

August 11, 2020

Good afternoon Commissioners, Executive Director Metruck, and Port Staff,

About two weeks ago, the last fully intact ice shelf in the Canadian Arctic collapsed, losing more than 40% of its area in just two days at the end of July. The shelf's area shrank by about 80 square kilometers. By comparison, the island of Manhattan in New York covers roughly 60 square kilometers. As a child playing at the seashore, or walking through the woods, it never occurred to me that humanity was entering the Anthropocene Extinction era, where perhaps 90% of life disappears forever in a relatively short period of time. But that is undeniably what is happening according to an overwhelming majority of scientists.

One Sunday earlier this month, I paddled twenty miles along the southwest coast of San Juan Island. We passed a rookery of critically endangered Stellar sea lions (at an appropriate distance), saw two eagles, one great blue heron, a few harbor porpoise, some seals, but zero orca or other whales, and no sign of salmon. Our oceans are dying and it's not as simple as a few dams on the Columbia River, but part of a much broader pattern of how humans, through our collective choices, have changed the biosphere over the past few centuries.

Wearing a mask in public is seen as a responsible action to save lives and prevent harm. Dismantling the non-essential cruise ship industry, with its many adverse impacts to the climate, the global environment, public health, coastal communities and workers, should similarly be viewed as an appropriate response to the emergent threat of ecological collapse. The climate emergency is already killing people in vulnerable front line communities, particularly in the global south and our choices in the first world, particularly by government decision makers, makes us complicit. The industry is non-essential and there are other ways to stimulate economic activity in a sustainable manner.

Although pausing the T46 project by canceling the RFP is the right step, my activist colleagues aren't celebrating because it seems clear the Port could attempt to resurrect this project if the cruise industry starts to recover in a year or two. The Titanic sank with many lives lost because it sailed into an area of icebergs at full speed, without heeding the warnings. Despite all the warning signs like the recent event in the Canadian Arctic, the fossil fuel economy continues to power full speed ahead towards climate collapse. It's understandable in a way – the human brain evolved to respond to visible risks with large fangs in the present moment, not less obvious events which happen over time. However, we have the capacity to evolve. This isn't to say that the Port isn't taking steps to address climate change, but as my colleagues and leading scientists have repeatedly emphasized, we aren't acting fast enough and the window of survival for our species is rapidly closing.

We often uncritically worship the economy as some kind of sacred entity. However, the etymology of the word "economy" comes from the Greek and simply means "household management" and connotes the idea of wise stewardship. It certainly doesn't mean we need to continue to support industries like cruise which, though employing many, and generating profits for a few, increasingly entails a long list of negative social and environmental effects which we articulate on our website: seattlecruisecontrol.org

A recent report by "[The Rewiring America Plan](#)" concluded that by focusing on decarbonization, 25 million jobs could be created. This is the new course heading we need to plot. Please exercise bold climate leadership and recognize the connection between climate inaction and structural racism which

adversely impacts people of color globally. The indigenous tribes of this area understood how to live in balance, in sacred relationship with nature, but our white colonial culture still worships capitalism, an economic model which was literally built on slavery and exploitation of people and the land, without reckoning with the long term consequences. Please cancel the T46 project and shrink the cruise industry in Seattle. Be a true leader for Port cities around the world by initiating a rapid response to the climate emergency.

Respectfully,

Jordan Van Voast, L.Ac.