

Testimony as prepared for delivery

House Energy & Digital Infrastructure Committee, Vermont House of Representatives

March 20, 2025

Jared Duval

Vermont Climate Councilor

Thank you, Chair James and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Jared Duval. I am happy to be with you today in my capacity as an appointed member of the Vermont Climate Council. To be clear, my testimony today is solely in my capacity as an appointed member of the Climate Council and does not represent a position of the organization I work for.

For context, I have served on the Climate Council since October 22, 2020, after being appointed to a 3-year term by the Senate Committee on Committees as the member of the Council that is a “from a Vermont based organization with expertise in energy and data analysis.” I was re-appointed by the Senate Committee on Committees in 2023 and am currently in the middle of my 2nd term on the Council. On the Council I serve on the Council Steering Committee; chair the Science & Data subcommittee, and serve on the Cross-Sector Mitigation subcommittee.

Chair James provided me with a list of questions, which I will address in order:

1) What is the role of the Council in advancing our state’s climate policy and what responsibilities does the Council have?

The roles and responsibilities of the Vermont Climate Council are outlined in the Global Warming Solutions Act (Act 153 of 2020), and are most specifically directed via Sec. 4 10 V.S.A. chapter 24, §591.¹ They include that:

(b) The Council shall:

(1) Identify, analyze, and evaluate strategies and programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; achieve the State’s reduction requirements pursuant to section 578 of this title; and build resilience to prepare the State’s communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change, including:

(A) creating an inventory of all existing programs that impact greenhouse gas emissions and their efficacy;

1

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/ACT%20153%20As%20Enacted.pdf>, especially pages 7-12

- (B) evaluating and analyzing the technical feasibility and cost effectiveness of existing strategies and programs and identifying, evaluating, and analyzing new strategies and programs that are based upon emerging scientific and technical information;
- (C) analyzing each source or category of sources of greenhouse gas emissions and ***identifying which strategies and programs will result in the largest greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the most cost-effective manner***; [italics added]
- (D) identifying, analyzing, and evaluating public and private financing strategies to support the transition to a reduced greenhouse gas emissions economy and a more resilient State; and
- (E) evaluating and analyzing existing strategies and programs that build resilience, and identifying, evaluating, and analyzing new strategies and programs to prepare the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

(2) On or before December 1, 2021, adopt the Vermont Climate Action Plan (Plan) and update the Plan on or before July 1 every four years thereafter. The Plan shall set forth the specific initiatives, programs, and strategies that the State shall pursue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; achieve the State's reduction requirements pursuant to section 578 of this title; and build resilience to prepare the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

(3) Identify the means to accurately measure:

- (A) the State's greenhouse gas emissions and progress towards meeting the reduction requirements pursuant to section 578 of this title, including publishing emissions data in a timely manner;
- (B) the effectiveness of the specific initiatives, programs, and strategies set forth in the Plan and updates to the Plan in reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- (C) the effect of climate change on the State's climate, wildlife, and natural resources; and
- (D) the existing resilience of the State's communities, infrastructure, and economy and progress towards improving resilience to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change.

(4) Provide guidance to the Secretary of Natural Resources concerning the form, content, and subject matter of rules to be adopted pursuant to section 593 of this chapter.

Subsection c goes on to detail the specific responsibilities of subcommittees of the Council.

Subsection d further articulates Council responsibilities, specifically:

- (d) The Council shall recommend necessary legislation to the General Assembly concerning:
 - (1) adopting market-based or alternative compliance mechanisms as part of the State's greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies;
 - (2) changes to land use and development, including to chapter 151 of this title and 30 V.S.A. § 248, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote resilience in response to climate change;
- (3) statutory authority necessary to implement the Plan; and
- (4) any other matter the Council deems appropriate.

Further logistical considerations related to the Council are detailed in sections e-h, and the Climate Action Plan requirements are detailed in §592. A key requirement of the Council is that the Climate Action Plan shall “*prioritize the most cost-effective, technologically feasible, and equitable greenhouse gas emissions reduction pathways and adaptation and preparedness strategies informed by scientific and technical expertise.*”²

2) How often does the Council meet?

Council meeting frequency varies, especially depending on where in the 4-year cycle we are in relation to writing or revising Vermont's Climate Action Plan. This month, the Council will meet three times and, as we near the July 1, 2025 deadline for revisions to the Climate Action Plan, at least two meetings per month will likely be the norm. The 5 subcommittees of the Council meet on varying schedules, some as frequently as twice a month. There are also workgroups of subcommittees that have met frequently for the purpose of research and drafting, which is then shared with Council subcommittees and then the full Council.

3) How are Council members involved in the creation of the Climate Action Plan?

Council members are the primary authors of the Climate Action Plan. The Climate Action Office provides logistical support to the Council but most Climate Action Plan drafting responsibilities currently lie with Councilors, who are summarizing the research and deliberation happening in Council subcommittees and the Council as a whole.

² See § 592 (d) (1)

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/ACT%20153%20As%20Enacted.pdf>

4) What can you tell us about how the original 2021 Plan has been used? Which work has advanced, which work has not advanced?

The initial Climate Action Plan³ included over 200 recommendations, including strategies and actions designed for pollution reduction, resilience, and/or adaptation.

When it comes to climate pollution reduction efforts, there were three “high impact” recommendations prioritized in the first climate action plan to cost-effectively and equitably make significant progress toward the emissions reduction obligations of the GWSA. In this context, “high impact” means recommendations expected to deliver more than 10% of the needed emissions reduction in line with the 2030 GWSA obligation. Those three recommendations were:

- a) Adopt California’s Advanced Clean Cars II (ACC II) Regulations (amending Vermont’s existing Low and Zero Emission Vehicle Regulations) beginning no later than Model Year 2026⁴
- b) Join the Transportation and Climate Initiative Program (TCI-P)⁵
- c) Implement a Clean Heat Standard⁶

As of now, only one of those three recommendations has advanced to implementation: Advanced Clean Cars II. Without a cap and invest program and/or a performance standard for the transportation and thermal sectors, there is no reason to have confidence that Vermont could meet our emissions reduction obligations or our energy affordability goals in the two sectors – transportation and thermal – that create the most pollution and energy costs in Vermont, let alone at an economy-wide level.

Other key recommendations beyond climate pollution and energy cost reduction are also included in the CAP. A summary of the current status of other Climate Action Plan recommendations was provided in the [Climate Council Report to the General Assembly](#) submitted by the Agency of Natural Resources on January 15th, 2025.⁷

5) How are things coming with the next iteration, which is due in July 2025?

3

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Initial%20Climate%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Final%20-%202012-1-21.pdf>

⁴ See Transportation Sector Pathway 1, Strategy 1, page 72:

<https://outside.vermont.gov/agency/anr/climatecouncil/Shared%20Documents/Initial%20Climate%20Action%20Plan%20-%20Final%20-%202012-1-21.pdf>

⁵ Ibid (see Transportation Sector Pathway 1, Strategy 4, page 79)

⁶ Ibid (see Thermal Sector Pathway 2, Strategy 1, page 98)

⁷ <https://climatechange.vermont.gov/sites/climatecouncilsandbox/files/2025-01/2025%20Council%20report%20to%20GA%20Final.pdf>

The Council recently met to agree on draft priority recommendations for the revised Climate Action Plan, due July 1, 2025, to share for public feedback. Draft recommendations and draft chapters are available in the meeting materials from the March 10th Climate Council meeting.⁸ The full list of upcoming public events, including two virtual and seven in person events all across the state, is available [here](#). While revising the CAP is a significant effort, especially for a primarily volunteer body, we are working toward and are on track to deliver a revised CAP by the statutory deadline.

Broadly speaking, much of the work of revising the CAP is now occurring at the full Council level, after much of the Fall and early winter work was primarily in the subcommittees, where recommendations were initially drafted to be lifted up for full Council consideration.

Thank you.

###

⁸ See: <https://climatechange.vermont.gov/event/climate-council-15>