

Sustainable Saanich Action Plan

This plan is driven by the urgent need to respond effectively to the challenges of climate change and the need to make the District of Saanich a fully sustainable community.

Specific Objectives:

- * **Reduce greenhouse gas emissions** and energy consumption within the District of Saanich;
- * Assess the current and potential vulnerability of the District of Saanich to the impacts of climate change, and **develop an adaptation strategy**; and
- * **Reduce the overall environmental footprint** of all municipal operations.

These objectives will be achieved through the concurrent development of two major initiatives:

1) A Municipal-wide Climate Change and Energy Action Plan

The Climate Change and Energy Action Plan (CCEAP) will focus principally on identifying key sources of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions throughout the District of Saanich. We will seek out opportunities for GHG reduction, energy efficiencies, and the development of clean energy alternatives. The obstacles that may stand in the way of changing behaviours and decision processes that contribute to GHG emissions will be identified.

Using appropriate **social marketing** techniques, we will engage all levels of the Saanich community including residents, businesses and youth in the important task of becoming part of the Climate Change solution. The key operating principle of the Climate Change and Energy Action Plan will be to empower individuals **to act**.

As former Vice President Al Gore notes in the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, many people, after coming to grips with the reality and monumental challenge of Climate Change, go directly from doubt to despair.

Saanich's Climate Change and Energy Action Plan aims to give such people a more positive option between doubt and despair: **Personal Action**. The underlying theme of the Action Plan will be based on the often quoted, but highly appropriate phrase: "Think globally, act locally."

It will be a significant priority in the Action Plan to not only inform and impress our citizens with the gravity of the situation but also to send out a hopeful, constructive message. This message will provide tips, techniques and **individual actions** that citizens can undertake to minimize their GHG emissions. Where, in the last resort this can not be accomplished, processes to at least off-set GHG emissions through appropriate carbon credits will be examined.

Development of the Plan

Process for development of the Plan

(1) Establish stakeholder engagement process

(2) Review inventory and baseline forecast of emissions

The CRD-wide GHG Inventory, released in November 2006, will be used as the baseline for the Action Plan.

(3) Identify and evaluate emission reduction measures

Development of the plan will involve evaluation of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of a wide range of potential actions to reduce GHG emissions.

Possible measures include:

- Develop transportation demand management strategies (e.g. commute travel reduction, goods movement improvements, school travel reduction, and non-commute travel reduction)
- Encourage high-density, mixed-use building developments, energy-aware landscaping methods, building for passive solar gain, etc.
- Promote a revised provincial energy code that establishes minimum energy efficiency requirements for new residential, commercial, and industrial buildings.
- Introduce permitting incentives for green buildings (e.g., density bonusing, queue jumping)

(4) Establish an emission reduction target

The CCEAP will include a GHG emissions target that will take into account the baseline emission forecast and the recommended emission reduction strategies provided for in the draft (2007) CRD Community Energy Plan. The CCEAP may include short-term (2015), medium-term (2025) and long-term (2050) targets.

(5) Council decision

The Saanich Climate Change and Energy Action Plan will not, in and of itself, turn the corner on Climate Change. It is only one very small, incremental part of a global movement that, will take decades to have any measurable effect on Climate.

The problem of GHG production has taken decades to evolve and will no doubt, take decades to reverse.

Adaptation Strategy

Even if global efforts succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the world is already committed to significant warming. The latest report (February 2007) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states that “warming and sea level rise would continue for centuries due to the timescales associated with climate processes and feedbacks, even if greenhouse gas concentrations were to be stabilized.”

Current science indicates that Canada will experience significant shifts in weather patterns over the span of a single generation, a trend that will most likely continue for the next several centuries or longer. For municipalities, climate change represents a number of risks, including extreme weather and winds, seasonal flooding in winter, possible higher sea levels, drought in summer and the possible effects of all of the above on persons, property, disease and invasive species migration, natural systems, parks and vegetation.

The CCEAP will assess the current and potential vulnerability of the District of Saanich to the impacts of climate change, and develop an adaptation strategy. The development of the adaptation strategy will include the following steps:

(1) Initiate a dialogue on climate change impacts and adaptation Through outreach and consultation, engage decision-makers and those most involved in managing day-to-day community life in a dialogue on the potential impacts of climate change in the District. This may include establishment of an ongoing taskforce to guide development and implementation of the adaptation strategy.

(2) Identify current vulnerabilities. Through a scoping exercise that involves the community and draws on the best available science (including expertise at UVic), identify and assess the current vulnerability of the District to climate change in all sectors: environmental (extreme weather), social (policy changes) and economic (market changes). Determine sectors or areas that need particular attention by reviewing where a municipality has been vulnerable in past climate events. A sector or area's current vulnerability to climate will likely increase in the future.

(3) Identify potential future vulnerabilities. Introduce scenarios, created by experts including the Pacific Climate Impacts Consortium (PCIC), describing social, environmental and economic conditions based on potential future climate change impacts. Ask municipal staff and community stakeholders to identify likely vulnerabilities given the scenarios and consider potential effects on environmental, social and economic systems.

(4) Identify adaptation strategies. Involve municipal staff and community stakeholders in a discussion on how best to address current and likely vulnerabilities. Adaptive approaches will be developed as a response to increased vulnerabilities or new opportunities.

(5) Implementation. Integrate adaptive approaches into existing programs and policies, recommend research where information gaps exist, and/or or develop appropriate new programs and policies.

The plan will also explore linkages between adaptation and mitigation strategies. There may be a number of actions that increase resilience to climate change, while at the same time reduce, emissions.

The CCEAP will be adopted as Municipal Council Policy and will form part of the Saanich Strategic Plan and the Official Community Plan.

It will be developed to be consistent with and complementary to the Regional Growth Strategy, the CRD's Community Energy Plan (2007). The CRD-wide GHG Inventory (2006) will be used as the baseline to gauge year by year progress on implementing the Action Plan.

It is recognized that a Saanich-based Climate Change and Energy Action Plan may have applicability within other municipalities in our region.

To promote the broadest possible up-take of climate change and energy efficiency initiatives, Saanich is committed to share our findings, knowledge, techniques and the Action Plan itself, with all our neighbouring CRD municipalities and any other local governments wishing to tackle climate change and to promote energy efficiency at the local level.

2) A Corporate Environmental Management System

The Environmental Management System (EMS) will be developed to complement the Climate Change and Energy Action Plan but unlike the CCEAP, which will be a community-wide initiative, specific to climate change, the EMS will focus on reducing the overall environmental footprint of municipal operations and activities.

The EMS is proposed to utilize the **Natural Step** approach to establish sustainable operations in all aspects of our operations. In order to ensure that the EMS focuses on the very important challenge of Climate Change, it is proposed that a long term goal of the organization will be to become a **carbon neutral** municipality.

Similar to how the CCEAP proposes to engage all Saanich residents in this challenge, it is proposed that the EMS will engage and gain the active support of all Saanich employees.

Many of the social marketing techniques used in the CCEAP to influence private, personal decisions will be utilized in developing and executing the EMS, however it is expected that positive environmental operational changes will be facilitated by the fact that the EMS can be adopted and implemented through administrative direction from within the municipal organization.

The EMS product will become municipal policy and form an integral part of annual budgeting, operational and maintenance decision processes.

It will be available to the public on the Saanich website and shareable and transferable to other municipalities wishing to pursue the EMS approach to moving toward sustainability.