Community-Wide Climate Action Planning Framework

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BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Ministry of
Community, Sport and
Cultural Development

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British Columbia's *Local Government Act* requirement for greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets, policies and actions to be included in Official Community Plans (OCPs) by May 31st 2010 and Regional Growth Strategies (RGSs) by May 31st 2011 has encouraged local governments across the province to engage in climate action planning. Climate action planning refers to the process of determining and implementing energy and emissions reduction measures in ways that make sense for communities.

Implementing energy and emissions reduction measures must be done in an integrated way. For some communities, this may mean using a climate action lens when developing an OCP. For others, it may involve developing an integrated community sustainability plan, a climate action plan, a community energy and emissions plan, or simply incorporating energy and emissions reduction measures into traditional plans and planning processes (e.g. transportation plans). The steps taken to move forward with climate action are very similar regardless of the approach chosen. Ultimately, the OCP should reflect and support the vision and objectives of the climate action planning process.

The climate action planning framework sketched out on this page identifies a number of steps to take when doing climate action planning.. These steps do not necessarily need to be followed in the sequence identified.

Community-Wide Climate Action Planning Framework:

1. **Commitment, Engagement and Resources:** Make a commitment to climate action, sustainability and integration. Engage the community. Allocate resources.
2. **Measuring:** Understand the community's energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
3. **Planning:** Set targets. Identify flexible and progressive policy and process tools to achieve GHG emissions targets, and integrate them into the OCP/RGS and other documents.
4. **Implementing:** Use planning and policy tools to put the plans and policies into action.
5. **Monitoring:** Monitor progress and make adjustments over time that will help move effectively toward achieving climate action goals.

1. Commitment, Engagement and Resources:

Gaining commitment from council, and effectively engaging staff and the public in the planning and implementation of actions related to GHG reduction can be a challenging task.

Communities have both committed and are required to take climate action. Most councils in B.C. have made a commitment under the B.C. Climate Action Charter to support the development of compact, complete communities. In addition, more than 200 local governments across the country (including over 60 from B.C.) have joined the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Partners for Climate Protection Program (PCP) and are benefitting from its resources and funding opportunities. The *Local Government Act* in B.C. requires all local governments to identify targets, policies and actions for GHG reduction in their OCPs and RGSs.

Committing to move forward with climate action initiatives will also involve dedicating staff time and financial resources. Some local governments may have the ability to create a position dedicated to sustainability/climate action/energy and emissions reduction planning, perhaps with funding assistance through BC Hydro's new Power Smart Sustainable Communities Program. Others will not. Either way, if local governments are to make effective movement toward achieving GHG reduction goals, they will need to develop a modest level of internal knowledge and capacity (e.g. at least one staff person dedicating some time to this task).

Resourcing can come from many sources. Local governments accessing Federal Gas Tax funds are required to engage in integrated community sustainability planning. This can be seen as an opportunity to initiate GHG reduction initiatives. Some local governments have funds specifically for climate action initiatives. A range of funding opportunities are available to support local government climate actions. These include the CARIP grant and the Federal Gas Tax funds (subject to program requirements). Consultants and other external resources (other levels of government, BC Hydro, academia, NGOs) may also provide value-added direction and advice.

The public plays a valuable role in planning and implementation of policies and actions. The more engaged the public is at the front end of the climate action planning process, the more buy-in there will be. As a result, greater support for implementation over the long-term will most likely be gained.

Identify possible support systems (e.g. NGOs, universities, business leaders). Engage willing participants in focus groups and steering committees to assist in defining an appropriate approach and identifying vision and goals.

2. Measuring:

Inventory Community Emissions: For communities that do not already have a community energy and emissions inventory, the Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI) is a good place to start. This inventory, developed and updated by the B.C. government, represents energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions from community activities in on-road transportation, buildings, solid waste, deforestation, large industry and agriculture. In addition, the recent CEEI updates include data on sector specific indicators that are relevant to energy and GHG emission reductions (e.g. transportation mode share).

CEEI provides a starting point for understanding emissions. However, communities are not required to use the CEEI numbers. Communities may decide to use their own data or a mixture of CEEI data and other. They may find that CEEI does not capture some of the emissions that may be a key part of their climate action strategies (e.g. industrial process emissions, visitor travel). Whether communities choose to use CEEI or not, it is prudent to maintain the same categories identified by CEEI as it will make it easier to relate to the improvements in CEEI data that will evolve over time.

Forecast future emissions: While a community energy and emissions inventory helps answer the question "Where are we now?", a forecast helps answer the question "Where are we heading?". Based on CEEI baseline emissions and secondary indicator data, as well as other community-specific details and population projections, communities can develop a sense of where their emissions could be in the longer term if they continue along their current development path. Communities can then work with a number of assumptions to identify where their emissions could be if certain measures are taken (e.g. How much will provincial vehicle emissions standards reduce GHG emissions? How much will certain actions taken reduce GHG emissions?). This process can be fairly basic and straightforward or quite involved and analytical. The process of forecasting based on future scenarios can help identify GHG reduction targets. For some communities, scenario modelling may be useful.

3. Planning:

Think Integration: Climate action planning is most effective when integrated with the other planning and policy work that local governments are engaged in (e.g. planning for transportation, infrastructure, and economic development). When beginning to identify GHG reduction actions, communities should start by making a list of existing policy and operating documents and the policies they contain which have the potential to contribute to GHG emissions reductions. Then explore opportunities that exist to develop new policies.

Set Targets: Targets establish goals to work toward and can be very effective in initiating and encouraging action. It is recommended that local governments set an overarching target, a goal for the community that is ambitious but realistic. The right target will represent a clear commitment to climate action but be "do-able" and have broad community support.

In addition to setting an overarching target, it is recommended that local governments identify a number of sector specific targets. Sector specific targets may be measured using a variety of indicators related to energy use (e.g. vehicle kilometres travelled). Five sector specific indicators have been included in the 2007 CEEI Update Reports (housing type, transportation mode share, residential density, commute distance, parks and protected areas). Twelve more are under consideration for future CEEI reports. Examples of the use of secondary indicators can be found in the District of Saanich's Climate Action Plan.

When establishing sector specific targets, communities should consider the following::

i. Identify targets related to GHG reduction that may already be in other documents (e.g. mode share targets in transportation plans).
ii. Create targets that coincide with existing initiatives (e.g. waste reduction programs, transportation demand management programs).
iii. Consider other areas where they can have a GHG reduction impact and identify realistic targets to work toward.
iv. Consider how they can maximize the economic development potential of climate actions.

4. Implementation:

There are a number of planning tools that can be used to encourage action. These tools come in a variety of forms:

- Outreach – Engaging and educating staff, council and community
- Enabling – Dedicating resources (financial and human)
- Incentives – Making it easier to be "green", providing economic benefit
- Regulation – Encouraging more energy efficient development, changing behaviour (e.g. anti-idling bylaws, development permit areas)

Examples of how local governments across the province are using a variety of implementation tools and processes can be found through the Climate Action Toolkit website as well as in webinars and documents found on the Ministry of Community Sport and Cultural Development Local Government website.

Identifying who will be responsible for facilitating action in different areas and when actions will be set in motion will help in moving from planning to implementation.

5. Monitoring

Local governments are encouraged to track changes in GHG emissions over time. Monitoring results of actions implemented will help determine whether the measures communities are taking are effectively moving them toward reaching GHG targets. **Tracking the results of specific actions and calculating the amount of GHG emissions reduced** is an integral part of the monitoring process**.** The use of secondary indicators in each sector will be helpful in evaluating progress**.** Broad monitoring and reporting for each B.C. local government's total and sectoral emissions, and related secondary indicators will be provided through the biennial CEEI Reports (2010, 2012, 2014, etc.) **Engaging stakeholders and decision-makers** in monitoring and verifying the results of the local action plan will help build community support and buy-in. It is important for communities to develop a monitoring system that works. Update the plan regularly to ensure progress is being made.

Useful Resources:

- Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
- BC Climate Action Toolkit
- Community Energy Association Community Energy and Emissions Planning Guide
- Bill 27 – Opportunities and Strategies for Green Action by Local Government
- BC Hydro Power Smart Sustainable Communities Program Website
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Protection