

Climate Action 2016:

Are we climate ready?



Climate Action 2016: Are we climate ready?

January 11, 2016

Chris Winter, Canada Conserves

www.canadaconserves.ca

Canada Conserves is a national initiative to help Canadians live better with less. Climate change is the leading environmental issue in Canada and globally. Applying a conserver lens on climate action leads to some interesting solutions.

Chris Winter has been a leader in conservation and sustainability in Canada for over 30 years, with experience in NGO management, campaign design, community organizing, and strategic planning.

Climate Action 2016

2015 saw a renewed commitment to action on climate change – several updated provincial strategies, a federal mandate, and an international commitment to keep global warming to under 2 degrees.

2016 is where we turn the commitment into action.

This isn't just a matter of waiting for our governments to come out with a plan and a price for carbon. This is about all of us shaping the future of our country; creating the future **we** want.

We are about to embark on a long journey to a low-carbon future. The first steps we take are all-important. They will demonstrate whether we have the true commitment as a nation to embrace a different future.

Here are four suggestions for how we should start:

FOUR CLIMATE ACTION PRIORITIES

1. TURN PROBLEMS INTO OPPORTUNITIES.

Climate change is an immense challenge. It is also an amazing opportunity. When will we ever get another chance to re-design our communities and our economy to provide a high quality of life for all Canadians while reducing fossil fuel dependency at the same time?

2. BUILD THE CAPACITY FOR ACTION.

The transition to a low-carbon future will not happen overnight, but the first steps are all-important. We need to invest in building the capacity for change – the physical infrastructure and the organizations and businesses that can make change easy, affordable, and desirable.

3. EMPOWER CHANGE.

The best change is voluntary, not imposed. We can use carbon pricing as a mechanism to fund the future we want through incentives and investments.

4. BECOME CLIMATE READY

This is a chance for every community group, every organization, and every business and business association in Canada to look at how it can be part of the solution. Big or small, climate action needs to become part of our internal operations and how we engage with our members, customers, and community.

1. *Turn problems in opportunities*

Canada is an amazing country, and a great place to live. Canadians want to keep it that way.

We are concerned about many things that pose a threat to our quality of life, including:

- the rising cost of living
- job security and a healthy economy
- community safety and national security
- climate change and extreme weather

Our country and our economy grew through access to cheap oil, land, forests and water. Now, we are entering a new era where resources will not be as abundant, and where we will have to pay a price for carbon.

Our challenge is to chart a path towards a better future – efficient, sustainable, and with a high quality of life.

This is no small task. Our climate targets require that we cut back 80% of our greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. We cannot get there by regulation alone. We need to transform our way of life.

Climate plans should not work in isolation. On the contrary, they need to be the driver of a voluntary and organic transition to a better future. They need to help us lower our energy, transportation, food, and housing bills. They need to provide opportunities for job creation and innovation. They need to strengthen communities and neighbourhoods as the backbone of a vibrant economy and society. They need to help us prepare for floods, blackouts, and other climate-related crises while improving our homes and communities at the same time.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Every climate plan should focus on achieving the future we want through low carbon solutions – a high quality of life, strong communities, good jobs and an efficient and resilient economy.

2. Build the Capacity for Action

We are at the beginning of a transition. It is a path we can go down voluntarily, or we can wait until circumstances force us.

The path is not a foreign one, nor is it unpleasant. The beginning is full of steps we already know:

- energy conservation
- green power
- better transit and safe cycling
- local businesses
- local food
- walkable, vibrant communities

We need to embrace the way forward with passion, not hesitancy.

An important first step is to build the social and economic capacity to support a long process of change. We need to invest in the organizations and research that have laid the groundwork for a climate action plan over the past two decades. Innovation hubs, community networks, and centres of excellence all provide much needed capacity to develop and promote climate solutions.

BEGINNINGS

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

- Lao Tzu

Beginnings are always messy.

- John Galsworthy

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

- St. Francis of Assisi

No good ending can be expected in the absence of the right beginning.

- I Ching

Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.

- Seneca

The beginning is the most important part of the work.

- Plato

The beginnings of all things are small.

- Cicero

What's well begun is half done.

- Horace

RECOMMENDATION #2

Every climate plan should focus on building capacity for change – the ability to promote and support voluntary change.

3. Empower Change

At the heart of climate action is voluntary change. The big actions can be achieved through regulations – emission standards, pricing, or a coal phase-out – but the long-term success of a climate plan depends on its ability to convince and empower people to take action in their own lives.

The transition to a low-carbon society will be driven by lifestyle and market choices – decisions people make about how they live their lives, earn a living, and spend their money. Change needs to be easy, affordable, and desirable.

Government plans will need to include adequate funding for incentives, green infrastructure, and engagement programs to stimulate widespread participation in climate solutions.

Early adoption of climate solutions will build support and pave the way for further action in the years ahead.

EMPOWERING CLIMATE ACTION

Examples where incentives, infrastructure and support programs will encourage climate action

- **ENERGY AUDITS**
- **ENERGY CONSERVATION**
- **BACK-UP POWER**
- **GREEN POWER**
- **EFFICIENT OR ELECTRIC VEHICLES**
- **CYCLE PATHS AND BIKE LANES**
- **OFFICE SHOWERS FOR CYCLISTS**
- **LOW COST AND EFFICIENT TRANSIT**
- **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**
- **INNOVATION CENTRES (SHARED SPACE)**
- **CLIMATE SOLUTION NETWORKS**
- **COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORKS**
- **COMMUNITY CLIMATE PLANS**
- **CLIMATE ACTION AMBASSADORS AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**
- **COMMUNITY GARDENS**
- **LOCAL FOOD**
- **COMPACT, MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT**

RECOMMENDATION #3

Every climate plan should invest in our future – from conservation incentives and innovation grants to community development and green infrastructure.

4. Become climate ready



The real question is whether we are ready to embark on a bold new path towards a low-carbon future.

The answer is almost.

We are not starting from scratch. On the contrary, we have an extremely strong foundation of research, products, and services that have been developed by Canadian organizations, businesses, and governments.

But we are not yet organized for action.

The very first step is to develop a voluntary sector campaign in support of a nationwide commitment to action: Climate Ready Canada.

2016 needs to be the year that Canada became “climate ready.”

For more details, see the Canada Conserves [projects page](#).

A CLIMATE READY CHECKLIST

Our climate ready checklist (see following pages) can be used to identify opportunities for action or develop an overall action plan.

Categories

Extreme weather: preparing for local impacts of climate change, in particular from extreme weather.

Energy: saving energy and shifting to renewable power sources

Transportation: finding alternatives to car dependency and ownership

Food: growing local, high quality food

Jobs and the economy: creating quality jobs, strong local economies, and a resilient economy

Community: celebrating the contribution of cultural activities to a low-carbon lifestyle and planning integrated communities and cities that are intrinsically low-carbon, vibrant, and great places to live.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Develop a national Climate Ready campaign – a collaboration of organizations, businesses and governments promoting climate action through their internal commitments and their support programs, products and/or services.

CLIMATE READY CHECKLIST

















This checklist gives ideas for actions that can help you adapt to or mitigate climate change. It can be used to find ideas to make your home climate ready; for community workshops to identify possible community projects, identify business opportunities; or to design a comprehensive local, provincial or national plan. The goal is to map out a course of action that improves our lives at the same time as it reduces our carbon footprint.













Benefits Key	Check List
extreme weather preparation	Are there products or services that help make it easy to act?
save money	Is there funding support for this action?
improve quality of life	Notes • Solutions, products, support, project ideas, etc.
climate friendly	• Things to look for, either for yourself or in your community.
Green jobs	• Edit the notes or add in weblinks of interest for products, services, incentives, or funding

Action	Top Benefits			Notes
Extreme Weather				
<input type="checkbox"/> Backup power				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Batteries charged via solar or off-peak power Camp stove/BBQ for outdoor cooking Generator for larger buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Backup heat				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High efficiency wood stove Portable gas heater (with CO detector)
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural cooling				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shade trees, curtains, night air flow
<input type="checkbox"/> Storm drainage and flood water				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downspout disconnection, rain barrel and overflow drainage Stormwater retention areas for communities/rural areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Non-perishable food and water				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emergency supplies No-power recipes
<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency kit				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find the recommended emergency kit for your region
<input type="checkbox"/> Community plan				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A community plan for extreme weather events
<input type="checkbox"/> Community emergency centre				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate community buildings and organizations as emergency centres
<input type="checkbox"/> Community crisis volunteers				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizations with professionals and volunteers to assist vulnerable populations and the public










Energy









<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy audit • Efficient lighting and appliances • Draft proofing and insulation • Conserver habits
<input type="checkbox"/> Solar power or heat	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive solar for hot water • Photovoltaic solar for home or to feed into the grid • Purchase green power at a premium
<input type="checkbox"/> Wind power	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-op or community power • Small scale personal use • Purchase green power at a premium
<input type="checkbox"/> Geothermal power	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vertical for small buildings • Horizontal for large areas
<input type="checkbox"/> Other green power	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water, tidal, energy storage

Transportation

<input type="checkbox"/> Walk or cycle	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active and Safe routes to School • Cycle lanes and routes • Practice safe cycling (and driving)
<input type="checkbox"/> Public transit	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download an app for route schedules and times in your municipality
<input type="checkbox"/> Car-sharing	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find the car-sharing companies in your municipality
<input type="checkbox"/> Car pooling	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for car pooling information in your municipality
<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel efficient vehicle	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hybrid, electric, or fuel-efficient cars
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation mix	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create your own transportation mix. See how much you can save and still get from A to B with ease and style • Design community transportation needs, including walkable village centres, safe cycling and urban/regional transit and commuting

Food

<input type="checkbox"/> Local and sustainable	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local farmers and agro-tourism • Eat seasonal foods • Host community events to celebrate good food and learn new recipes
<input type="checkbox"/> Community gardens	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow your own food • Create a community kitchen or pizza oven
<input type="checkbox"/> Farmers' markets	  		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support local farmers' markets
<input type="checkbox"/> Organic food	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support organic or ethically grown food (especially livestock)
<input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarian food	 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save money and learn new recipes for vegetarian meals

Jobs and the Economy				
<input type="checkbox"/> Innovation				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for innovative ideas – products and services that will help us live better with less • Create community innovation centres to support social and economic entrepreneurs
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth employment				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide summer jobs for youth that will provide practical experience in the new green economy
<input type="checkbox"/> Green jobs				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support jobs in a green economy, including energy conservation, renewable power, education and culture, and value-added skills that emphasize quality and durability
<input type="checkbox"/> Local economy				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop local. Support a complex, value-added local economy.
Community				
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts and culture				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate local culture, arts, music as part of the fabric of a vibrant, livable community
<input type="checkbox"/> Greenspace				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance local greenspace and streets. Plant trees and create habitat for wildlife • Enjoy urban parks and greenspace as a place for recreation and community events
<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Design				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take an active role in planning a climate-friendly community • Support village centres, amenities, and a vibrant and diverse economy and culture.
<input type="checkbox"/> Community action plan				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get involved with local groups and community projects • Create a community network and an action plan for your community

This checklist is available in Word or PDF format at <http://canadaconserves.ca/solutions/climate-action-worksheets/>. You can adapt the list as you wish to meet your needs.