

Department: Office of the NL Premier; Department of Municipal Affairs & Environment
(Office of Climate Change)

Title: Climate Watch NL Open Submission to the Provincial Government of Newfoundland & Labrador on Upcoming Climate Change Plan

Date: February 2, 2018

Issue: Recommendations for the new provincial climate change plan for Newfoundland & Labrador

Summary: These suggestions by Climate Watch NL for the upcoming provincial climate plan are based on the premise that climate policy, culture and economic development are intimately tied. Addressing climate change can create jobs and boost the economy. However, this requires a cultural shift led by the province towards a positive, clear vision for our future that acts decisively to reduce carbon emissions and views climate change as an economic opportunity.

Background:

With the impacts of climate change being felt in increasingly severe ways both globally and locally there is a significant need for policy to adapt to a changing environmental and economic environment. The global community is making the transition to renewable energy and green economies, setting new targets such as those of the 2015 Paris Agreement. Those targets also have significant potential economic ramifications for NL, a province heavily dependent upon oil and gas.

Policies aimed at mitigating climate change, such as carbon pricing plans, renewable energy subsidies, sustainable agriculture and worker retraining are all increasingly common on the global stage. The federal government is moving towards implementing a national carbon pricing plan and it is essential that the province of NL also take a proactive co-leadership approach. Meanwhile many places worldwide – including NL – are increasingly finding themselves in the path of the impacts of climate change, necessitating the development of policy aimed at adapting to climate change. It is important that government act quickly to aid communities in adapting to climate change impacts that are not only expected but are already being experienced.

Recommendations: The following are a series of short term (1-5 year) and long term (10 – 15 year) recommendations to be incorporated into the upcoming provincial climate plan:

Short term:

- Recognize that reducing climate change emissions is just as much a cultural shift as a technical and economic problem to be solved. The province must be a leader in this cultural transition by stating a clear vision for the future, using language that is positive and inspiring – one that identifies opportunities rather than barriers.
- Highlight and promote the many aspects of traditional Newfoundland and Labrador culture that are already low carbon including: subsistence hunting, fishing and gathering; growing food for personal consumption; re-using and fixing rather than buying new items; using clotheslines; stay-cationing; and many others. By framing these practices as important contributions to a sustainable future, it not only helps shape our identity as a low carbon province but can also help pave the way for the introduction of critical changes that need to be made, such as the transition to electric vehicles.
- Work collaboratively with the federal government to create a carbon pricing plan which ensures that revenue generated is spent on renewable and green energy projects as well as helping those with the least means to adapt to de-carbonization and climate change (i.e. lower income households, marginalized groups, rural areas). Carbon pricing, for example, should be approached as a necessary, modern tool to help society shift to a greener economy, rather than a burdensome policy that may negatively affect certain economic sectors. It is important that carbon pricing is implemented in a socially and economically just manner. As demonstrated in BC, a carbon tax can foster economic growth.
- Work with municipalities to hire regional co-ordinators to help communities and regions with mitigation and adaptation, including providing information on resources and technical expertise, and ensuring follow-through and evaluation on municipal climate action plans.
- Make climate change a cross-departmental priority. At a minimum, this would involve implementing a green and local procurement policy that accounts for the carbon footprint of purchases for all internal government purchases.

- Create retraining programs for workers transitioning from the oil and gas industry and to help fill the labour needs of the fledgling renewable energy industry, potentially working in collaboration with existing workers' groups (i.e. Iron and Earth).
- Foster the expansion of electric vehicle usage through infrastructure support and incentives for purchase. In partnership with the federal government, provide incentives to buy an electric vehicle (ie. waiving the GST on electric vehicles (federal) or providing a rebate, funded by proceeds of the carbon tax (provincially)).
- In small remote communities, implement small-scale, renewable energy projects to phase out diesel power.
- Expand current energy efficiency programs. Offer low interest loans to complete energy efficiency retrofitting in homes and businesses. Loans are repaid by the difference in consumers' power bill. This ensures no additional financial burden on families/businesses while creating warmer, healthier homes that reduce health care costs.
- Support smaller scale and ecological forms of agriculture (such as organic, no-till, and pesticide-free) which reduce GHG emissions and create more jobs.
- Work with large institutional employers and municipalities to increase connectivity and accessibility of transit to these transportation hubs.

Long term:

- Utilize the existing relationship between the provincial government, the energy sector, and provincial research institutions (Memorial, CNA) to focus on developing renewable energy (offshore and onshore wind, tidal, solar and small-scale hydro) and the green economy through a similar collaborative approach as has been utilized in the past to support the oil and gas industry.
- Establish a research unit at Memorial University to draw in expertise on decarbonization and the green economy from across Canada/internationally. Providing

- funding and infrastructure for research and development will be an essential first step to getting our province on a low carbon energy path.
- Support the province-wide energy efficient retrofitting of public buildings, including both institutions and housing, ensuring future buildings are energy efficient to cut costs, improve health and create jobs.
- Develop a long-term carbon budget for the province that aligns with our province's responsibilities given Canada's commitment to the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Primary Sources for Further Information

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Financial considerations:

Many of the above items are intended as ways to protect existing infrastructure and the environment and prepare for climate change, *all while ensuring and protecting the long-term viability of the province's economy*. Climate change is costly; it causes negative impacts on infrastructure and strains existing services due to severe weather and other ramifications felt locally, nationally, and globally. Given that fossil fuels are the primary source of global GHG emissions, the global economy is transitioning away from the use of fossil fuels and toward renewable energy and green economies. This transition has extensive consequences for a province heavily dependent on oil extraction. Implementing the recommendations above would allow the province to prepare for the future energy economy while also generating revenue and helping to secure our current economy.

Interdepartmental considerations:

As noted above, these items will involve work from multiple departments and in general require cross-departmental considerations. While the Office of Climate Change may lead these efforts, communication between departments and sharing of findings will be key to their implementation.

Intergovernmental considerations:

Many of the above items, such as carbon pricing, are linked directly to federal policy. As well, items linked to transportation and climate change adaptation will require working with municipal governments. Building a collaborative dialog between these levels of government, and strengthening existing policy through evaluation and research, will be key to the implementation of these items.

Consultations:

These policy items were developed in consultation with Climate Watch NL's Policy Advisory Committee, which draws together experts from policy and scientific fields related to climate change both provincially and nationally/internationally.

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