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change including providing funding and resources for the development and implementation of climate action plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Saint Paul calls on the federal government to immediately commit resources to support the climate mitigation and adaptation efforts of cities large and small, to invest in the infrastructure needed for a sustainable future, to ensure that investment is at the scale needed, and to provide the necessary global leadership to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).