

Regional Board Meeting – March 20, 2025 Chairpersons Report – Attachment

FCM Sustainable Communities Conference

Climate action is a moral issue! Action is motivated by what we care about (our children's future).

Hope is hard work, radical hope is when you don't know how, but do the hard work anyway.

Combine the outcomes. Addressing climate impacts, sends ripples out improving health, affordability, equity, air quality, community connections.

Knowing Canada's History, Knowing Ourselves

Keynote by award-winning journalist and author, Tanya Talaga. She underscored the importance of acknowledging Canada's history through Indigenous perspectives, highlighting how understanding one another's truth can guide us toward sustainable and inclusive change: "Reconciliation is about getting to know each other better. Past issues from previous centuries bleed into the present. Reconciliation is about respectful relationship-building, and it is an ongoing process. Find the knowledge of the land to find the way forward.

Green Municipal Fund

The Green Municipal Fund provides funding and capacity building to deliver clear environmental, economic and social impact.

GMF manages approximately \$2.4B in programs funded by the Government of Canada. <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/>

FCM's Sustainable Communities Awards

<https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/fcms-sustainable-communities-awards>

Each award has a short case study summary in the link.

Town of Bridgewater, Climate Change Mitigation <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-bridging-energy-efficiency-and-equity-bridgewater>

Region of Waterloo, Sustainable Buildings <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-sustainable-homes-stronger-community>

Metro Vancouver Regional District, Community Energy <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-sustainable-heating-unlikely-sources>

Durham Region, Reconciliation and anti-racism, equity and inclusion <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-paving-way-future-proof-equitable-transportation-infrastructure>

District of Saanich, Transportation <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-shifting-gears-e-bike-incentives>

Comox Valley Regional District, Climate Adaptation <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-restoring-nature-reducing-flood-risks>

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Strathcona County, Waste [HodgePodge Lodge](#)

Ville de Longueuil, Natural Assets <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-longueuil-2030-sustainable-vision-protecting-21-its-territory-perpetuity>

City of Surrey, Natural Assets <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/case-studies/case-study-shaping-resilient-and-sustainable-shoreline>

A new era of climate action – Economic opportunity, job creation and cost savings at the forefront of action

Investing in climate resilience is not just necessary—it's economically smart. It saves money, creates jobs, and strengthens local economies. Panelists underscored the need for balanced growth, sustainable urban planning, and new municipal funding frameworks to build resilient communities. Inclusive decision-making alongside stronger public engagement and energy democracy ensures climate solutions benefit everyone. Addressing knowledge gaps and fairness concerns will help build public trust, while storytelling and shared values can drive meaningful action

The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, acknowledged the critical role municipalities play in leading climate action. He emphasized that the decisions we make today—through investments, innovations, and policies—will shape the Canada of tomorrow. From reducing emissions to creating affordable, energy-efficient housing, bold action is essential. Resilience, he noted, is not just about overcoming challenges but about moving forward together to build a stronger, more sustainable future for all.

No one left behind – Collaborative climate solutions for inclusive action

We heard inspiring stories on the power of bravery, trust, collaboration, and inclusivity in advancing climate action. Speakers emphasized that progress depends on relationship-building, open communication, and meaningful engagement with all community members, including Indigenous communities. They reinforced the need to integrate climate considerations into every policy and decision across all sectors, ensuring equitable access to the tools and resources needed to adapt and thrive—with municipalities leading the way.

When local governments take the first steps of integrating a climate lens into their day-to-day, they create change that enables other orders of government to follow. The discussion reinforced that climate action isn't all or nothing—it's about taking consistent, meaningful steps forward and ensuring no one is left behind.

The Honourable Nate Erskine-Smith, Minister of Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada, spoke on creating communities that benefit both current and future generations. He highlighted relationship-building and genuine collaboration with municipalities as a way to foster sustainable communities and cities. The Minister stressed the need for a unified approach to address challenges, ensuring that affordability and sustainability go hand in hand, and reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with municipalities, addressing funding concerns, and offering hands-on support.

The Mindfulness Initiative

<https://www.themindfulnessinitiative.org/>

Climate change is a physical reality, demanding political and practical solutions.

Training started in the UK for politicians to help with the overwhelming feelings of despair and eco-anxiety around climate. A way to bring connection with nature back into lives, and center it in policy and decision making.

Intact Insurance

Municipal Climate Resiliency Grants, available for flood and fire smart work <https://www.intactfc.com/in-the-community/municipal-climate/mcrg-program-details>

Presentations/Panel insights

Climate policy should be embedded in every department and decision. Support for staff to be creative and bring forward ideas. Need to think in 7 Generations governance terms so that political change doesn't undermine actions.

Less than 50% of Canadians understand that burning fossil fuels are the reason for human caused climate change and therefore do not support or understand the "solutions". Climate action will be motivated by wanting to care for what we love -children. People will act when they see and hear from the "doers" (builders, installers, the neighbours who show the how-to and talk about the benefits).

Energy Efficiency programs for homes and community buildings can address many affordability and safety issues for homeowners, energy equity, social and community connection. One neighbour taking action leads to another, and another. Community buildings should be/can be resiliency hubs with battery back up, food prep, warming or cooling centers for emergency events.

The Green Municipal Fund, Building Retrofit Program <https://greenmunicipalfund.ca/community-buildings-retrofit-initiative>

Property Assessed Clean Energy(PACE) program combining public/private investment into deep energy retrofits. E.I. Switchpace.org

Co-operators Insurance and Adenda Capital

<https://www.cooperators.ca/en/about-us/sustainability/sustainable-investing>

Investment in current residential building stock in Canada will require \$5 Billion each year for the next 20 years to reach Net Zero.

Working with non-profits, research groups, investors and all orders of government to mobilize private capital and build more climate-resilient communities.

Risk and Resiliency

Invest in Resiliency, creativity is important. Climate risk disclosure can be embedded in financial reports.

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Past land use planning is part of the problem. People live in harms way of natural events and processes (flood plains, landslide areas, fire interface). We need to start the discussion for managed retreat.

Investing in natural assets: re-establish native plant ecosystems, protecting intact ecosystems, natural planting riverbank and shoreline restoration, embed natural assets into procurement decisions. All these activities have multiple benefits from biodiversity, soil protection, water timing and flow mitigation, protecting infrastructure, homes and communities. These activities bring people together, build community and social cohesion.

Tools

Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation

<https://www.intactcentrecclimateadaptation.ca/> has resources such as:

Municipal Flood Risk Check-Up, 50 question risk spread sheet from the University of Waterloo.
Natural Asset Management, get nature into financial reporting

WWF.ca Mission Restoration: bringing together those doing work to share knowledge.

GMF

Adaptation Library

Connect and Collaborate with communities of practice

Online course, Building Climate Resilience with asset management

Biodiversity Lens (and the multiple benefits of biodiversity)

St. John's, Newfoundland, has leveraged the Green Municipal Fund to initiate its transition from diesel to electric vehicle fleets. It may be beneficial for us to examine their approach.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) offers a Municipal Green Certification process.

Re.Climate, based at Carlton University focuses on Communications about climate change. Resources including webinars/reports, tools, training. <https://reclimate.ca/>

Presentation focus was around factors and underlying trends shaping climate conversations:

1. Lack of understanding (people do not understand climate change)
2. Affordability is more than money (more about fairness, action on climate change is seen as only an option for the wealthy)
3. Fragmented information (people believe the comments section of where they get their info)
4. Declining trust (people believe their "peers" who are often social media influencers they think are their "friends"). We, the RD, are not top of people's media feeds.
5. Rising fatalism (people feel unsafe and insecure, finite action budget).

Five Traps Undermining Public Support for Climate Action

1. Focus on targets and plans (too abstract, few trust they are achievable) should rather focus on people and what you are doing for them
2. Over reliance on politicians (let the managers, engineer's, staff etc. tell the story)

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3. Bury Climate (this fails to build understanding, hides reality, and silences support)
4. Talking to the “public” (generic, wrong message to the wrong people, be targeted!)
5. Fighting with facts (people’s feelings don’t care about your facts!)

Stories shape understanding. Tell stories.

Five strategies to build public support for climate action right now

1. Focus on people and choices, not concepts. Use stories to articulate your Challenge, then give the Choice and Opportunities, 2/3rds of the message is then empowering.
2. Talk to people, not the public.
3. Activate Trusted Voices. Feature people that have led the way. The journey is just as important as the end result in convincing others to get involved.
4. Create space for conversations, within and outside of your organization. Reference: https://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/environmental_stewardship/neighbouring-for-climate
5. Plan for Disinformation. Reference: Disinformation in the City, Playbook 2024 esp. pages 35-36 This is critical before (pre-emp and early detection), during (prevent the spread), after (de-bunk and recovery).

Closing keynote: Climate change, local government and justice: Action and hope for the way forward

Award-winning journalist, Laura Lynch, closed SCC 2025 with a message of hope and inspiration. Through her powerful insights on climate justice and local climate action, she demonstrated how storytelling is one of the most powerful and effective ways to engage people and drive meaningful change —and one we local leaders should leverage to mobilize climate action. She urged delegates to stay informed, counter misinformation, and make sustainable choices to push for policies that balance environmental and economic well-being. Hope is not passive; it demands action. Through small steps, collective efforts, and persistent advocacy, we can build a more just and sustainable future.