

Municipal Climate Change Action Plan

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I.0 Introduction

Both the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMDC) and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA), the 'Associations', have Protocols of Cooperation with Alberta Environment, which guide their joint work on a number of initiatives towards safeguarding the environment. One of these initiatives is the development of a Municipal Climate Change Action Plan.

Development of the Action Plan aligns with major initiatives of Alberta Environment, Alberta Municipal Affairs, and the Associations. Municipal actions to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions will help the Province meet commitments set out in its 2008 Climate Change Strategy. At the same time, measures to reduce emissions have economic, environmental, and social co-benefits which contribute to municipal sustainability, a central objective of both the Associations.

The Action Plan will evolve over time, as it is implemented and as municipalities provide feedback. The Municipal Climate Change Action Plan will provide capacity building support to all Alberta municipalities to increase energy efficiency and conservation and to reduce GHG emissions by providing information, tools and other resources that support effective action.

1.1 Why Take Action?

Reducing GHG emissions not only combats climate change, but also helps municipalities in three dimensions of sustainability: economic, environmental, and social. The following provides select examples; for a more detailed discussion of climate change and sustainability, see the Associations' Environmental Scans on climate change referenced in Section 2.1.

- **Economic:** The maintenance of sprawled communities is expensive and contributes to the municipal infrastructure deficit. Taking measures towards increasing energy efficiency is not only about combating climate change, but also about ensuring that our communities are economically viable, well into the future.
- **Environmental:** The predicted effects of climate change include extreme weather events, increased frequency of disease, and heat stress. Existing water management infrastructure (i.e. storage and drainage systems) may not be well suited to changes in precipitation and snow melt. Fortunately many actions which will reduce emissions can also help municipalities adapt to climate change. Some examples of actions include water conservation measures, such as fixing leaking pipes, reducing energy use, and making municipalities more resilient in the face of droughts, and other extreme weather events.
- **Social:** Burning fossil fuels not only contributes to climate change, but also releases chemicals that are detrimental to human health. Therefore, taking action on climate change often results in improved air quality and human health. According to Health Canada, climate change also has numerous socio-economic impacts including increased health care costs, social disruption, loss of income and productivity and diminished quality of life.

1.2 Municipal Leadership

Local Government Leadership

Whether it's through increasing the energy efficiency of our buildings or by reducing water consumption, behavioral change is required to reduce emissions. Municipalities have a leadership role to play in creating a cultural shift to support behavioural change. The role of municipalities in local policy, as well as their ability to lead by example, makes them key partners in helping provincial and federal levels of government meet climate change targets.

Intergovernmental Partnership

In addition, local governments need to be strongly engaged with other levels of government on climate change action in order to avoid duplication and access needed resources and expertise. A more effective approach to both mitigating and adapting to climate change will require strong collaboration between different levels of governments. This Action Plan will provide a foundation that will lead to the provision of comprehensive and coordinated leadership towards action on climate change.

2.0 Background

2.1 Environmental Scan

As a precursor to this Action Plan, the Associations, in partnership with Alberta Environment, completed separate environmental scans (e-scan) to identify sources of GHG emissions from municipalities and barriers that municipalities face when implementing climate change plans and programs. The e-scans also identified the support that municipalities seek in terms of implementing local climate change initiatives.

Through the research and interviews for the e-scans, it became evident that municipalities have a key role to play in developing solutions to climate change. In addition, barriers that municipalities face when implementing climate change plans and programs were identified. These barriers include financial and human resource limitations, lack of awareness by citizen groups, indifference, political barriers, and policy barriers. Municipalities also expressed a desire for support including increased public awareness campaigns, increased technical assistance, an inventory of best practices, information, financial assistance, and increased assistance from the Associations and Alberta Environment.

The Action Plan sets out a strategy that addresses many of the challenges identified in the e-scans. To review the complete AUMA and AAMDC e-scans, please visit:

http://www.auma.ca/live/digitalAssets/21/21098_Urban_Municipal_Action_on_Climate_Change_Environmental_Scan.pdf

<http://www.aamdc.com:8081/library/Advocacy/Publications/Reports/2009%20-%20Rural%20Municipal%20Action%20on%20Climate%20Change%20Environmental%20Scan%20Feb2009.pdf>

2.2 Related Initiatives

Climate change is a complex issue. Dealing with climate change and its impacts will have implications as varied as changing taxation structures and land use planning decisions, and

influencing everyday choices made by individuals. As such, there are a number of existing municipal, provincial, and federal initiatives which are relevant to this Action Plan.

What follows is not an exhaustive list, but provides examples of policies, programs and initiatives which will be important to monitor in order to look for opportunities to leverage complimentary efforts as the Action Plan is rolled out.

AUMA Initiatives:

[Municipal Sustainability Planning](#)

[Municipal Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity](#)

Energy Aggregation and Management (via the Alberta Municipal Services Corporation)

AAMDC Initiatives:

[Integrated Community Sustainability Planning](#)

Rural Municipal Water Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Planning

[Model Process Pilot Project](#)

Government of Alberta Initiatives:

[Land-use Framework](#)

[Climate Change Strategy](#)

[Provincial Energy Strategy \(PET\)](#)

[Water for Life](#)

[Cumulative Effects Management](#)

Government of Canada:

[EcoACTION](#)

[ecoENERGY for Buildings and Houses](#)

[ecoENERGY for Renewable Heat](#)

[ecoENERGY for Renewable Power](#)

[ecoENERGY for Biofuels](#)

[ecoENERGY for Fleets](#)

Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)

[Partners for Climate Protection \(PCP\)](#)

ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability

[Small Communities Toolkit](#)

3.0 Approach

The following sections outline the principles, vision, goal, and objectives of the Action Plan.

3.1 Principles

1. All municipalities will be part of the climate change solution.
2. Alberta municipalities will be leaders in using energy more effectively and efficiently.
3. Municipalities will have the information and knowledge they need to effectively participate in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

4. Municipalities will be leaders in implementing technology to reduce GHG emissions in the short, medium and long term.
5. The Action Plan and all related initiatives and activities will be developed and implemented with due consideration of the various dimensions of sustainability; including economic, environmental, and social.

3.2 Vision

All Alberta municipalities demonstrate leadership in energy efficiency and conservation, as well as reducing GHG emissions in their own operations and in the broader community.

3.3 Goal

In accordance with Alberta's 2008 Climate Change Strategy, the goal is to provide capacity building support to all Alberta municipalities to increase energy efficiency and conservation and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing information, tools and other resources that support effective action.

3.4 Objectives

The overall objective of the Action Plan is to enable municipalities to substantially increase energy efficiency and reduce GHG emissions in their own operations and communities.

1. Build Municipal Capacity

The Action Plan will establish mechanisms to support the goal of building the capacity of municipalities. As part of this capacity building, the Associations, Alberta Environment, Alberta Municipal Affairs, other government departments, and organizations will work cooperatively to develop a Climate Change Action Centre, which will include a website and a Municipal Climate Change Action Team.

2. Establish Baselines and Measure Progress

Provide assistance to municipalities in tracking their energy use and emissions in order to track progress on a community and province wide level. Only a handful of municipalities have existing targets, baselines and emissions inventories and there are concerns about the reliability of this information and the time it takes to track energy use and emissions with the current tools available. Consequently, there is insufficient information on which to base a realistic and measurable target for municipal related emission reductions on a province wide level.

3. Development of Action Plans

Provide assistance to municipalities in developing their own action plans. Each municipality will have unique circumstance that can be taken into account in their action plans. Developing a comprehensive action plan will help each municipality identify the least costly and most effective approach to reducing their GHG emissions.

4. Taking Action

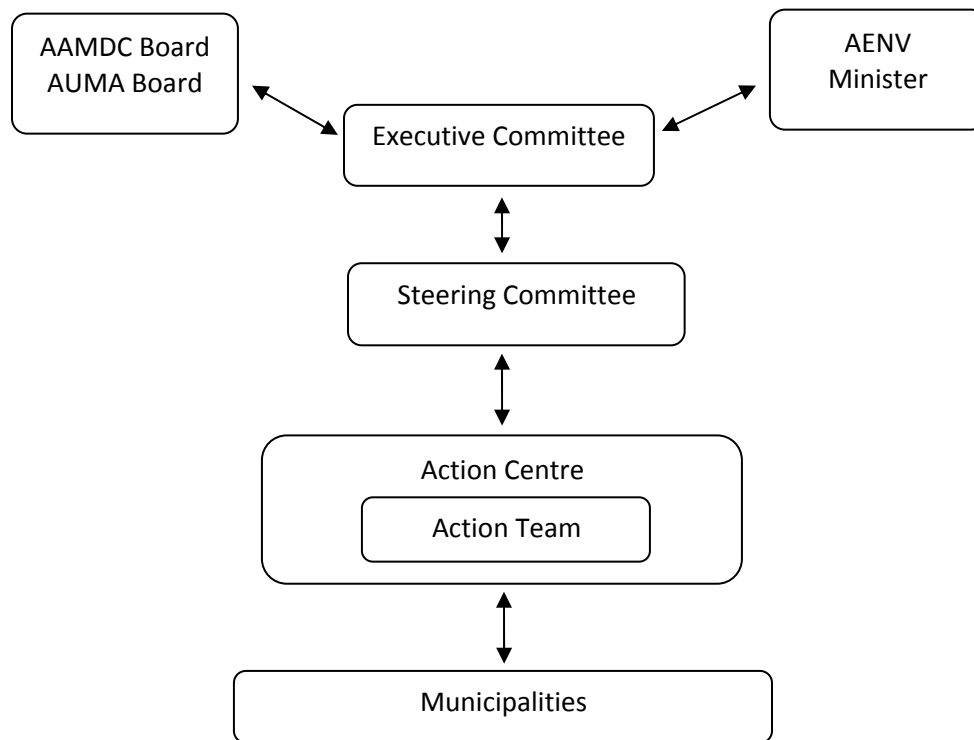
Provide assistance to municipalities in taking GHG emission reduction actions. Municipalities are already taking action to reduce GHG emissions and are looking to make further reductions.

4.0 Governance

The Governance structure of the Action Plan consists of the Minister of Environment and the AAMDC and AUMA Boards providing final approval for the development of the Action Plan and any significant changes that are made as the Plan is implemented. An Executive Committee provides overall direction for the Action Plan and a Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing implementation of the Plan, which will be administered through the Action Centre.

Further details on the governance structure can be found in the following paragraphs and in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Governance of the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan



4.1 Executive Committee

Structure

The Executive Committee will consist of the Executive Director of the AAMDC and the Chief Executive Officer of the AUMA and the Deputy Ministers of Alberta Environment and Alberta Municipal Affairs. The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of the Associations will report to their respective Association Boards and Environment's Deputy Minister will report to the Environment Minister.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Executive Committee will provide overall guidance of the Action Plan. Roles and responsibilities include:

- Approving the annual work plan;
- Approving the annual budget; and
- Approving the annual progress report.

4.2 Steering Committee

Structure

The Steering Committee, consisting of representatives of the AAMDC, AUMA, Alberta Environment and Alberta Municipal Affairs, will report to the Executive Committee. The Steering Committee will meet and/or hold conference calls once per month. The Chair of the Steering Committee will rotate annually among the members.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring the Action Plan objectives are achieved and products are delivered. Roles and responsibilities of the Steering Committee include:

- Planning, implementing and ensuring the Action Plan principles, objectives and goals are met;
- Working with the Action Centre Coordinator to develop the work plan including the budget;
- Identifying long-term funding sources for the Action Centre;
- Providing guidance to the Action Centre Coordinator;
- Ensuring timelines are met;
- Providing linkages with other municipal and provincial government policies and initiatives; and
- Where appropriate, communicating with and engaging stakeholders in the project.

4.3 Climate Change Action Centre

The focus of the Action Plan is to provide the support that municipalities identified as necessary in both Associations' e-scans. The need for a one-stop-centre to provide education, demonstrated practices, policy review and funding was raised by municipalities regardless of size or location. The development of the Climate Change Action Centre and a cooperative approach to tackling policy issues will respond to the needs and concerns of municipalities.

The Climate Change Action Centre will be located at the AUMA which will act as the employer of the Action Team. AUMA will be responsible for administration, including payroll of the Action Team. A Memorandum of Understanding will be developed between the Associations and government departments to outline the partnership approach to the Action Centre (e.g. that the Action Team works for all of the partner organizations and not a single entity).

4.3.1. Action Team

Structure

The Action Team will consist of an Action Centre Coordinator and two research analysts. The Action Centre Coordinator will report to the Steering Committee at their monthly meetings/conference calls. Issues requiring more immediate direction will be brought to the Chair of the Steering Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Action Team will provide municipalities with technical assistance and expertise on effective methods of reducing GHG emissions. Roles and responsibilities include:

- Helping identify areas and activities for increasing energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- Providing advice on the development and implementation of municipal action plans;
- Providing municipalities with information on potential funding options;
- Assisting in identifying barriers and providing potential solutions to taking action on climate change;
- Contracting individuals and organizations that can provide municipalities with information and capacity building; and
- Conducting education and outreach, such as workshops and other events;
- Providing progress reports on implementation of the Action Plan and making any necessary updates.

The Action Centre Coordinator will manage staff and resources and produce monthly progress reports. The Coordinator will also develop the work plan and annual progress reports.

4.3.2 Website

The Municipal Climate Change Action Centre Website will include information on effective actions municipalities can take to reduce emissions, as well as information on adaptation, funding and knowledge resources to support municipal efforts.

- Design, development, and maintenance of the website will be contracted out to a web designer while the Action Team will carry out updates;
- The Website will be funded through the Action Centre budget; and
- The website will be prominently linked to and from: AENV, AAMDC, AUMA and AUMA's MSP microsite, MA, and possibly MEnet.

4.3.3 Action Centre Resources

Alberta Environment will cover the operational costs of the Action Centre for a three year period, while AUMA will provide the space and cover capital costs related to setting up the Centre. A strategy for long term funding of the Centre will be developed.

5.0 Indicators of Success

Indicators of success of the Plan will include quantifiable indicators such as the number of workshops held, the number of municipalities that have completed action plans, the number of projects completed and associated greenhouse gas emission reductions, and the number of municipalities assisted by the Action Team. Municipalities will also be asked to assess the quality of information they access via the website and support they receive from the action team.

Qualitative indicators will include looking at what barriers to action have been reduced or overcome by the plan. Follow-up interviews with municipalities who participated in the environmental scans could provide an assessment of the difference the Action Plan has made in building municipal capacity.

As the Plan evolves, more outcome oriented indicators can be used which track initiatives undertaken and their resulting emission reductions and increased energy efficiency.

6.0 Reporting

Implementation of the Action Plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis and outcomes will be reported to both Associations memberships and the Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment. The review will be used to determine what aspects of the plan are working well in fulfilling the objectives, goal and vision of the Plan, and what aspects need to be reworked.

Annual progress reports will be completed and posted on both Associations' websites.