



Status Report to the Cabinet Committee on Climate Action from the Citizens' Conservation Councils on Climate Action February 2009

Citizens' Conservation Councils on Climate Action – Activities to Date

Committed to in the Throne Speeches of 2007 and 2008, seven regional Citizens' Conservation Councils (CCCs) on Climate Action were established in October 2008 to build a network for grassroots action across British Columbia. The Councils were mandated to provide advice to government on: 1) the most regionally-relevant ways to engage individuals, groups and local communities to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and develop low carbon economic opportunities; and 2) the best ways to educate and inform citizens to understand more about the challenges climate change presents and the steps they can take to reduce their own carbon footprints.

With a mandate until the end of December, 2009, there are seven councils including: Cariboo - Prince George, Kootenays, Vancouver Island – Coast, Thompson – Okanagan, Southwest – Lower Mainland, Northeast, and Skeena – North Coast. There are eight to twelve members on each council, comprised of community leaders from local governments, education institutions, local business, local community organizations, First Nations, youth and seniors.

Since the initial all members' meeting in Vancouver on October 8, 2008, the regional councils have met monthly and completed several tasks to inform their mandate and complete their first report to the Cabinet Committee on Climate Action (CCCA) including drafting terms of reference, nominating chairpersons, developing regional climate action inventories, reviewing related research, participating in webinars and considering the Ministry of Environment's regional greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) reports.

Recommendations to Cabinet Committee on Climate Action

There are themes that emerged from all the councils on how to regionally engage with local citizens that will encourage and move them into action on climate change that can be considered on a provincial level:

- In order to connect with people on climate action, government communications need to:
 - Speak in terms that are relevant to the local community;
 - Display close-to-home and familiar imagery, situations and people; and,
 - Show more practical and specific ways that people can take individual action.
- Government support (including barrier reductions) for new, "green" business, technology, education and training can stimulate local economies, and entrepreneurial investment. Leadership is needed on "creating the supportive environment" for the new green, low carbon economy and demonstrating value of that economy to the public.

- A province-wide GHG reduction challenge would be a fun, friendly way to actively engage local citizens. This challenge could be sponsored and implemented in partnership with other organizations, local governments, and First Nations.
- First Nations people are “close to the earth” and have stories to tell about how local natural habitat is changing. Power Visuals and messages can be used across BC.
- There is a need for more research to support facilitating public climate-smart behaviour. There is a considerable amount of existing research that could be consolidated into a literature review on best practices and case studies. This will help to formulate what future messages are going to be most effective.

The councils can play an important role implementing these recommendations by assisting with regional communications, accessing local networks and mobilizing community support to meet the province’s targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Cariboo–Prince George Citizens’ Conservation Council

1. **Education and Public Information:** Building on the success of the “Community Heroes” advertising program, the Council suggests that new education and public information materials on climate change and climate action developed by the provincial government is regionally focused with an emphasis on local environmental success stories. Local citizens will be inspired and encouraged to take action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if there are more regional “role models” and information that they able to connect with. Some specific suggestions include:
 - a. Adapting the LiveSmart BC incentive program information which identifies where and how local citizens can utilize the program (for example, local car dealerships that sell hybrid vehicles and companies that sell high efficiency gas furnaces);
 - b. Undertaking a Cariboo – Prince George regional challenge/pledge program for local citizens to reduce greenhouse gas emissions;
 - c. Extending the BC Stories program originally created by the 2010 Olympic Secretariat to enable regions and communities to utilize video in telling the stories of local climate action heroes. This footage would contribute to provincial efforts aimed at educating all citizens about the role they can play in combating climate change while also supporting regional/local programs by profiling local citizens actively reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
 - d. Developing a regional fact sheet on climate change issues and actions to adapt or mitigate; and,
 - e. Undertaking a regional speaker series involving both provincial experts on climate change as well as local climate action heroes who can speak in communities throughout the Cariboo – Prince George region;
2. **Community Bike Lane and Sidewalk Infrastructure:** The Council noted that there are few bike lanes and sidewalks in Cariboo – Prince George communities. The lack of this infrastructure is a significant impediment for local citizens to walk or ride in their communities and in turn reduce personal greenhouse gas transportation emissions. Recognizing current provincial programs including the Cycling Infrastructure Partnerships and Towns for Tomorrow, the Council recommends that that these and other provincial programs are expanded so that the development of new sidewalks and bike lanes can be built sooner and existing infrastructure is expanded. While this recommendation would assist in reducing GHG emissions, it would also contribute to better personal health and provide additional regional economic benefits through the construction of this infrastructure.

Kootenay Citizens' Conservation Council

1. **Locally, Regionally, and Provincially Coordinated Climate Action Activities:** The Council recommends that there be a public-facing provincial resource – located within each region – dedicated to maintaining a data base of public education, speakers, events, etc., related to climate action. This person would also be responsible for building efficiencies between various groups who are active in the region, particularly the Columbia Basin Trust, Smart Planning for Communities (Fraser Basin Council), regional districts, municipalities, school districts, eco-societies and others. A local “one-stop shop” for information would make information easy, convenient to obtain and will help to drive behaviour change.
2. **Climate Action Communications, Advertising and Marketing:** To be best accepted by citizens, these vehicles need to contain regionally relevant information and visuals. This means showing the local landscape (example: Arrow Lakes) and the local people, speaking in the language of the local community. The council recommends portrayals of concrete activities that people can be involved in – that make sense in their region. Reach out to people who have not been part of the climate action conversation by showing people from industry as well as fishers, hunters, snowmobilers – invite these people to be part of the conversation. For instance, the LiveSmart BC “Dave from Chilliwack,” “Holly from Prince George” ads, along with the “Community Heroes” newspaper campaign, are on the right track.
3. **“Sustainable” or “Sustainability” instead of “Environment” or “Environmental” Terminology in all Messages:** The council recommends that the word “sustainability” needs to be explained – not everyone knows what it means in the context of climate action. Education is required. In the Kootenays, and no doubt in other resource-rich regions of the province, many people feel that “environmentalism” is responsible for the loss of their livelihood. The council wants people to understand that the issue of “sustainability” is one of balance between what we have and what we need to do.
4. **Public Expectations on Climate Action:** The council is concerned that there are limited resources/capacity to implement provincial regulations, legislation, charter requirements – particularly at the municipal level. (As an example: 2003 Report on Wild Fires – “Fire Smart.” The perception is that few if any recommendations have been implemented in the most significant areas for fire spread.) The councils recommend a collaborative relationship with UBCM on real, attainable targets: Focus on what is achievable and “winnable” and report out on the successes.
5. **More to Connection Between “Taking Climate Action” (or “going green”) and Cost Savings:** The council recommends that the relationship is more clear and direct on personal benefits including cost savings to the public which will assist in inspiring personal action.

Lower Mainland-Southwest Citizens' Conservation Council

1. **Carbon Tax:** Be vigorous, and stick with the program, on the Carbon Tax. Through creative and regular communications and outreach, build understanding of the value of the tax and the benefits to our “sustainable society.” Frame government’s position on the tax as a human and social justice issue. Look to Sweden for ideas on moving toward a \$150/tonne tax.
2. **“Active” public engagement strategy on climate action:** The council believes that the Climate Action Plan needs a communication plan that includes innovative and creative models of engagement. The current delivery mechanisms for communications on climate action – the LiveSmart BC website and TV/radio/newspaper ads – have minimal value for, or impact on, citizen behaviour in BC. To create citizen behaviour change to reach its GHG emission reduction targets, Council recommends the following:
 - a. Create a broadcast mini “soap opera,” about average people dealing with the lifestyle transition to a low carbon future. (It could be animated. This has been done in other

- jurisdictions to show *how* to make lifestyle changes and encourage an “I can do it too” attitude.) Post segments on YouTube, www.sustainabilitytelevision.com, LiveSmart BC, etc.
- b. Initiate a travelling, community-level dialogue sponsored by LiveSmart BC (modelled on the “Conversations on Health” initiative) such as: “**Conversations on Climate Action and the Low Carbon Economic Future.**” Not only does this kind of forum stimulate new ideas, it encourages/supports people to action through interaction with others. Include a public “Open Space” activity.
 - c. A regular provincial “Report Card on GHG Emissions”. Create an interactive feedback tool (e.g. BC Hydro PowerSmart energy consumption reports, AirCare reports). It is motivating for people to see how collective action creates improvement.
 - d. Create partnerships between LiveSmart BC and organizations that give people (including children) the opportunity to interact with the natural environment to reinforce responsibility to the planet and create new “norms” of behaviour.
 - e. Use Web 2.0 and social media to communicate with younger audiences.
3. **Relevant local Climate Action Language:** Communities in the Lower Mainland-Southwest region are widely diversified. All members of society need to feel part of the solution and have access to understandable, practical advice on changes they can make that will make a difference.
 4. **Research to uncover the barriers to personal action, and then to act to eliminate those barriers:** Research will help to uncover intrinsic values and motivations for people to make real changes. There is now a paralysis of thinking (and a frustration) in the “engaged” environmental and climate action communities about what else can be done to move people to personal action to reduce GHGs and live a low carbon lifestyle. Uncovering these values and motivations may help move things forward.
 5. **Current Economic Situation:** Optimize opportunities in the current economic situation to develop a broad public understanding of the links between economic, social justice and climate realities:
 - a. The council recommends that government start to redefine “growth” and develop a new framework for success based on shared **intrinsic**, rather than extrinsic values.
 - b. Champion the opportunities for “green” technology and renewable energy sources to revitalize the economic sustainability of communities.
 - c. Sell a new kind of quality of life; create disincentives to the mindsets of entitlement and NIMBYism.
 - d. Price signals are not enough to create broad based behaviour change.
 - e. Reframe situations where the perception could be humans vs. the environment.
 6. **Motivate individual behaviour change:** Government should communicate the idea of collective action – we are “in it together.” Share stories of success from “average” people who have overcome obstacles, created new ways of doing things, while taking climate action. This might be communicated through the “soap opera” idea, described above.
 7. **Leadership:** Develop a leadership position on broad-based systemic impediments to climate action in society. There are limits to what individuals can do on climate action and “average” people don’t think of themselves as leaders in this area. They look to government to “do the right thing” on their behalf.
 8. **New messages and regulations to reach into people’s consciousness to help reduce consumer waste:** The Dalia Lama (when recently in Vancouver) pointed to people in the room and said “you have too much,” (referring in general to people in the western world.) Raising consciousness about our wastefulness will help support climate conscious behaviour.
 9. **The Council recommends standardization in public reporting of GHG emissions.**

Northeast Citizens’ Conservation Council

The Northeast Council supports the provincial government's multi-layered approach to climate action and advises the following ways to build on and improve public engagement:

1. **Communications:** All forms of communications on climate action must be positive, relevant and meaningful to the people in communities in the Northeast. People here need to see images of local landscape and fellow citizens from across the region, including First Nations, oil & gas sector workers, school age children, youth and families. The council recommends government place a greater emphasis on *showing average people taking specific local actions*, rather than portraying a general, enormous (and often overwhelming) view of global climate change. In the Northeast, it is known that climate change is occurring: what is needed now is a greater knowledge of what specific actions to take that makes sense locally.
2. **Enforcement of Regulations:** Demonstrate *on-the-ground enforcement of existing regulations* that affect our climate, environment and sustainability. The council believes this will enhance public trust in the government to "do the right thing." In council discussions, the issue of consumer waste arose and specifically the lack of enforcement of regulations in the recycling industry. The Council knows BC has excellent regulations related to recycling of goods. However, it is observed that the "recovery rate" (by manufacturers) is not fully enforced. (Examples: Bottles, paint and electrical waste.)
3. **Transportation:** Connect with the citizens of the Northeast through discussions about diversifying transportation options in the region, and in turn, explore low-carbon job creation opportunities in renewable energy alternatives. Government needs to "walk the talk" and demonstrate intent to support "clean" transportation options for all regions. In the Northeast, for example, an opportunity exists to establish an electric train route from Fort Nelson to the south (CN Rail contract). Wind power could be explored to power such a train. The benefits include a reduction of vehicles on the road (lower GHG emissions), clean goods movement, passenger services, expansion of tourism opportunities and transportation safety.
4. **Transient Population:** In the Northeast, approximately 50 percent of the population is transient and has no particular sense of ownership of climate action in the region. (High disposable incomes, affinity for power-intensive "toys", culture of consumption and waste.) This presents a challenge to the broader permanent population who *are* concerned about region. We recommend this unique demographic – generally 18 to 30 year old males – be targeted with specific outreach. Government can play a role in communicating with companies licensed to work in the area (main employers of this target group), through the Oil & Gas Activities Act (OGAA), the Oil & Gas Working Group (CAS), etc. Contractors and sub-contractors - often noted to be "the worst offenders" - need to be included in outreach and held accountable for actions in the region.
5. **Vehicle Idling:** Vehicle idling is a significant GHG emissions challenge in the Northeast. Provincial support is needed for region-wide anti-idling education, idling "disincentives" and targeted communications to reduce this behaviour (Idling is a "norm" in the region.) The Council recommends Government provide incentives to create/promote use of electric plug-in stations, and that education and communications related to anti-idling be delivered through employers, school districts, community-based and neighbourhood level programs, with a corresponding enforcement and/or fine process.

Skeena-North Coast Citizens' Conservation Council

1. **Regionally Relevant Engagement:** To effectively engage local citizens to take personal action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the Council recommends that local climate change visioning is

undertaken for the Skeena – North Coast region. Using visualisations of important local landmarks such as Hudsons’ Bay Mountain or Bear Glacier and demonstrating the present and near future impacts of climate change to the region, communities will become aware of these impacts and build capacity to develop and implement local solutions. The benefits of undertaking local climate change visioning in the Skeena North Coast include:

- a. Clearly communicating local causes and impacts of climate change and mitigation/adaptation choices that are relevant for the region;
 - b. Engaging the community in informed dialogue and accelerating their sense of urgency in meeting provincial climate change targets and local priorities; and,
 - c. Building local capacity to respond to climate change by drawing on existing resources at regional districts, regional colleges, local provincial government, and consulting firms.
2. **Education:** Recognizing the current efforts of the provincial government to develop climate change curriculum for primary grades, the council recommends that additional curriculum is developed for high school students that expands the current personal planning education materials to include options for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in daily activities.
 3. **Regional Climate Change Challenge – “Climateville”** Building on the success of “Hockeyville,” the council recommends that the provincial government create “Climate Changeville” to challenge communities and regions around the province to demonstrate their passion for their local areas and recognizing the impacts of global warming by competing to reduce the most greenhouse gas emissions.
 4. **Local Food Production:** Due to the remoteness of the Skeena North Coast region and the large distances between communities, the council recognizes the greenhouse gas emissions due to the transportation of food. Current government policies inhibit the local production of food and contribute to higher greenhouse gas emissions, the council recommends that these policies are reviewed and barriers to local food production are removed. In addition, new programs should be developed that support local food production.

Thompson Okanagan Citizens’ Conservation Council

1. **Community-Based Social Marketing:** To effectively encourage citizens to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in their daily lives, further research is required to understand what factors act as drivers, motivators, and inhibitors to environmental change. Building on the qualitative research (Harris Decima Report) completed by the Climate Action Secretariat to date, the council recommends that a quantitative survey is completed to identify approaches for target audiences in the various regions. The results of this study should be broken down by gender, age, location, employment sector, and ethnicity.
2. **Utility Bills:** To encourage awareness of energy use, it is recommended that all utility companies include energy consumption information on residential bills. This information should be illustrated in comparison to a “regional” or “provincial” average use of energy.
3. **LiveSmart BC Carbon Calculator:** To build awareness of GHG emissions of individual actions (for example, driving vehicles, car pooling, home heating), the council recommends that the LiveSmart BC carbon calculator be expanded to include relative consumption energy use and to track daily activities over periods of time as a way to inform citizens on how their choices effective their personal amount of GHG emissions.
4. **Communication of Citizens’ Conservation Councils on Climate Action:**

- a. **Regional LiveSmart BC Advertising:** To build profile and gather feedback from local citizens, LiveSmart BC ads should be developed that highlight the Citizens' Conservation Councils on Climate Action
- b. **Citizens Conservation Council Newsletter:** Quarterly regional e-newsletters should be developed to communicate the activities of the councils.

Vancouver Island-Coast Citizens' Conservation Council

1. **Local Examples of Climate Change:** Show examples of local, observable climate change impacts in the region and tie those impacts to immediate, practical solutions in which the public can participate. If the local impacts of global warming and climate change are unknown, people will not take action because the issue is too remote and vague. An example of a local impact seen by First Nations in our region is the reduction in the Ooligan catch in Knight Inlet. First Nations stories about local, natural resource changes can beautifully tell the stories that most British Columbians are unaware of. These stories should be used more often.
2. **Transportation:** Build on the BC Transit pass and transfer programs and integrate with other modes of transportation, such as sponsored "free bikes" or car share program. Frame the new approach as "Smart Mobility." Some GHG emission-conscious European cities already use such integrated transportation systems with success.
3. **Assist municipalities to create the legal use of electric vehicles in their communities.**
4. **GHG Reductions Competition:** Use friendly, fun competition as a fun way to motivate groups of people to take climate action. Create a scoring system with "Made in BC" emission-reduction benchmarks and "stretch goals." Recognize "winners" in climate action in publications, on community TV, in online videos, with stickers (such as "Low Carbon Hero" designation). Reach out to engage a wide variety of groups: K to 12 students (through school districts), business associations, workers' unions, etc.
5. **Create a "reality TV" program about families trying to figure out ways to move forward with a low-carbon lifestyle.**
6. **LiveSmart BC Incentive Programs:** Increase awareness, clarify benefits and simplify accessibility to LiveSmart BC incentive programs. Awareness of these incentives is low and that "average citizens" find the value difficult to understand. It should be clear and easy for citizens to access these programs – currently the process is cumbersome. Communications about incentives, energy audits, etc, should be more personal – face-to-face, door-to-door – so people can learn how to apply for these incentives and how they can benefit their lives. People will become more engaged if they understand that up-front investments in home improvements can be "free" (given cost savings from improvements) over time.
7. **Enhance Low Carbon / Renewable Energy Business Incentives:** Create a higher awareness in business and academia of what is available. High-light and celebrate solutions-based business innovation in the broader community.

3. Next Steps & Priorities:

Over the next few months, all councils will develop regional action plans to be presented in their next status report to the Cabinet Committee on Climate Action. In addition, each council will undertake the following next steps:

Cariboo-Prince George

- The council will host a speaker's event in March for the local community. Dr Stephen Sheppard will speak on local climate change visioning.
- The council will work with the other northern councils to discuss and organize a presentation for the North Central Municipal Association.
- The council will speak at the Cariboo Regional Sustainability Conference on Earth Day in Williams Lake.

Kootenay

- The council will engage local regional municipal councils (CCC members will make presentations) to encourage local citizens to work together to take climate action.
- The council will explore and form partnerships with local organizations (such as the Columbia Basin Trust and the Fraser Basin Council) to broaden education and awareness in the region.
- A list of visible, regional impacts of climate change will be created for use in communication materials.

Lower Mainland-Southwest

- This council will be connecting with a representative of Metro Vancouver's Sustainable Region Initiative.
- A matrix of private/government roles and responsibilities with regards to climate change actions to better identify the gaps will be developed.
- A community profile will be completed to better understand our audiences and what are their motivations.
- The council will consider communications strategies to engage these key audiences.
- "Green" council meetings by finding venues and caterers that minimize the environmental and social impacts of their businesses.

Northeast

- The council will develop a top "10" tips list of the most effect ways for citizens in the Northeast to reduce emissions.
- As the LiveSmart BC advertising campaign is further implemented, the council would like to work with the government to ensure local images and stories are incorporated.
- Opportunities to partner with local organizations to further the climate action agenda will be explored.
- The council will work with the other northern councils to discuss and organize a presentation for the North Central Municipal Association.

Skeena-North Coast

- This council will continue to expand their regional climate action inventory into a public resource for all citizens.
- This council will begin exploring local climate change visioning for their region and begin to identify resources that could be utilized.
- The council will work with the other northern councils to discuss and organize a presentation for the North Central Municipal Association.

Thompson-Okanagan

- The council will host a session with Dr Stephen Sheppard on local climate change visioning.
- Council will begin organizing an outreach event in coordination with the ECCO centre in the Okanagan.

- Council will participate in the upcoming Southern Interior Local Government Association's annual convention as a way to introduce themselves to local government.
- Council will send out a letter to local organizations in their region to introduce the council and explain their mandate.

Vancouver-Island Coast

- Council will host an open house in March – location is Nanaimo.

4. Summary

From the informed perspectives of community leaders, this report provides valuable insights into both regional and provincial approaches on how the government can engage local citizens to take climate action that contributes both to the development of a new low carbon economy and adapting/mitigating to the impacts of climate change. Recognizing our current economic situation and limited government financial resources, innovative new partnerships between government, local government, local community organizations, First Nations will be required to implement the councils' recommendations.