

June 12, 2022

To: Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, The Honourable Chief Justice Christopher E. Hinkson

Cc: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam

This letter is from health professionals in support of Dr. Tim Takaro, a physician-scientist/toxicologist and expert on the health impacts of climate change who is due to be sentenced by the Supreme Court of British Columbia for allegedly violating a court-ordered injunction against blocking the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Dr. Takaro has published over 100 peer-reviewed papers, is a professor emeritus of Simon Fraser University's (SFU) Faculty of Health Sciences, taught students at the University of British Columbia Medical School and is highly-respected for his national and international contributions as a researcher, advisor and educator. Beginning in 2014, Dr. Takaro lent his scholarly skills and time to examining the health impacts of the Transmountain Pipeline Expansion. He led two public health impact assessments for the National Energy Board's environmental review. The first underlined the potential local health impacts of the project, which include the risk of a uncontainable fire engulfing the SFU campus if the enlarged tank farm at its base catches fire, and of harmful exposures to toxic volatile chemicals which increase the risk of childhood leukemia in the case of a spill of dilute bitumen. The second report outlined the potential impacts of climate disruption on health and health systems. The National Energy Board's final report did not address his concerns about local toxicity, and refused to consider the findings in the public health assessment regarding the impacts of climate change and health, as the government of the day excluded climate impacts from the National Energy Board's terms of reference.

Recent examples of the health and health system impacts of the climate crisis underscore why Dr. Takaro's public health assessments should not be overlooked: there were [86](#) deaths due to heat in Montreal in 2018, and [619](#) in British Columbia during the heat dome in the summer of 2021. Wildfires forced the evacuation of the hospital in [Fort McMurray](#) in a matter of hours and severe smoke led to a full [doubling](#) of emergency department visits for asthma over a two and a half month exposure period in 2014 in Yellowknife. Flooding due to an atmospheric river isolated many communities in British Columbia in 2021, resulting in stranded [people](#) and disruption to health service availability. Finally, [pollen](#) seasons are leading to increasing problems for allergy sufferers and the geographic range of the ticks responsible for [Lyme Disease](#) has expanded. The prestigious medical Journal, the [Lancet](#) and the [World Health Organization](#) both call climate change the biggest global health threat of the 21st Century.

Canada is warming at [double the global rate](#). Under all plausible emissions scenarios we will continue to warm until at least mid-century. In the high-emissions scenario in which we are currently tracking, a child born today will experience a Canada that is approximately six degrees Celcius warmer than a baseline drawn between 1986 and 2005 by the time they are in their

sixties. As emphasized in this year's reports from [Health Canada](#) and [IPCC](#), it is unlikely that under this scenario health and health systems will be protected to acceptable levels.

In 2018, the Trudeau Government bought the TMX pipeline, putting the federal government in a position of conflict of interest with regards to further decisions. In 2019, the [Health Officers' Council of BC](#) called on the province to order an independent review of the cumulative health impacts, a response to inadequacies in the Kinder Morgan contractor's assessment. This call has been ignored.

The system designed to protect public health ignored essential information as well as repeated expressions of concern from the most qualified health practitioners in the province. With it now subject to bias given the financial interests of the government, Dr. Takaro constructed a platform and began to occupy one of the trees set to be cut down for the expansion, having run through all other available responses.

We believe that everyone wants a healthy future for themselves and their children. We believe that systems need to be built that fairly consider and act upon the evidence that is most important in informing a reasoned response to the climate challenges we face. We believe that in an ineffective and unjust system, Dr Tim Takaro followed the direction of the modern Hippocratic Oath to protect the health of his patients and the public, and to warn about impending health threats. He did so with courage and integrity, in service of all people alive today, as well as those yet to be born. We ask that you ensure that true justice be served, and allow Dr Tim Takaro to spend his time not in jail, but in continuing to put his skills to use in the community protecting public health.

Sincerely,

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