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News

SFU to participate in \$2.5-million climate change study

By Kendra Wong

SFU's Adaptation to Climate Change Team (ACT) is set to participate in a new \$2.5-million study dedicated to determining how coastal cities can best adapt to climate change.

The study, "Coastal cities at risk: Building adaptive capacity for managing climate change in coastal megacities", will address an important gap in Canada's climate change knowledge and will teach the participating cities to anticipate, manage, and reduce climate risk vulnerability through adaptation.

Vancouver is one of four participating cities from across the world including, Manila, Lagos, and Bangkok who will take part in the \$12.5-million initiative known as the International Research Initiative on Adaptation to Climate Change.

The research teams will each receive \$2.5-million over a five-year period to study how best to protect people, communities, and vital economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism, that are most at risk from the effects of climate change.

"Adaptation to climate change impacts everything from health to water supply to the ecosystem," said ACT executive director Deborah Harford. "International collaboration of this kind, with cities that are advancing their planning, will help us all with adaptation." According to Harford, the cities were chosen according to their size, coastal locations, socio-cultural-economic characteristics, and ability to carry through with collaborative research efforts.

Furthermore, Vancouver's economy has been identified as one that could be severely damaged should sea levels continue to rise.

"Vancouver had been identified as 32nd on the list of those most at risk from sea-level rise in the world, and 16th at risk for damage costs due to our approximately \$16-million in infrastructure right at sea level," she said.

The four other studies include: Partnership for Canada-Caribbean Community Climate Change Adaptation, Indigenous Health Adaptation to Climate Change, Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Extremes in the Americas. Researchers are receiving funding from the International Development Research Centre, an organization that works with researchers and innovators in developing countries to find practical, long-term solutions to the social, economic, and environmental problems; in addition, they will collaborate with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

“Policy decisions are all connected. If you make a decision on water, you have to take into account the effect it will have on energy or biodiversity,” concluded Harford. “There is an enormous volume of high-quality research being done, but it needed to be in a format that decision makers can use.”

ACT was created in 2006 by SFU to better equip Vancouver and SFU’s “decision-makers” of the future with the resources to guide them through the challenges and effects of climate change.

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