

Wes Pelletier
Portland
LD 1870

Senator Tepler, Representative Doudera, and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is Wes Pelletier, I'm a City Councilor in District 2 in Portland. I represent Portland's West End, Parkside, and parts of Portland's working waterfront. I come to you today not on behalf of the City of Portland, but as a resident of a City with huge climate adaptation needs and a serious funding gap to achieve them.

Earlier this week, our Sustainability Office put out flood alerts about overnight high tides of nearly 12ft. Too often, we see high tides break over onto our working waterfront, causing flooding in our streets and damaging local businesses. This has become normal in Portland, and when my constituents ask me about sea level rise and what can be done to help, I'm left speechless.

One bright light is that Portland, in partnership with South Portland, is committed to climate action. We've adopted a One Climate Future plan that includes ambitious goals for building retrofits, renewable energy expansion, transportation electrification, and climate resilience projects. The plan is excellent, and it represents real intention to do what is needed to overcome and adapt to the climate crisis.

The sticking point is the price tag.

While the plan has not been costed out fully, it's easy to guess that we're looking at a cost of hundreds of millions or potentially billions of dollars. Reengineering our waterfront, retrofitting all of Portland's housing stock, new electrified public transportation. The costs are immense.

Portland taxpayers will never be able to afford that type of investment without help. And that is only for Portland.

Statewide, the problem of adequately adapting to climate change is an immense cost. And Mainers should not, and can not, foot the bill. We did not cause this problem, massive fossil fuel companies did. And they did it without our consent and the expense of our communities' health and safety.

And why should tax payers pay for this when a trillion dollar industry is sitting on hundreds of billions of dollars in profit each year? They shouldn't.

It's time for accountability and it's time for the fossil fuel industry to pitch in to solve the problems that they've created.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.