

Climate Change and Association Leadership in the New Decade

CSAE Workshop Report

In March 2020 the Ottawa-Gatineau Chapter of CSAE held a half-day climate change workshop in collaboration with Coro Strandberg, of Strandberg Consulting. This paper is a summary of the presentations and discussion, including a presentation from Environment and Climate Change Canada, Canadian Institute of Planners, and Railway Association of Canada, along with a discussion of how associations are responding and steps they can pursue to play a leadership role in addressing climate change.

If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.

- *African Proverb*

Environment and Climate Change Canada Presentation

Vincent C. Ngan, Director General of the Pan-Canadian Framework Implementation Office of Environment and Climate Change Canada, made a presentation on Climate Change and Canada's response. The following is a summary of Vince's remarks.

Human activity has caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming above pre-industrial levels. This warming will continue to persist for centuries to millennia. The planet is projected to warm by a further 1.0-5.5°C by late century (>66% chance). Global warming of 1.5°C will likely be reached between 2030 and 2052 at current rates.

Canada is warming twice the global average, while the North is warming 3 times. Some of the current and projected impacts include increased flooding, damaging infrastructure and supply chains; higher risks of wildfires; thawing permafrost affecting buildings and infrastructure; ecosystem changes and shifts in species distribution affecting country food supply and species at risk; sea level rise and increased coastal erosion affecting infrastructure; increased frequency of drought; reduced glacier cover affecting water resources and hydro production; and increased health issues due to vector-borne diseases.

Given that the economic impact of climate change could reach between \$21B and \$43B a year in 2050, taking action now brings more benefits and avoids more costs. Climate action drives innovation and enables Canada to be a leader in a low carbon economy. Advancing adaptation can also lead to avoided costs and decreased insurance claims.

Under the Paris Agreement, Canada has committed to reducing the country's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 30% below 2005 levels by 2030. Since 2016, the Government of Canada has been working with provinces, territories, and Indigenous Peoples, to implement Canada's Climate Plan (called the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change), which includes over 50 measures across four pillars: pricing carbon pollution, complementary mitigation actions across all sectors, adaptation and climate resilience, and clean technology, innovation and jobs. For more information on Canada's climate plan, progress, and investments, please visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/environment/weather/climatechange.html>. The Government of Canada set up a number of programs and services to support climate action, including:

- Climate Action Fund for education, training and tools, outreach and promotion, and networking and partnering. Industry and trade associations are eligible (applications open later in 2020). (Canada.ca/climate-action-fund)
- Low Carbon Economy Fund for projects to make homes and buildings more energy efficient; help companies innovate and access technologies to reduce emissions; and help the forest and agriculture sectors enhance stored carbon in forests and soils. (Canada.ca/low-carbon-economy-fund)
- Climate Growth Hub, which is a whole-of-government focal point for clean technology focused on supporting companies and projects, coordinating programs and tracking results. (Canada.ca/clean-growth)
- Canadian Centre for Climate Services to provide Canadians with information and support to consider climate change in their decisions. (Canada.ca/climate-services)

The Government of Canada's 2019 GHG emissions projections show that the Plan is working and with the policies and measures in place, Canada's emissions are projected to be reduced by 227 million tonnes in 2030. However, more work is needed and in 2019, the Government of Canada committed to continuing to implement the Plan, while strengthening existing and introducing new climate action to exceed Canada's 2030 emission reduction target. The Government of Canada also committed to developing a plan to set Canada on a path to achieve a prosperous net-zero emissions future by 2050, among other commitments including setting legally binding 5-year emission-reduction milestones, consulting with experts and Canadians, and positioning Canada as a global leader in clean technology.

The discussion that followed recognized that industry had solutions and is already partnering with the Government of Canada. Participants acknowledged that associations have a role to play to prioritize climate change conversations and issues among their members. For those wondering where to start, they are encouraged to contact the Clean Growth Hub and visit their website (Canada.ca/clean-growth) on various funding programs. If there are specific ideas about how your sector can take climate action, you are also encouraged to speak with Vince and his office.

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Association Approaches to Climate Change

Canadian Institute of Planners

Beth McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, made a presentation on the approach Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) is playing to address climate change amongst its membership.

CIP has been working on this issue for a long time. Its first Climate Change Committee started with the support of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) in 2009 and CIP issued its first national climate change policy shortly after that.

Here are CIP's lessons learned over the past ten years:

1) Members Really Care

Climate change and the environment are the #1 and #2 issues that its members have identified through CIP's annual membership survey, so the organization has a strong mandate to act.

In 2017, CIP's Board made a statement that climate change is the most important issue facing Canada and the world. In 2018, CIP released a fully revised national climate change policy for the planning profession. In 2019, with the support of NRCan, CIP conducted its fifth climate change benchmarking survey that showed that members have a greater understanding of the issue; however, there was increasing uncertainty about what data to use and where to find the best tools.

2) Small Steps Matter

CIP is not a huge association. It has ten staff for 7,800 members, so it looks for low hanging fruit. For example, CIP links its work to the UN Sustainable Development Goals – this doesn't require much work but helps show that the climate change efforts are linked to global sustainability objectives. CIP also has climate and environment built into its regular conference programming calls for abstracts and it's a standing topic in the professional learning webinar series. CIP also created a climate and environment category in its Awards for Planning Excellence, which helps to identify best/emerging practices to profile in webinars and other venues.

3) Climate Change is Complex, so Partnership and Collaboration are Key

CIP works closely with the Federal Government. In recent years, CIP strengthened its collaboration with NRCan, contributing member expertise to national resiliency efforts. Currently CIP is undertaking a key project on flood risk mapping. CIP also seeks out opportunities to contribute to federal initiatives, like the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy.

CIP is part of an initiative out of Simon Fraser University called ACT – Adaptation to Climate Change Team – that has brought many professional organizations together who are committed to climate action through both resilience and adaptation.

At the international level, CIP is part of Planners 4 Climate Action, a UN-Habitat initiative, that brings together planning voices and expertise on climate change.

4) Walking the Talk is Important

It's not enough to just tell members what they should do, so this year, CIP committed to completing a carbon neutrality plan for its operations. It doesn't know what that will look like or how much time it will need to reach neutrality, but it will have those answers once it starts that work this summer.

CIP recently conducted an assessment of the GHG impacts of its board meetings and changed its meeting venue to reduce flight emissions.

"I truly believe that since associations can set a direction and policy for its members that extend far beyond profit margins and political timelines, that we can – and must – play a leading role in advancing climate change solutions. This can be done through education, policies, and for professional organizations – even updating professional competencies or program accreditation requirements."

Beth McMahon, Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Institute of Planners

Railway Association of Canada

Michael Gullo, Senior Director, Policy and Public Affairs, made a presentation on the approach the Railway Association of Canada (RAC) and its members are taking to address climate change by reducing emissions from locomotives with operations in Canada.

RAC and its members have set voluntary emission reduction targets since 1995. These targets have been formalized through a series of MOUs with the Federal Government. The current MOU captures performance from 2018 to 2022 and proposes a 6% reduction target for Class I freight railways (e.g. CN, CP) and inter-city passenger rail (e.g. Via Rail), and 3% for shortline rails.

The freight industry's workload has increased by 80% since 1990 while emissions intensities have decreased by approximately 40%.

Each year the RAC with support from Transport Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada prepares a performance report that tracks progress and includes information about best practices in the railway sector. Pollution Probe, an environmental non-government organization, plays an important peer review function by vetting and reviewing each performance report. Over the duration of the MOU, railway data is subject to audit by an independent and accredited agency.

RAC is currently working in cooperation with the federal government to create a Pathway framework that outlines the short, medium and long-term options for reducing emissions in the railway sector. This Pathway also aims to position the railway sector and its environmental benefits as a vehicle for reducing transportation-related emissions in Canada by identifying options for moving more goods and people by rail. Phase one has just started. Pathway options to explore include:

- Short-term options: Initiatives to further improve fuel efficiency through technology and innovation (e.g. trip optimization, anti-idling devices)
- Medium-term options: Reducing the carbon intensity of fuels used in existing locomotives
- Long-term options: Alternative propulsion and fuel consumption.

Climate Change Checklist for Associations

At tables and in the larger group, workshop participants shared best practices and identified several actions associations are/can take to address climate change at their organizations and within their membership. These ideas have been turned into a checklist, summarized below.

"Associations can build additional value with members by providing leadership and understanding on this complex issue, even helping to attract new members."

- *Workshop Participant*

Research and Knowledge Development

- Conduct research to understand how members and their value chains / ecosystems will be physically impacted by climate change and the impacts of the transition to a low carbon economy.
- Share research on climate risks and opportunities with members.
- Develop and share the business case and risk case for action on climate change.
- Conduct a life cycle analysis of your sector's carbon footprint to identify "hot spots" to address.

Education

- Standing call for climate change at conferences and webinars
- Include sessions in national conferences; regular conference programming call for abstracts

Recognition and Best Practices

- Create an Environment and Climate Change Award to profile best practices. Use the award to identify best practices that can be shared at conferences and in webinars.
- Conduct an annual benchmarking survey of member practices.
- Provide resources, toolkits and guides
- Develop practice guidelines
- Help members market their climate change practices; help them tell their climate change story

Policy and Plan

- Adopt a climate change policy and plan for how the profession or industry can respond to and prepare for climate change; include in policy common terms and definitions
- Survey members on their climate change priorities
- Include climate change in the association's strategic plan
- Establish a climate change committee or task force

Targets and Reporting to Decarbonize the Sector

- Set voluntary industry-wide emission reduction targets and issue public reports on progress
- Develop climate change mitigation pathways, with short, medium and long-term targets
- Consider climate change in the industry's innovation and technology agenda
- Decouple industry's growth from its carbon impacts

Operational Practices

- Adopt and implement a plan for the association to become carbon neutral.
- Implement measures that begin to change the association culture, so climate change is considered on a day-to-day basis. Not all changes require a board motion / policy
- Hold conversations with suppliers about how they can reduce their emissions and offer sustainable options and choices
- Develop a green meeting program, including:
 - Eliminate paper use
 - Reduce waste
 - Eliminate plastic bottles
 - Green venues
 - Consolidate number of meetings
 - Hold virtual meetings

Standards and Certifications

- For associations with standards, include climate change best practices
- For associations with professional competencies, certifications, accreditations and designations, update them to include climate change as either a mandatory component or specialization

Collaboration and Partnerships

- Partner with other associations in your sector or professional ecosystem to foster best practices and knowledge sharing
- Partner with governments to create free tools and guidance for members
- Provide expertise to provincial and federal governments
- Collaborate with value chain and ecosystem partners to address shared risks and opportunities
- Collaborate with international associations; find out about new research, best practices and researchers who can address the issue at conferences and events
- Create MOUs with partners to advanced shared objectives

Advocacy

- Lobby governments for more resources and to support the sector in addressing its climate change impacts

CSAE Role

Workshop participants also identified potential roles that CSAE might play to help associations address climate change risks and opportunities and play a leadership role on climate change. CSAE's vision is to "empower associations to transform the world" and it turns 100 in 2051. The possibility exists for it to help fulfill its vision by addressing climate change over the coming decades.

These are the ideas brainstormed by workshop participants. A few people offered to share these recommendations to CSAE.

Long-term Framework and Planning

- CSAE is positioned to think longer-term than its members; it can identify long-term climate change trends and help members understand what's coming
- Information on long-term trends can be turned into digestible information for members who can use it for their longer-term planning
- Establish a national task force to develop a climate change leadership agenda for Canadian associations
- Survey members on climate change and see what associations are doing
- Apply to the Climate Action Fund to develop tools, materials and training to increase climate literacy and benefit all associations

Operations

- Offer airport pick-ups at the national conference for those arriving at the same time
- Include green criteria as part of the RFP for the national conference venue and local events
- Ask suppliers to meet green standards

CAE Designation

- CSAE can integrate climate change management into the CAE designation
- It can also make climate change articles and reports required reading for CAE professionals and hold online discussions on the topic

Recognition and Best Practices

- Include environment and climate change in the Awards and Recognition Program
- Encourage sharing of best practices and tips through Associations Connect

Awareness, Education and Tools

- Create a template for associations to provide information to increase the climate literacy of their members
- Include Environment and Climate Change as a topic at the national conference
- Hold webinars on the topic
- Write articles on the topic
- Encourage local chapters to have events on the topic
- Include green vendors in the supplier directory
- Create a virtual meeting guideline; these are an art and people need guidelines for how to make them work, both as a participant and as chair

Advocacy

- Include climate change in CSAE's advocacy and lobby agenda
- CSAE's Government Relations committee could organize a Sustainability Day on the Hill for interested associations

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Author:

This workshop summary was produced by Coro Strandberg, President of Strandberg Consulting.
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