

Engage!

How to put Canadians
into Canada's Climate Plans



October 2017

It's a bold target

An 80% reduction in
greenhouse gas
emissions
by 2050



Getting there won't be easy. We're going to need help.
A lot of help.

Congratulations, Canada

Canada has acknowledged climate change is real, is happening now, and poses a major threat to our environment, our economy and way of life.

Our governments, from federal down to municipal, are enacting climate plans. Carbon pricing is rolling out across the country, and the revenue being invested back into climate solutions.

We've taken the first steps on a long journey to a low-carbon future. That's something worth celebrating.

Completing the journey will require some major changes in how we live, work, and play – all in just three decades. This is much bigger than any government plan. You're going to need some help.

Like, about 36 million people.

We can do it, if our climate plans focus on how Canadians can improve their quality of life at the same time as cutting carbon emissions; and if our climate plans that engage communities and the voluntary sector as partners in climate action.

This is how we can do it..



Climate action
is within reach

Meeting the climate challenge

The power has been out for a day following an intense storm, and it's freezing.

Where do you go?

People in your community are complaining about the high cost of living.

How can you help them?

Your climate plan offers incentives for key solutions.

Do people know about them?

Chances are, your answer is: "I don't know."

Maybe your climate plan has an information website, or a series of advertisements. It's not enough. If we are serious about climate action, we need to engage people in their homes, communities, and through the many organizations they belong to.

The most overlooked part of climate planning is public engagement and support. Which is crazy, not only because individual and community action is a key part of the solution, but also because if we can't show strong public and social benefit from climate plans, how do we expect to maintain public support for the next 50 years?

What if:

- communities were ready for extreme weather events, with emergency centres and volunteer services run by local groups;
- NGO and community projects helped connect people with climate solutions that also save money or improve their quality of life;
- groups across Canada helped promote climate action to their members and the public.

We need to make public and community engagement a more central component in Canada's climate plans.

YES, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE



Getting off the Climate Couch

The biggest challenge with climate change is not getting people to admit it exists, nor is it getting politicians and governments to act. It lies in convincing ourselves to act.

Most Canadians are convinced that climate change is a real and significant threat. They either believe the science or their own eyes.

Most Canadians support government leadership on climate change, including carbon pricing if there is transparency, accountability, and benefit in the measures taken.

Many municipal and provincial governments have climate plans in place, including greenhouse gas inventories and targets for key sectors such as buildings and transportation.

The problem is that we have focused on climate change as a problem requiring a political solution, when in reality it is as much about changing ourselves.

So here are the real questions: **what should people do, what motivates people to act, and how can we help them?**

What can people do?

We want people to be ready for climate change, and burn less fossil fuels. It's as simple as that.

In practice, it boils down to five main areas of activity:

1. Readiness

- Be prepared for extreme weather and a changing climate

2. Homes and Buildings

- Conserving energy
- Choosing efficient appliances
- Using renewable power

3. Travel

- Purchasing e-vehicles
- Using public transit
- Choosing active transportation
- Reducing air travel

4. Food

- Choosing local food
- Growing our own food
- Reducing or eliminating meat in our diet

5. Communities

- compact and complete communities
- greenspace and play
- Supporting local economies and culture

Why will people act?

We need to ask why would people want to change their homes, cars, possessions, diet, and lifestyle? In general, it boils down to three likely reasons:

Money – it lowers the cost of living or is an investment that will pay back over time.

Quality of life – it improves our health, reduces stress, or creates a more livable community.

Ethics – helping the environment and helping others is the right thing to do.

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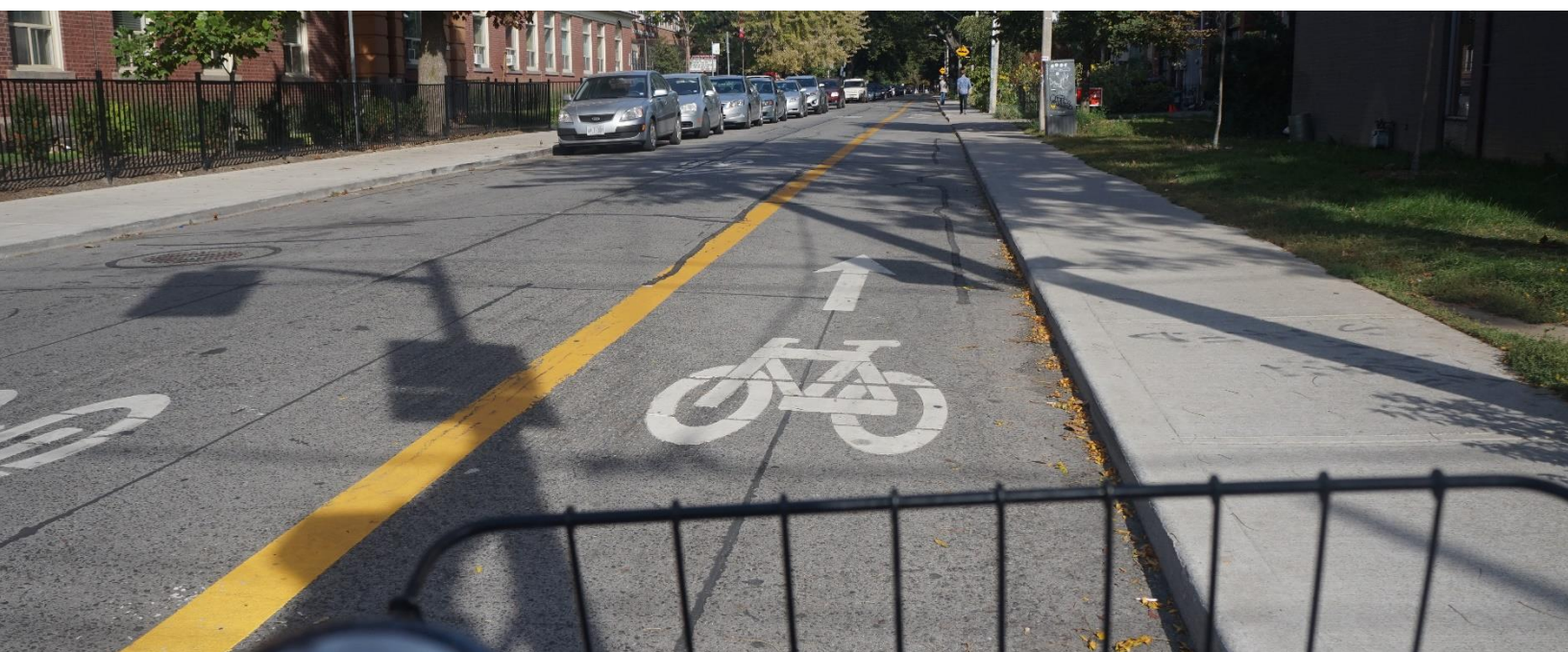
How can we help?

We can help by making climate solutions **easy, affordable, and desirable**.

Easy – remove barriers to action. Invest in low-carbon infrastructure, provide clear information, support community-based outreach, and offer products and services to help people act.

Affordable – offer incentives to support new technology or to reward a low-carbon lifestyle.

Desirable – focus on solutions people want; solutions that address their needs and/or provide additional social benefits.



Is it that simple?

In a way, it is. Climate action is really about helping people do things that improve their lives at the same time as they are helping the environment. It should be a positive thing.

Now comes the hard part. Yes, there is a hard part. We need to up our game – activists, NGOs, funders, and government – all of us together.

We need to build a different climate movement – a support movement that is focused on implementation. More than just looking at our own organizations and mandates, we need to think, and act, like a movement.

In real terms, it means we need a strategy that will invest in the social infrastructure for climate action. A strategy that will engage Canadians.

The Strategy: Connect, Organize, and Act.

WHAT	WHO	HOW
CONNECT		
1. Create social benefit	Government	Link carbon revenue to climate solutions that have strong public and social benefit – demonstrating value for carbon pricing.
ORGANIZE		
2. Develop climate solutions	Organizations, Social Ventures, Businesses	Develop expertise in climate solutions – locally, provincially, and nationally.
3. Create climate circles	Communities, Organizations	Build climate circles, or networks, to foster collaboration at the community, regional, and national levels, and around climate solutions.
4. Connect and collaborate	Climate Circles	Connect these circles within a regional and national climate action framework.
ACT		
5. Create cool communities	Governments, Funders	Invest in community and voluntary sector capacity to engage the public and help people and communities take action on climate change.
6. Create cool campaigns	NGO Leads, Multi-sector partners	Develop coordinated movement-based campaigns to engage and support public action on the key solutions.

The following pages look at each of these points in greater detail.

1. Create Social Benefit

A better future

It is the science of climate change that drives the urgency for action, but it will be the benefits of action that will determine whether or not we will succeed.

Quite simply, without public support our climate plans are doomed to fail. It's one thing to garner support for political leadership, it's an entirely different matter to maintain that support over time. Without deep cultural support for climate action, every election for the foreseeable future will be a referendum on climate policy. Without public support, we run the risk of seeing climate policy overturned.

Deep cultural support for climate action requires that we demonstrate individual and social benefit. For governments, it is a focus on green infrastructure, green jobs, and consumer incentives. At the community level, it means we need to promote climate solutions that save people money, enhance our quality of life, create jobs, and improve our communities.

Connecting climate action with social benefit also builds allies. Suddenly carbon pricing becomes part of the solution to funding community development, healthy lifestyles, food security, job creation, and much more.

Marketing climate action is not just about tackling climate change. It is about creating the future we want.



Examples of Social Benefit

Actions that have direct social benefit include:

- ☐ extreme weather readiness
- ☐ energy conservation and efficiency
- ☐ affordable and reliable renewable power
- ☐ better public transit
- ☐ safe cycling
- ☐ electric and hybrid vehicles

Other actions will have a lower return on investment for carbon reduction, but they will have strong social benefits and contribute to the development of vibrant, complete communities. They include:

- ☐ local job creation
- ☐ innovation centres
- ☐ community gardens and markets
- ☐ cafes and community hubs
- ☐ outdoor play areas for kids, adults, and seniors
- ☐ urban greenspace and parks
- ☐ urban fruit trees and natural streetscapes
- ☐ culture and the arts



2. Develop Climate Solutions

Local Solutions to a Global Problem

The path to a low-carbon future is not linear or simple, it is complex and organic. It will require a whole generation of people choosing to work in ways that support a low-carbon lifestyle and economy.

There are the big fixes, like investing in transit or designing a new generation of electric cars, but there are also thousands of local solutions.

Some are tried and true, like a farmer's market, a bike shop, or energy conservation. They are part of the green movement that has been with us for decades.

Then there are the opportunities arising from new research and technology, such as electric vehicles, green power, and net zero buildings.

And then there are the social ventures and the ecopreneurs – often the result of the next

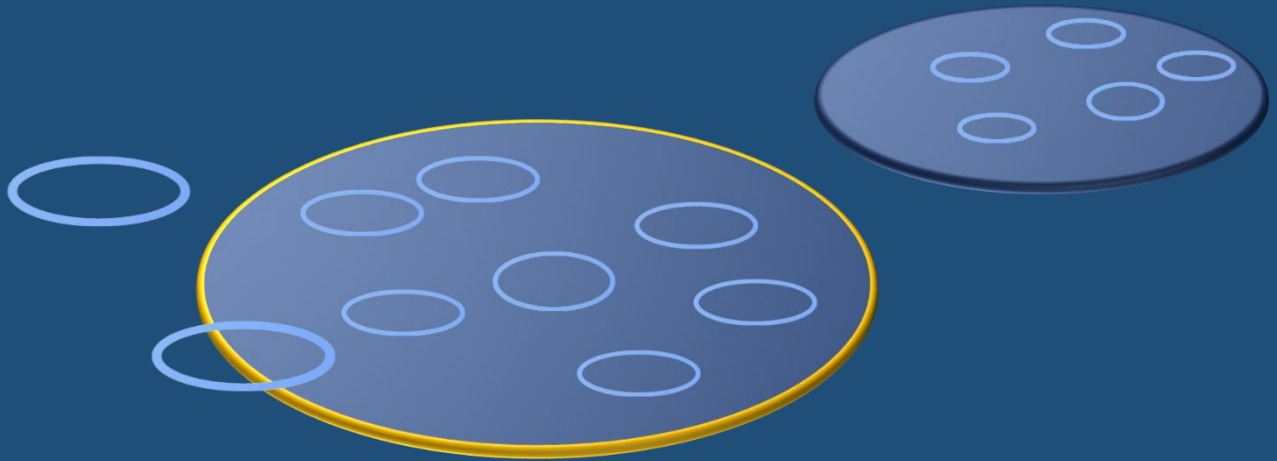
generation coming up with innovative ways to tackle problems and create a better future.

The line between business and the voluntary sector is becoming increasingly blurry these days, with B Corp and mission-based companies, and charitable organizations running social venture businesses. The bottom line is that they are all looking at climate action and asking, “what does my community need?”

Climate action is a tremendous opportunity for Canadians to create new products and services that will help people live better while reducing their carbon impact.

Climate plans can help by funding centres of excellence and local innovation centres, as well as incentives to support the development of small-scale climate solutions.

3. Create Climate Circles



Find Your Circle

So you have developed your area of expertise in climate solutions – now what?

Whether you are working at the community level or a national organization, in the voluntary sector, business, or government, the next step is to connect and collaborate with others. Find your circle.

We are rarely alone. There are usually around a dozen or more organizations that share our mission. They may have a different focus, offer similar services or products, fill a different need, yet you will also find something in common.

Finding, or developing a circle, is about working together to support each other in our own work, and to find areas for collaboration.

A circle can be a formal network or association, a community of practice, or an informal contact list. It can form around a particular solution (e.g. green power, active transportation, or healthy food), or it can form around a neighbourhood or any other type of community (see Create Cool Communities, page 8).

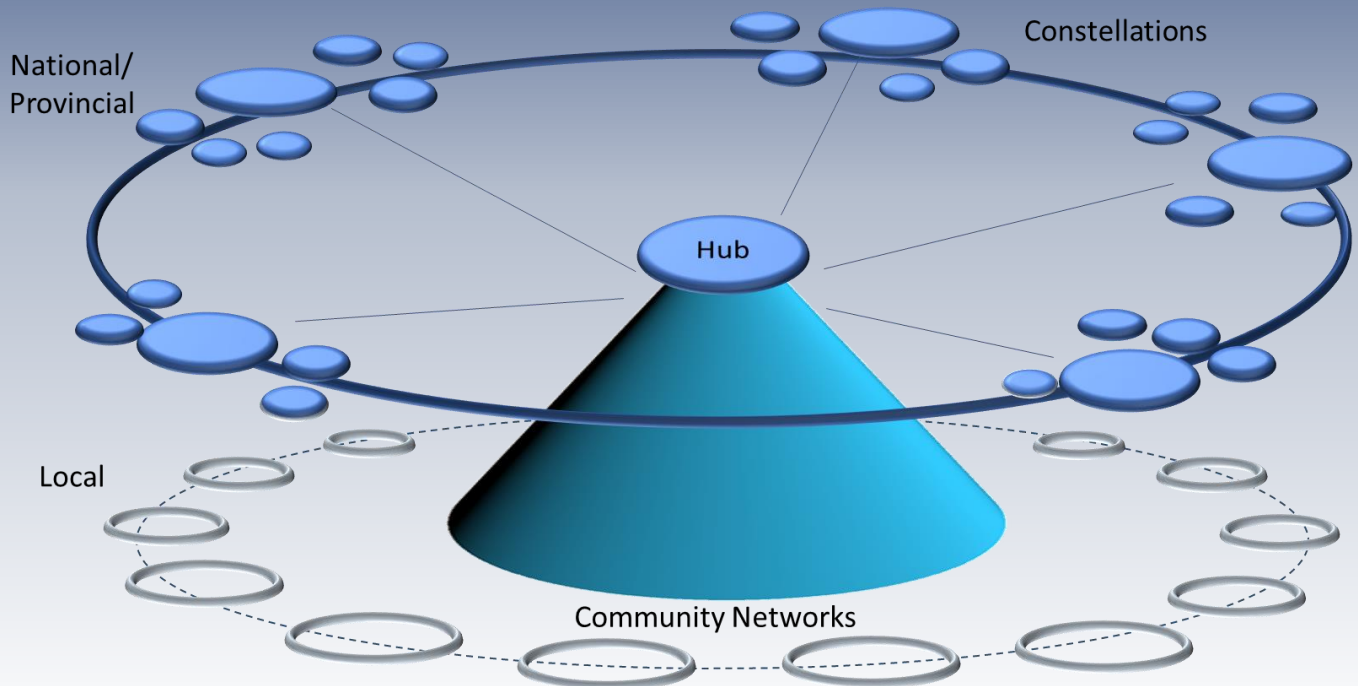
The idea of networking is nothing new, but it has fallen on hard times in recent years due to cuts in mission-based funding. For example, the Canadian Environmental Network, with its affiliated provincial networks, used to receive core funding to facilitate consultation with the country's environmental community. No more.

To be successful, networks need a clear focus. Climate action can provide that focus by:

1. promoting climate solutions to the Canadian public
2. co-marketing products and services
3. integrating climate action with other benefits (see Create Social Benefit, page 7.)

Climate circles already exist – such as Green Communities Canada, the Climate Action Network, Faith and the Common Good, the Ontario Healthy Communities Association, and many others. We have the opportunity to strengthen their role and develop new networks to build a stronger climate action movement across Canada.

4. Connect and Collaborate



Connect the Circles

Now the fun part. What if we connect all the circles? This is how we organize a complex and organic sector, with hundreds of thousands of volunteers, thousands of community groups and businesses in hundreds of municipalities in ten provinces and three territories across the country?

Sound daunting, doesn't it? It doesn't have to be if we focus on three simple solutions:

1. Networking
2. Positive Action
3. Strategic Interventions

Networking: look to collaborate with those around you, whether in your community, a business, an organization, or a government department.

And when we network our networks, we find we can connect from national or provincial to individual citizens in just three degrees of separation (see diagram above). Now that's organizing.

Positive Action: Focus on tangible actions that connect climate action with social benefit. Organize collaborative movement-based campaigns through our networks.

Strategic Interventions: Practice nudging. Look at how strategic investments in physical and social infrastructure, economic instruments and public incentives, and regulated standards can stimulate organic and positive change.



5. Create Cool Communities

A Nation of Cool Communities

Canada is a nation of communities, each one unique, proud, and strong.

At the heart of each community lies the groups and volunteers who are dedicated to making their community a great place to live, be it through faith, culture, greening, economic development, social services recreation, food security, or any other cause.

These groups, these people, are the key to climate action. They can engage their members and the public, adapt messaging and solutions to local priorities, and develop projects to help people and strengthen their community.

Over eighty percent of Canada's population lives in urban areas. As a result, much of the focus for community action will be on urban neighbourhoods, although these ideas can be applied equally to rural communities, and faith, cultural, or other communities.

Canada is a great place to live. We want to keep it that way. Climate action should be a way to invest in our communities, and the future we want.

Here's how:

1. **A community lead** – an organization that can coordinate a community effort
2. **A community network** – community organizations willing to work together on climate action
3. **A community climate plan** – a plan of action in support of a community vision
4. **Community projects** – individual projects that support the plan
5. **Community Campaigns** – community-wide campaigns supported by numerous organizations within the network

The first three steps can be carried out by volunteers or with a capacity-building grant of up to \$40,000. In turn, a community plan can help raise project and campaign funds.

Creating a nation of “cool communities” can be easier than you may think. There are already groups on the ground doing community organizing either directly on climate action, or where climate change is part of a broader mandate (e.g. the United Nations Sustainability Goals, or healthy communities).

For more details, see <http://climateaction.ca/cool-communities/>



Our Vision: a great place to live

In 2050, will there still be a corner garage and a corner restaurant? Will we drive gas cars, electric vehicles, or ride bikes? Where will our electricity come from?

Change can fill us with fear, or with hope. But change is inevitable.

We fear climate change. We fear potential economic instability, social unrest, resource scarcity, and a rising cost of living. We fear that all these things may come to pass together.

We hope for a better future. We hope for a good life with family, friends and community. We hope for good work in a strong economy, and a healthy environment.

The key to a good climate plan – national or neighbourhood -- is to start with a vision of the future we want, and then find ways we can get there.

Most Canadians live in an urban area, so take a walk around your neighbourhood. Or, if you live in the country, look around you. Think about what might be different in 2050. Think about what may happen, what will change, and how it might change for the better. Think about the potential for positive change – in our homes, our communities, and across the country.

This is how we build our climate plans – from the bottom up. Our vision is of Canada as a great place to live, and we believe acting on climate change will make it even better.



Three Priorities for Community Action

Talk about climate change in your community, and you will probably hear one or more of these priorities:

1. **(Adaptation)**
Help us be adapt to climate change and be ready for extreme weather.
2. **(Mitigation)**
Help us save energy and improve our lives.
3. **(Resilience)**
Help us create resilient communities that are great places to live.

1. Extreme Weather Readiness

Extreme weather is how most of us have experienced the effects of climate change. Depending on the region, it could be extreme heat or cold, heavy rain and floods, ice storms, strong winds, hurricanes and tornadoes, or drought and wildfire. Often, extreme weather is accompanied by power failures.

Canadians and communities come together in times of crisis. We need to be better prepared ready for blackouts and extreme weather with community emergency plans, volunteers, and shelters.

2. Solutions People Want

Climate action is all about using less fossil energy. It's that simple.

The trick is to find climate solutions that you want to do – solutions that save you time or money, make you feel good, or that you feel is a worthwhile investment. It's up to you to figure out which ones fit your needs and desires.

We will do this one step at a time. Just remember, thirty years ago solar power was an oddity, few people cycled to work, and there were no electric vehicles.

A climate plan for Canadians will help people save energy, switch to green power, ride bikes safely, drive fuel efficient cars, use transit, eat local healthy food, start community gardens, eat less meat, find meaningful work, become a social entrepreneur, and contribute to their community.

3. Plan for the Future

In the end, all these climate solutions converge around the design of complete communities – great places to live, work, and play.

If we want our future to be climate friendly, then we need to design our communities so that they are energy-efficient and people friendly.

Over 80% of Canadians live in urban areas, so it makes sense to focus on creating vibrant urban villages nested within efficient municipalities and connected to rural lands and a regional economy.

To get there, we need to fully engage Canadians in thinking about the future we want, and to get involved in formal municipal plans as well as community-led action plans. We need to invest now in development that will lead to a low carbon future with a high quality of life.





6. Create Cool Campaigns

Movement-based social marketing

So we have organized climate circles for communities and climate solutions. Now what?

What about co-marketing climate solutions with movement-based campaigns? Governments, business, and NGOs can collaborate on promoting a common message that links climate action with social benefit, and that promotes the available incentives, products, and services.

The key to movement-based social marketing is that the campaign has a core message which can be easily adapted to fit different audiences. Conserving energy, for example, is a common goal that has different applications for small business, low-income communities, or farmers.

At the heart of each campaign is a positive message. We are marketing the future we want, not the future we fear.



What if every local business could display a sticker showing their level of commitment to climate action in their community. Stores would get recognition for their actions, and we would all benefit from nation-wide visibility on a daily basis.

For more details, see www.climateaction.ca/campaign





Breaking Down the Barriers to Action

How to make this plan work

Near Dundas and Spadina in Toronto, there's a mural dedicated to Sonny Atkinson, a community activist who caused the brick wall to be torn down that isolated his community from the rest of the neighbourhood.

A radical, yet entirely pragmatic solution.

Solving climate change is going to require just that kind of thinking – finding ways to break down the barriers to action and strengthening our common resolve and capacity to take action.

On the radical side, it suggests that climate action is a force for positive change, not a sacrifice. It empowers voluntary leadership; it emphasizes social co-benefits, and it adds a whole new focus to most climate plans. To the traditional focus on policy and pricing we add a new focus on empowering voluntary action.

The pragmatic side is that our climate plans can focus on solutions people want; on helping people take action; and on strengthening a huge support network that includes community groups and volunteers, local businesses, and provincial and national organizations.

In the end, this isn't radical at all. It's just effective community engagement. We have built a brick wall around climate change – isolating it as a government responsibility when we should be reconnecting with communities, focusing on the future we want, and using climate action as the means to get there.

Whether you are an activist, in government, a funder, or in business, the advice is the same: reach out, connect, and collaborate.

Get Active

For those of us who are active in our communities or who are interested in making a difference, apply the six steps in your own work.

1. **Develop an area of expertise**
 - a. A climate solution
 - b. Community organizing
 - c. Climate policy
2. **Be part of a climate circle**
 - a. A community network
 - b. A solutions network
 - c. A policy network
3. **Be connected**
 - a. To higher level groups
 - b. To local groups
 - c. To peer groups or communities
4. **Link climate action with social benefit**
 - a. To customers, clients, or the public
 - b. To the community at large
5. **Promote climate action in your community**
 - a. Community projects
 - b. A Community Climate Action Plan
6. **Collaborate on campaigns to promote climate solutions**
 - a. Community campaigns
 - b. Climate solutions

Advocate

For those of us who are active in lobbying for government leadership, press for effective engagement strategies in your municipality, province or territory, and federally.

Ask your councillor, MPP, or MP if their climate plan includes people and communities as active partners in climate action. Remind them that community engagement is not just public consultation on government action, it is how government empowers people to act.

Create Better Climate Plans

If you are developing a municipal, provincial, or federal climate plan, or are a funder, create a one-window web site (or page) that includes:

1. **Incentives** and support for individuals and businesses
2. **Funding** for community and non-governmental organizations
3. **Climate campaigns** and marketing tools to promote climate action and climate solutions
4. **Links** to other funding and programs with similar goals
5. **Information** on government investments in infrastructure, economic development and other measures in support of climate action.

Continuous Improvement

Climate change requires both immediate action and continuous improvement. The urgency of the issue demands that we do the best we can right now. The depth of change required means that we need to do constantly review and improve our actions – as individuals, as communities, climate leaders, and as governments.

Challenge ourselves and each other to do better, and support each other along the way.

Let's use climate action as the opportunity to create the future we want!



Summary Chart



Engage:

How to put Canadians into Canada's Climate Plans

ACTION		NGO	GOV'T	FUNDERS	ALLIES
CONNECT					
1	Social Benefit Connect climate action with social benefit – find co-benefits and synergy – find allies in other areas	✓	✓	✓	✓
ORGANIZE					
2	Climate Solutions Develop expertise, products and services – locally, regionally, and nationally	✓	\$	\$	✓
3	Climate Circles Build networks – locally, regionally, nationally – around communities and solutions	✓	\$	\$	✓
4	Connect and Collaborate Build capacity and collaboration – between climate circles – between national, regional, and local circles	✓	\$	—	—
ACT					
5	Community Action Focus on community action – action plans, projects and campaigns	✓	\$	\$	✓
6	Climate Campaigns Run movement-based campaigns – promote climate solutions – engage the public via communities – support communities via climate circles	✓	✓	\$	✓

Climate Action Resources



NGOs and Others at the Forefront

Here are some of the organizations that are at the forefront of climate action in Canada.

Climate Change Policy

- [Climate Action Network](#)
- [350.org](#)
- [Ecofiscal Commission](#)
- [David Suzuki Foundation](#)
- [Environmental Defence](#)
- [World Wildlife Fund](#)
- [Evergreen Foundation](#)
- [Climate Reality](#)
- [Citizen's Climate Lobby](#)

Government Plans

- See www.climateaction.ca/resources
- [Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#)

Community Organizing

- [Climate Hubs](#) (Climate Reality)
- [Green Communities Canada](#)
- [Equiterre](#)
- [Tamarack Institute](#)
- [Sustainability CoLab](#)
- [Centre for Social Innovation](#)

Extreme Weather

- [CLARION](#)
- [Community Resilience to Extreme Weather](#)

Energy Conservation

- [Green Communities Home Energy Solutions](#)
- [Quest](#)

Green Power

- [Solar Energy Society of Canada](#)
- [Canadian Wind Energy Association](#)
- [Pembina Institute](#)

Transportation

- [Canadian Urban Transit Association](#)

Food

- [Sustain Ontario](#)

Complete Communities

- [Jane's Walk](#)
- [Earth Day Canada](#)
- [Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition](#)
- [Canadian Urban Institute](#)

Funding

- [Canadian Environmental Grantmakers Network](#)

Climate Action Canada

www.climateaction.ca

- Cool Communities guide
- 50+ Ideas for Community Engagement on Climate Action
- Cool Campaigns

