

The British Columbia Climate Action Charter

Questions and Answers

(1) Where can I get a copy of the proposed British Columbia Climate Change Action Charter?

A copy is available on the UBCM's web-site at www.civicnet.bc.ca under Featured Policy Topics/Climate Change

(2) Who will be the parties to the Climate Change Action Charter?

It is expected that the Provincial Government and UBCM will be parties to the Charter, along with "Signatory Local Governments". Local Government participation is not mandatory, and the choice about whether or not to become a signatory to the Charter will be made by individual Municipal Councils and Regional District Boards.

(3) What is the intention behind the Climate Change Action Charter?

The Charter recognizes the need to take action on climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the important role that the Provincial Government and Local Governments can play in affecting change. The Charter is not a legally binding instrument, but rather a statement of commitment by the parties towards common climate change action goals.

(4) What commitments are the Provincial Government and UBCM making?

UBCM and the Provincial Government are committing to establishing a Joint Provincial-UBCM Green Communities Committee and Green Communities Working Groups to develop a range of actions that can affect climate change, build local government capacity to plan and implement climate change initiatives, support local governments in taking actions on becoming carbon neutral in respect of their operations by 2012 and share information and explore additional opportunities to support climate change activities.

(5) If a Local Government wanted to become a signatory, what commitments would it need to make?

The commitments signatory Local Governments would make are set out in section 5 of the Charter. If a Local Government wished to sign the Charter, it must commit to developing strategies and taking action to achieve three goals: becoming carbon neutral in respect of their operations by 2012; measuring and reporting on their community's GHG emissions profile; and creating complete, compact, more energy efficient rural and urban communities. However, this is not a legally binding document and does not fetter future councils or boards (see section 9).

In addition, signatory Local Governments may also include a statement of their other commitments and initiatives in an appendix to the Charter.

(6) What is meant by carbon neutral?

Part of the work that the Provincial Government and UBCM will be undertaking through the Green Communities Committee is to develop a common approach to determining carbon neutrality for the purposes of the Charter.

Essentially, becoming carbon neutral is a process by which you determine what carbon emissions you contribute and work towards reducing these to zero; ideally, through first reducing your own emissions to the extent that this is possible and then through offsetting your remaining emissions with credits for emission reductions elsewhere.

The Charter states that the Local Government commitment does not relate to solid waste facilities that are regulated under the *Environmental Management Act*. Further, the Province and UBCM have agreed that the commitment to carbon neutrality is intended to capture only those activities for which the Local Government exercises direct control (e.g., emissions relating to vehicles and buildings owned by the Local Government) and is not intended to capture the indirect results of the exercise of Local Government decision making, regulatory or legislative authority (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions that might result from a Local Government land use decision).

The Green Communities Committee will further refine these concepts as it develops a common approach to determining carbon neutrality for the purposes of the Charter in the coming months. Local Governments need not implement their carbon neutral commitments until after the Green Communities Committee has completed this work.

(7) What does measuring and reporting on a community's GHG emission profile mean?

This is meant to mirror some of the other commitments that signatory Local Governments are making under the Charter. So, for instance, a Local Government will be measuring and reporting on the GHG emissions resulting from its operations once a common approach to determining carbon neutrality has been developed by the Green Communities Committee. Similarly, a Local Government may want to mark its progress towards undertaking strategies and actions related to creating complete, compact and more energy efficient communities and describe how those strategies and actions are intended to affect the community's GHG profile.

(8) What support can Local Governments expect in working towards these goals?

The Province and UBCM commit in the Charter to providing support to local governments in pursuing the Charter's goals. Specific Provincial

commitments may come in the form of responses to UBCM resolutions or in the form of announcements during the UBCM Convention.

In addition, the Joint Provincial-UBCM Green Communities Committee will be looking at what barriers there might be to Local Governments taking action on climate change and working towards implementing measures to remove those barriers. That Committee is specifically tasked with developing a range of actions that can affect climate change, building local government capacity to plan and implement climate change initiatives, supporting local governments in taking actions on becoming carbon neutral and sharing information and exploring additional opportunities to support climate change activities.

(9) How are local governments taking action on climate change?

Communities large and small have engaged in a wide variety of projects intended to reduce the carbon footprint of communities. Local governments are currently planning liveable, sustainable communities; encouraging green developments and transit oriented developments; and implementing innovative infrastructure technologies including landfill gas recapture and production of clean energy.

From fleet vehicle conversion, to anti-idling bylaws, to encouraging energy efficient municipal operations, local governments of all sizes have taken practical steps to reducing greenhouse gases.

(10) What is the purpose of the Addendum?

We know many local governments have already undertaken plans or projects to reduce GHGs and/or are planning to do so. Potential signatories may wish to make reference to these as existing or additional commitments.

The sample Addendum allows local governments to customize this section of the Charter to include a listing of:

- Related plans or projects already adopted or undertaken;
- Plans, bylaws or other policies that council or boards have committed to develop.

(11) What do we do after we have agreed to become a signatory?

The Wednesday (September 26) afternoon session at our upcoming convention is devoted to climate change and green city initiatives and will feature the Climate Action Charter. Please notify the UBCM office as soon as possible and indicate who from your local government would be available at the convention to participate in this session.

If you decide to become a signatory after that date, please provide UBCM with your signed Charter.

(12) Where can I get further information?

Additional materials are available on UBCM's website at [insert link]. For further information, please feel free to contact:

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