

12-step Plan to Advocate for a Climate Emergency Declaration

In June 2019, members of the group Parents 4 Climate!, under the leadership of Victoria teacher and climate activist, Tara Ehrcke, were successful in their campaign to convince the Greater Victoria School Board to declare a climate emergency. In making this declaration, the school board committed to developing and implementing a climate change action plan that would include strategies to decrease schools' greenhouse gas emissions in line with the recommendations from the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The board also agreed to encourage other school districts and government agencies to develop similar action plans.

Victoria was the first school board in the province—and possibly in the country—to declare a climate emergency, but several other school boards and municipal governments have followed their lead and made similar declarations. At the time this article was written, six school boards and 30 municipal governments in the province have declared a climate emergency. For an up to date list, visit the Climate Emergency Declaration and Mobilisation in Action (CEDAMIA) website.

It took time, patience, and planning to achieve this goal. Ehrcke was able to access release time to develop and implement the following plan through funding from a BCTF Local Social Justice Grant.

Step 1: Found a group and develop campaign goal

Parents 4 Climate! set as our first campaign goal to convince our local school board to declare a climate emergency and develop a climate action plan.

Step 2: Carry out research to prepare for your presentation

The following questions can guide your research:

- How do we apply to present to the school board?
- What climate measures does the school board already have in place?
- Do we have any personal connections with school board trustees?
- Have any other local bodies declared an emergency?
- What could a sample motion look like?

Step 3: Choose a suitable school board meeting date to make a presentation.

We selected a meeting that was at least a month away to provide enough time to build support.

Step 4: Do outreach to grow your group.

We invited students and teachers to get involved.

Step 5: Register to speak at a school board meeting.

Our school board limits three speakers per topic, so we chose one parent, one teacher, and one student.

Step 6: Make a Facebook event to begin inviting people to attend the school board meeting.

You can see our event on @parents4climate.

Step 7: Attempt to find a friendly trustee who will put a motion on the agenda.

It is helpful, but not necessary, to have a personal connection.

Step 8: Continue outreach to Parent Advisory Councils and employee unions.

Request to speak at their meetings and post a notice in their newsletters.

Step 9: Plan a very short “fossil free march” to the school board meeting.

Invite media and speakers. Ask students to lead the march. Advertise this event at student climate strikes.

Step 10: If a trustee agrees to put a motion on the agenda, publicize this.

Step 11: Send out a media advisory three or four days prior to the school board meeting.

We were successful in getting a high level of local media coverage. We also advertised on Facebook with other local environmental groups.

Step 12: Hold a march, then present at the meeting.

Ideally, you will have succeeded in getting a motion on the agenda. If not, follow up with individual trustees after the presentation to see if any of them will bring a motion to a subsequent meeting.