



FAQs for Municipal Managers

What is the Carbon Neutral Kootenays project?

The Carbon Neutral Kootenays project is an unprecedented collaboration by local governments to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions – that is the energy consumed and the emissions generated from their municipal operations. Reducing GHG emissions is a strategy for climate change mitigation - while other activities are focused on adaptation.

The project is being funded by the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) – to assist local governments in meeting their commitments to the Province of BC as signatories to the Climate Action Charter. As well, several First Nations are participating as they develop their own energy and climate change strategies.

Why am I being contacted?

The first step is the compilation of an energy and GHG inventory. This is simply a tabulation of the energy consumption and associated GHG emissions by local government operations. Most of this energy is used for civic buildings, vehicle fleets, with some energy used for providing municipal services.

- **The First Step:** The consultant team will make contact with the CAO or other senior manager of each municipality starting in mid-March. This will include a brief interview to help understand what types of activities may be underway (e.g. some communities may have already compiled a baseline inventory, completed energy audits on their buildings, etc.). Also collected here will be names of contacts within the municipality that can provide information such as a list of civic buildings and vehicle fleet data.
- **The Second Step:** The second step will be for the consultant team to initiate contact with relevant staff to assemble the inventory data. The collection of inventory data will start in late March and continue until June 2009. Through this period there will likely be several calls (or emails) between the consultant team and municipal staff. The consulting team will take the lead in compiling the GHG emissions inventory for the local governments.

What does my community get out of this?

Each participating community will receive:

1. An inventory of energy use and emissions for the municipal, regional district, or first nations operations covered in the climate action charter. The inventory counts emissions from vehicle fuels, natural gas, electricity use, fuel oil or propane associated with services such as:
 - Buildings, fire halls, works yards and other operations facilities,
 - Community centers, arenas, pools and cultural facilities, and
 - Water, sewer and solid waste, public lighting street, traffic signals, etc.

2. An Action Template that lists common actions that local governments can take to reduce the emissions from their operations. The template will define the key areas of GHG emissions and provide a scoping of the potential opportunities that the community may take.
3. An opportunity to attend a climate change learning session in their region.
4. An opportunity to attend an inventory development learning session in their region to help their staff better understand measuring emissions, actions, and their Climate Action Charter responsibilities.
5. Suggestions on how local governments can track data so that energy and emissions information is easily accessible. This will enable smoother reporting on emissions and assist the communities to apply for their Climate Action Revenue Incentive (the Carbon Tax Rebate).

Communities will NOT receive:

1. Inventories of community-wide emissions such as all the homes, businesses and industries in the community. Community inventories are being developed and refined by Province of BC's Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI) initiative.
2. Customized action plans or opportunities for specific buildings, vehicles, or other operations beyond the Action Template described above. Communities may still have to conduct other activities (e.g. a building audit) to establish their top priorities.
3. Climate Action Revenue Incentive grant applications, although the information gathered as part of this project will be useful in completing the applications.
4. Design or implementation of specific manual or automated processes to capture inventory data on an ongoing basis.

What does it cost?

This project is **fully funded** by the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT). Municipalities and First Nations do not have to pay anything additional to participate in this project. There will, however, be a requirement for a **small amount of staff time** to assist in obtaining specific information about your operations (see ***How much time from staff or council is needed***).

Will it save me anything?

All of the communities that are signed on to the Climate Action Charter are committed to tracking and reporting their energy use and GHG emissions. Individually, if all the communities in the Regional Districts and the Columbia Basin Trust were to compile their own inventory it would be cumbersome, and expensive. This project aims to save time and resources by helping all the communities at once and to enable shared learning.

What if we have a corporate inventory already?

Many communities have already compiled their operations energy and GHG inventory - some have developed action plans. If your municipality, regional district, or First Nation already has



good information on the energy it uses and the emissions it produces, you may still benefit from other project deliverables (see “***What does my community get out of this***”). Even if you have already compiled an inventory in the past, this project will update it to include 2008 data.

How much time from staff or council is needed?

A senior staff person will be contacted in late March 2009 to participate in a short (approximately 15 minute) telephone interview to determine where the local government or first nation is starting from regarding climate action in its operations. This will introduce the project, compile some preliminary information, and define other staff that will need to be contacted to compile the inventory (e.g. staff knowledgeable about the facilities, vehicles, or accounting system will need to be contacted).

A small amount of time from staff familiar with the buildings or vehicles in scope may be required to clarify specific assumptions, provide data, or review compiled information. The team is working to minimize the burden to local staff.

Senior staff and elected officials may, at their discretion, attend “Climate Action 101” full-day workshops (the team will endeavor to have one in each region) and inventory learning sessions.

Why are the Regional Districts and the CBT undertaking this project?

Many local governments in the Kootenay region have signed on to the Climate Action Charter, pledging to reduce GHG emissions and achieve carbon neutrality in their operations by 2012. The Regional Districts and the CBT are funding this initiative to recognize:

- the limited time and resources that exist within local governments to meet these commitments,
- the need to create their own action plans, and
- the efficiencies and capacity building opportunities through a coordinated approach.

Rather than each individual local government bearing the burden on their own, this collaborative approach will create a number of efficiencies for local governments and provide expert assistance along the way.

Will I hear more about this project?

Throughout the spring of 2009 there will be several calls and emails between consultants and staff to compile the inventory data. In May, informational workshops in each Regional District will assist with inventory compilation for local governments. Staff can gather to share experiences, ask questions and learn how to compile their energy and emissions inventory. Also in the spring of 2009, the consultant team will present climate change learning sessions to the Boards of all the Regional Districts to advance their understanding and interest in energy efficiency and climate change. Information will also be presented at the Association of Kootenay Boundary Local Governments (AKBLG) conference in April and at the UBCM conference in September 2009.

What are greenhouse gasses and where do municipal emissions come from?

Common greenhouse gases in the Earth's atmosphere include, carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and chlorofluorocarbons. Greenhouse gasses trap heat in the Earth's atmosphere, much like a greenhouse traps heat inside and are linked to global climate change. These arise from the burning of fossil fuels in the community, or when fossil fuels are burned elsewhere to provide electricity. Methane, another greenhouse gas is produced from organic material decomposing in a landfill.

There are a lot of initiatives on Climate Change - How does this project fit in?

This project focuses on helping municipalities, regional districts, and the First Nations make reductions in the energy use from their operations. As well, those signed to the Charter have committed to becoming carbon neutral in these operations. Other initiatives which are ongoing include:

- The Community Energy and Emissions Inventory (CEEI) from the Ministry of Environment is providing municipalities and regional districts with energy and GHG inventories for their entire communities (residents, and commercial and industrial users). The 'beta' version for 2007 has been released in March 2009.
- Bill 27 – legislation that requires local governments to have GHG emissions reductions targets in their Official Community Plans by May 31, 2010 and in their Regional Growth Strategies by May 31, 2011.
- The Community Action on Energy and Emissions (CAEE), a grant funding program of the Province to help communities develop emission reduction strategies for the entire community. Several communities in the Kootenays have received grants from this initiative.
- Climate Change Adaptation: Some communities as well as the Columbia Basin Trust are funding initiatives to start understanding how to adapt to the changes in climate that are expected. (Reducing emissions - called *mitigation* - is the focus of this project).

Who are the Consultants?

The consultant team is led by The Sheltair Group, a Vancouver-based planning and resource management firm with extensive experience in energy planning work. They are working with the Community Energy Association (CEA), a BC-based non-profit with a mandate to help communities plan for a sustainable energy future. Sheltair and the CEA are being assisted by local, independent consultants with expertise in energy management and municipal planning.

Who is overseeing this work?

The project is overseen by a Steering Committee comprised of staff from the three Regional Districts and the CBT. The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is taking the lead role as project manager. Contact: Ramona Mattix at the RDCK 250-352-8191.



How do I find out more?

The Columbia Basin Trust has established a webpage for this project at **www.cbt.org**.

The **Carbon Neutral Kootenays** project is an initiative to assist local governments in the Kootenay region in meeting their commitments under the Climate Action Charter, including becoming carbon neutral in their operations. It is jointly funded by the Regional Districts of Central Kootenay, East Kootenay and Kootenay Boundary, and the Columbia Basin Trust, with the participation of member municipalities and First Nations.

In 2009, the initiative includes compiling inventories of energy and greenhouse gas emissions for local government operations, developing action strategies for reducing emissions from Regional District operations, and conducting outreach and capacity building activities for staff and elected officials in the Kootenay region.

This project is being implemented and facilitated by The Sheltair Group with the Community Energy Association.

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