

On March 31, the United Nations released a [report](#) about the impacts of climate change. For the first time, a United Nations panel – the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – has concluded that climate change impacts could soon include strains on water and food, leading to migration and international conflict. This is an issue of concern and reason for prayer.

Fortunately, the IPCC report also included some useful guidelines for responding to the growing threats of climate change. Here’s a list compiled by [Desmog Canada](#):

1. Start by making changes at the local level where and how they make sense.

There’s no single catch-all solution when it comes to a complex problem like global climate change. The report’s authors recommend taking a local approach that addresses “risk reduction and adaptation strategies” that attend to specific socioeconomic processes and needs. Oh, and don’t wait for the perfect local strategy—just pursue all solutions simultaneously, even if they overlap.

2. We need change on all levels—from individual to government.

The report is clear on this: federal governments should be fostering and supporting climate action on the subnational or municipal level. Federal governments can do this by protecting vulnerable groups—like constitutionally-protected First Nations in Canada, for example—and having a diverse energy portfolio that doesn’t invest too heavily in highly polluting resources, like tar sands bitumen, for example. The authors also recommend governments spend time and money providing information to citizens, construct robust policy and legal frameworks to limit climate change-related risks and work with the private sector to ensure communities are adapting to a changing environment.

3. Make everything better for everyone and that will help the climate issue. Seriously.

If you work hard to “improve human health, livelihoods, social and economic well-being, and environmental quality” you’re pretty much guaranteed to make progress on the climate file. Governments should start working double-time on these fronts as a part of their climate change adaption and mitigation efforts. Co-benefits!

4. Don’t be single-minded.

Climate change in a way is the result of pursuing the objectives of a small sector of society. If we started to recognize “diverse interests, circumstances, social-cultural contexts and expectations” that could “benefit decision-making processes.” So, if local communities are suffering as a result of new refineries, coal-fired power plants, oil export pipelines or the expansion of the tar sands—take the interests and needs of those local communities to heart. Giving too much sway to vested fossil-fuel interests is exacerbating climate change, after all. And anyway, “Indigenous, local and traditional knowledge systems and practices, including indigenous peoples’ holistic view of community and environment, are a major resource for adapting to climate change.” We’ve got to stop ignoring these alternative perspectives.

5. Be inclusive and gain support when decision-making.

Governments can be a little bad at this—including diverse groups in decision-making processes. But it turns out, the brightest minds are telling governments to be more sensitive to context when thinking

through decisions, and to make those decisions in concert with more diverse groups represented in the process.

6. Use the economy.

Economic instruments can “foster adaptation by providing incentives for anticipating and reducing impacts.” Investing in renewable and clean energy is a good place to start. And “improved resource pricing” might help too. Requiring companies to pay high prices for access to things like freshwater (for fracking companies, for example) or to extract carbon-intensive resources (the tar sands industry, for example) just makes sense.

7. Invest in research and science.

This is a recommendation fit for Canada: do science. Insufficient research, monitoring and observation can get in the way of making the right decisions and keeping the money flowing in the right direction.

8. Plan and plan for the long-term.

We tend to think short term, especially in the political realm. But that doesn't work so well when we're trying to resolve a long-term challenge on the immediate level. The report recommends getting serious about planning for the long term, to think ahead. This is crucial if we want to avoid making vulnerable groups more vulnerable.

9. Figure out how much adaptation will cost.

There's little knowledge of the true costs of climate change adaptation on a global scale. Somebody, anybody, please start assessing this so we know when to put resources and where.

10. Limiting climate change is a great way of avoiding adaptation costs. Who knew?!

“Co-benefits (there's that word again), synergies and tradeoffs” are just some of the great things that will come about from getting serious about addressing climate change. If we start using water, energy and land more efficiently, for example, we're both limiting the causes of climate change while also preserving key resources for the future. Co-benefits come from many activities including energy efficiency, clean energy, reduced pollution, reduced water consumption, greening cities, recycling, practicing sustainable agriculture and forestry, preserving forests that also act as carbon stores. The benefits of practical and long-term decision-making just seem to be endless.

11. Start immediately.

It turns out the sooner we get started limiting climate change, the more time we'll have to adequately prepare for adaptation. Mitigation, the report's authors state, “reduces the rate as well as the magnitude of warming.” So, best to get started right away.

12. Seriously. Start immediately.

If we let climate change get worse, we're just making more work for ourselves. The best time to take advantage of those great co-benefits and synergies is now. The longer we wait, the more those benefits will decrease. And that's already happening in some places: “In some parts of the world, insufficient responses to emerging impacts are already eroding the basis for sustainable development.”

13. Overhaul your systems. Change it all, if it needs changing.

“Transformations in economic, social, technological, and political decisions and actions can enable climate-resilient pathways.” These kinds of changes don’t just help us respond to climate change but also help “improve livelihoods, social and economic well-being, and responsible environmental management.” And these kinds of transitions are a big deal when they’re supported by national governments. “Transformation is considered most effective when it reflects a country’s own visions and approaches to achieving sustainable development in accordance with their national circumstances and priorities.” But to do this well, we need to keep learning, be iterative, deliberate and innovate.

Follow this link to some online resources for any of us working with other groups

<http://www.climateandhealthalliance.org/ipcc>.