

**Testimony of Mayor Melvin Carter**  
**Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis**  
**Wednesday, July 17, 2019**

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Chairman Schatz, Members of the Committee:

Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to testify about what is without question one of the most critical issues we face: our climate crisis.

My name is Melvin Carter and I serve as mayor of Saint Paul, Minnesota. I stand today alongside four other mayors present in the room as well as 400 others, representing over 70 million Americans, who have committed to uphold the aims of the Paris Climate Agreement through local action, despite the withdrawal of our Federal Administration. We thank you for your efforts and urge you to continue this committee's work charting the course to a more sustainable future.

In the tragic event you've never visited Saint Paul, we are Minnesota's Capital City, founded 165 years ago where the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers converge. We boast a nationally recognized network of parks & trails, and beautiful white stone cliffs for which our original Dakota inhabitants named the area "*Imnizaska*".

Our most iconic feature is 26 miles of Mississippi River frontage that today is filled with canoes, houseboats, and barges that move five million tons of commodities through area terminals each year.

Saint Paul's defining natural features, river dependency, and northern location combine to make us particularly sensitive to changes in temperature. From the polar vortex of winter to summertime heat waves, we have an acute perspective on how our climate crisis plays out at a local level.

Three of our biggest ten floods ever have occurred in the past decade, and our stretch of the Mississippi River spent a record 42 consecutive days at major flood stage this year, with mitigation costs exceeding \$2 million.

Warmer winter temperatures and increased snowfall have made it more expensive to maintain public infrastructure, and accelerated erosion on our bluffs.

Last year, that erosion resulted in a major slope failure and landslide that dropped 400,000 pounds of limestone onto an arterial street. Clearing the debris and stabilizing the bluff above cost a million dollars and interrupted the lives of countless businesses and residents.

I will always remember how narrowly we evaded catastrophe: those rocks fell onto the route of our annual Cinco de Mayo parade exactly one week before thousands of people flooded that same street for the festivities.

We have no choice but to adapt to our changing climate while working to mitigate its harmful impacts; Saint Paul's Climate Action and Resilience Plan sets out to do just that.

Our plan prioritizes efforts to reduce energy and transportation costs, and create pathways to opportunity for low-income residents.

It proposes local actions to reduce emissions from buildings and transportation, including:

- Public and private investments, led by a grant from Bloomberg Philanthropies to build charging hubs and the country's first electric car share powered completely with renewable energy;
- Transitioning to LED lighting to reduce energy use in city buildings; and
- Improving pedestrian and bike infrastructure to make it safer and easier to get around our city.

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We are pursuing a unique opportunity to develop a sustainable, energy efficient demonstration neighborhood on a 122-acre site that once housed a Ford production plant. Buildings on the site will generate 80% less carbon emissions than those built to code in 2005; and most homes will be powered, heated, and cooled with renewable energy.

Finally, Xcel Energy, our electric utility, has committed to providing 100% clean electricity by 2050; a commitment we strongly support.

We are doing our part on the local level to address our climate crisis, but without significant federal action our efforts will not be enough.

America must rejoin and accelerate the Paris Climate Accords.

Our federal government must help us build for the 21st century, with major investments in:

- Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure;
- Electric buses, like those made at New Flyer of America in Saint Cloud, Minnesota;
- Public charging equipment to help us transition to electric vehicles; and
- Research and development to advance technological solutions.

Communities across our country are counting on you to continue pushing this vital work forward, and we stand as ready teammates in the work ahead.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you here today. I look forward to your questions.