



Climate: A Call to Action

April 2017

Acknowledgements

Compiled by PIBC's Climate Action Task Force and endorsed by PIBC Council, the recommendations contained in this document reflect the input of professional planners across the Province of British Columbia and the Yukon and seeks to build on the countless collective and individual efforts so many people, in their work and everyday lives, are taking to address climate change now.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate change is impacting communities across British Columbia. While action is being taken by the Province and by organizations and individuals across the province, the opportunity to significantly affect positive action on climate change requires more: more leadership, more strategic planning and more resources will be necessary to address climate change and secure a better future.

Where the Province has set climate change targets and goals, planners are key players in operationalizing these targets at the local level. Planners, as professionals who work in a cross-disciplinary manner on a daily basis and at the intersection of numerous climate drivers including buildings, transportation, and land-use, are uniquely suited to help lead this charge; but they are encountering barriers to doing this work. In this call to action, the professional planning community has come together to provide a series of concrete steps to help remove barriers and move forward to aid in this effort.

The impacts of climate change continue to reveal themselves through increased storm events, flooding and sea level rise as well as drier summers with water shortages and wildfire threat, among other serious impacts. Efforts are underway (including collaboration on Provincial Green Communities Task Forces) and solutions are at hand in many communities to help mitigate and adapt to the unique situation in each local context.

Yet such efforts are often hampered by a political environment tailored to a four year election cycle, a lack of institutional will, a general lack of understanding of the link between land use planning and transportation emissions, and by insufficient resources and examples and a public confused by mixed messages in the media.

A better future is possible: where our collective efforts and solutions are strengthened and made more widespread. There are many means to do this, including:

- create a more favourable political environment on this issue;
- improve understanding of the links amongst land use, transportation and emissions;
- access to localized and consistent annual data;
- commitment to required targets and monitoring built into the Annual Municipal Report; and,
- adequate funding and resources directed towards climate change action.

To realize this vision of what is possible Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) proposes a series of recommendations for provincial action on climate and a set of commitments from PIBC in support. The role of the public is also acknowledged. **The recommendations are outlined in the Call to Action section of the report.** Collectively these signify a Call to Action on Climate that aims to build on successes to date and work together toward a brighter future.

INTRODUCTION

A Call to Action is needed to increase and better affect climate action in BC and the Yukon; the Province of BC, professional planners in BC and the Yukon and the public each have an important role to play.

Climate change is occurring, in part due to greenhouse gas emissions from the use of fossil fuel to heat buildings, to fuel transportation, as a by-product of waste and agriculture land uses. The Province has established climate change targets and goals and planners play a key role in both its reduction and in the introduction of adaptation measures to address climate impacts already underway.

While climate change has been around as an issue for many years and most planners are aware of it, many have been struggling to put solutions into action in their work for a variety of reasons. In July 2016, PIBC Council resolved to:

“champion action on climate policy, help members understand how to take climate change into account in their planning activities and collaborate with and advocate for progressive policy solutions by senior levels of government”.

The effort to date has included a survey of the PIBC membership to identify barriers and opportunities in taking action on climate; encouraging use of many resources made available by the province (websites, toolkits, etc) and other sources.

At the provincial level, some great progress has been made – from the implementation of Bill 27 (in 2008) to require some level of targets, policies and actions in local government Official Community Plan’s to the provincial carbon tax, the BC Energy Step Code, Climate Leadership Plan and the Green Communities Task Force in collaboration with local government. However, the issue of climate is complex and finding the most effective solutions takes time and a coordinated and collaborative effort.

The recommendations included in this Call to Action are intended to build on successes to date while identifying opportunities to further reduce barriers to climate action for broad community benefit.

The messaging the public receives, from local and provincial sources is also important as community members struggle to understand the issue and make the connection between their daily actions and climate change.

In the fall of 2016, PIBC struck a Climate Action Task Force (“the Task Force”) to review the existing policy framework on climate, and provide recommendations to its members, community leaders and the Provincial Government in further addressing this issue. The Task Force was made up of members of the Institute, academia, local government and industry, who provided its findings to PIBC Council in the spring of 2017, in advance of the provincial election in May 2017.

POLICY REVIEW AND MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

The PIBC Climate Action Task Force has both reviewed the BC Climate Leadership Plan and sought input from its membership in a survey on how best to support them to take action on climate. The following barriers and opportunities emerged and are included here in support of the recommendations.

Provincial Climate Leadership Plan

The plan was evaluated on the basis of whether or not it would: (1) meet scientific and internationally-agreed upon targets for limiting warming to 1.5C; (2) meet and uphold the goals, objectives, and values of the Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change. And (3) if it was actionable in coordination with local government actors, businesses, and the general public.

Based on this analysis, there are many opportunities to strengthen the Provincial Climate Action Plan. While BC stands out globally for its continued willingness to discuss climate change and adjust the policy parameters to pursue goals, the pathway to its 2030 and 2050 emissions goals is still highly tenuous. We have approached our recommendations here with an eye to how planners can help the Province achieve its goals specific to limiting the dangerous impacts of climate change, but also to achieving the many possible co-benefits of climate action: healthier, more active citizens, cleaner air, more robust, local jobs, and more.

Planners are uniquely positioned to help realise the plan at its fullest, both as actors within local governments — which themselves handle many of the drivers and impacts of climate change — but also because of our skillset as facilitators and aggregators of technical information.

The following specific recommendations by area were also identified as follows:

- **Communities and Built Environment**
 - Acknowledge the link between fulsome, compact land-use planning and low-carbon communities;
 - Strengthen, through municipal resourcing, legislative changes, research, and collaboration, the ability of local governments to create compact, low-carbon communities;
 - Create a timeline for the Province-wide, coordinated implementation of the Energy Step Code, sensitive to local capacities and ensuring full resources where necessary;

- Create more resources, research, and offer necessary regulatory and statutory tools through the Local Government Act, to better enable communities to protect and expand their urban tree canopies, in line with the Government of BC’s commitment to sequester more carbon through forestry initiatives.
- Transportation
 - Create mechanisms and provide support for cities and regional governments to research and implement congestion pricing in major population centres;
 - Realign road tolling mechanisms throughout the Province, but particularly in Metro Vancouver, to ensure that demand-side management is being effectively undertaken and so that burdens of cost are equitably distributed;
 - Develop creative policies, including support for zero waste and circular economy initiatives and policies, local production, load-maximization, and higher commercial fuel standards, to reduce commercial transportation emissions;
 - Increase the Low-Carbon Fuel Standard from 10% to 30% (from the current trajectory of 15% by 2030).
- Industry and Utilities
 - Take forward the Climate Leadership Team’s recommendation on a Task Force to “research BC’s competitive advantages and potential growth areas in a low carbon economy,” with particular emphasis on clean technology, the circular economy, and the sharing economy.
- Adaptation
 - Ensure that local governments have up-to-date information about major climate change impacts and resulting hazards. For example, some regions will be more affected by drought and heat than others; adaptation efforts will require different approaches and resources depending on the type of impacts that are predicted to occur. Identifying the specific risks facing each community will help their planners to prioritize appropriate adaptation measures;
 - Support and promote resource sharing efforts between municipalities and regions, such as the Resilient-C platform (developed at UBC), the Fraser Basin Council’s webinar series, and other initiatives that integrate First Nations and municipal climate change adaptation planning;
 - Provide further research and resources to integrate green infrastructure into climate adaptation planning across the Province.

PIBC Climate Action Member Survey

In a recent survey (March 2017) of registered planners across the Province of BC and the Yukon, a number of barriers and opportunities emerged regarding taking positive action on climate change.

The top three barriers:

- 1. Lack of political will/political leadership;**

- 2. Funding;**
- 3. Lack of awareness/education on climate change.**

The top three opportunities to overcome the above:

- 1. Strategic Funding;**
- 2. Education;**
- 3. Community engagement and awareness.**

The best role for the province to play to assist local governments:

- 1. Regulatory Role**
(clear, strong requirements with accountability; legislative reforms and new regulations with changes to some existing regulations);
- 2. Targeted Funding Role**
(prioritize funding for transit. Also funding for energy efficient retrofits, alternative transportation, green infrastructure and toward alternative energy to offset some cost to help foster behaviour change);
- 3. Leadership Role**
(walking the talk, avoiding mixed messages, be progressive, be consistent).

The areas of change at the provincial level seen as fundamental:

- 1. Funding for transit;**
- 2. Expanding local government powers/regulation**
(road pricing, distance based insurance, Development Cost Charge, tools, own ministry, fewer silos across ministries, simplify Local Government Act and Community Charter);
- 3. Incentives for change**
(smart projects, electric vehicles, alternative energy, energy efficiency/retrofits, funding area plans near transit).

Other items flagged include the need for consistent, reliable data for emissions inventories to aid monitoring.

Consideration of the combined review of provincial climate efforts and the perspective of professional planners across the Province seeking to reduce the barriers to take action on climate a set of actions have been identified below to form part of a Call to Action for the Province, professional planners working across the spectrum of regional, local public and private sectors as well as the public.

CALL TO ACTION

Ensuring success on climate action will require a coordinated effort on a number of fronts.

For the Province of BC

A better future is possible: to help realize it PIBC proposes the following recommendations for provincial action on climate:

Recommendation 1: Build on Success

THAT the Government of British Columbia continue in its leadership role on climate through provision of Community Energy and Emissions Inventory data, carbon pricing, the Energy Step Code, the creation and promotion of guidebooks and toolkits to support communities in addressing the issue.

Recommendation 2: Land Use Planning Link

THAT the Government of British Columbia take a leadership role in acknowledging and promoting the fundamental link between land use planning and transportation in lowering GHG emissions; and by acknowledging local governments' role in reducing emissions;

AND THAT the Local Government Act be amended to require the involvement of a Registered Professional Planner (RPP) in the creation of Community Energy Emissions Plans and Official Community Plans.

Recommendation 3: Amend Legislation

THAT the Government of British Columbia broaden the powers of regional and local level governments to support implementation of the Energy Step Code and district energy; and to require annual reporting of targets and emissions in Annual Municipal Reports.

Recommendation 4: Targets and Reporting

THAT the Government of British Columbia take a leadership role by establishing a framework for monitoring and reporting on emissions reduction targets to ensure compliance; and that reporting on emissions be required content in Annual Municipal Reports which are required under the Community Charter.

Recommendation 5: Targeted Funding

THAT the Government of British Columbia provide targeted funding for transit, active transportation (pedestrian and cycling), climate change adaptation (e.g. flood protection, re-planning/relocation due to wildfire events) and other transportation support (HOV lanes, car-share, electrification) in both urban and rural communities with funding opportunities tied to performance in reducing emissions.

Recommendation 6: Timely and Consistent Data

AND THAT the Government of British Columbia provide CEEI data in a complete form on an annual basis (rather than every few years), and in a centralized location in support of annual reporting on emissions in Annual Municipal Reports.

For PIBC

There is a role both for PIBC as a professional association and for planners as professionals.

PIBC will continue to work collaboratively with the provincial government and community stakeholders to support the implementation of the above recommendations. To that end, the Institute commits to the following:

Commitment 1:

PIBC will maintain a collaborative approach in our efforts to advance policy that will result in positive action on climate change. This includes providing support in the roll out of the new BC Energy Step Code, stronger linkages between land use planning and transportation emissions, and enhanced policy and regulatory tools for Official Community Plans and Regional Growth Strategies in order to promote and create more compact, complete communities.

Commitment 2:

PIBC will support sustainable solutions that use public resources wisely to ensure quality of life and reduce greenhouse gas emissions for both urban and rural communities across BC. Sustainable solutions are data and target focused in achieving the highest possible performance on sustainability indicators (e.g., GHG reductions, mode-share, walk-scores, energy usage, and so on) in BC's urban and rural communities.

Commitment 3:

PIBC will continue to support its professional membership with outreach and education for their professional development by providing access to climate change related information, training (webinars) and networks. This in turn will help support the communication of the issue to the broad public through the efforts of individual planners in their organizations.

For Individual Planners

In ten steps (see www.pibc.bc.ca for full details):

- 1. Get In the Know** - Start with Information Gathering. Refer to the PIBC Resource Webpage for information on communicating about climate, find best practise guides and connect with key networks.
- 2. Research What Works** - Connect with those who have done it before. Find webinars, resources and connect with others on the new resource page. Many consulting firms also specialize in climate mitigation and adaptation.
- 3. Adapt it to Your Local Context** - Adapt the information to your local context – who are the stakeholders in your community and your organization, consider the community’s physical context.
- 4. Be the Champion** - Every policy needs a voice to be heard. Identify the benefits of taking action now vs the cost of inaction (impacts on assets, on humans, as well as on the environment) and be ready to spread the word at opportunities that arise internally. Work with community members to identify champions in the community and arm them with information that speaks to the issue as viewed through their lens.
- 5. Establish Partnerships** - Work cross departmentally to build a team and find a common language of what resonates in your organization. Break down silos and connect to a common goal. Work with other organizations (BCHydro, CEA, the Province of BC).
- 6. Messaging for your Politicians** - Provide them the information they need in a format they can understand and convey to the public. Help them see how addressing climate will contribute to the municipality’s priorities as well as the human and asset related costs associated with putting it off. Provide memorable talking points they can repeat to the public and function as spokespeople for the issue, fostering support.

- 7. Involve the Community** - Engage and involve the community to raise awareness of the issues and tradeoffs. Public awareness and concern for the impacts of climate change are high but for many the issue may feel like it is happening 'out there' eg: image of a polar bear floating on a piece of melted glacier. Frame the issue with trends that are occurring now and likely to continue (eg: more frequent storms) rather than referencing abstract scientific facts.
- 8. Leverage What You Have** - All municipalities in BC were required to incorporate targets, policies and actions into their Official Community Plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Fan the flames by keeping them topical in discussions and ensure staff across the organization are aware of how their daily jobs are helping achieve them.
- 9. Plan Smart** - The consideration and interaction between land use and urban form decisions and transportation cannot be understated when talking about emissions and their reduction or adaptation strategies: more compact compete communities bring jobs and homes closer together in a more energy efficient and less land intensive format.
- 10. Be the Change you Wish to See** - Get yourself up to speed on the topic, find out what others are doing, adapt some of those ideas to your local context, become a champion of it, establish partnerships, help your politicians get on board, involve the community, leverage what you have, plan smart and the ball will be rolling before you know it!

For the Public

There is room for improvement in communicating about climate change, its impacts and solutions where the public is concerned. This is a struggle at the local, regional, provincial, national and international level.

What is needed is consistency in messaging, avoiding mixed messages and providing opportunities for information sharing and dialogue.

Land use planning and resulting transportation emissions are fundamental to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A better understanding, by the public, of the role that land use plays in reducing transportation related greenhouse gas emissions is needed to help the public make the connection between local land use decisions and resulting impacts on climate change. Support by the Province in promoting this connection to the public in future communications, in future updates to the Climate Leadership Plan and in allocation of future funding would greatly increase public awareness.

Working together to take more action on climate change we can make a difference.

CONCLUSION

Ensuring success on climate action will require movement on a number of fronts. In this *Climate: Call to Action*, the Planning Institute of British Columbia has made a series of recommendations to the Province of BC further supported by a series of PIBC commitments. We have also identified a key list of actions for professional planners and encourage the broad public to seek information, engage in dialogue and champion action on climate in our communities.

BC's future is a bright one. While climate change is threatening our communities the good news is we have the power to choose our future. The time for more progressive action is now. Let's do this together.

ABOUT PIBC

The Planning Institute of British Columbia (PIBC) is the professional association of planners in British Columbia and the Yukon. PIBC is the westernmost affiliate of the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) – the national association.

PIBC represents over 1,500 professional planners: forward thinking individuals who work in both the public and private sectors, in many different fields of planning – including land-use and development, municipal and regional planning, resource and environmental management, policy planning and law, heritage conservation, transportation planning, economic development, urban design, and more.

Professional planners use their knowledge, skills and experience to help shape more livable, sustainable communities and environments.

Our Strategic Vision:

PIBC is a thriving organization supporting and regulating respected professional planners, inspiring excellence, advocacy and community well-being.