Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Conseil de conservation du Nouveau-Brunswick
www.conservationcouncil.ca

Climate Action Plan: Questions and Answers

1. Why is the Conservation Council of New Brunswick taking climate change so seriously?

Answer: There is a strong scientific consensus that the climate is becoming unbalanced mostly because of human activity. The world's leading climate scientists are absolutely certain – as certain as 95 to 100% that humans are the primary cause of the pollution increasing global temperatures:

> Anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the pre-industrial era, driven largely by economic and population growth, and are now higher than ever. This has led to atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide that are unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years. Their effects, together with those of other anthropogenic drivers, have been detected throughout the climate system and are extremely likely (95 to 100%) to have been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century" (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Core Writing Team, Pachaur, & Meyer, 2014, p. 3).

2. Where do greenhouse gas emissions come from?

Answer: The oil we dig out of the ground and ship by rail or pipeline is processed in refineries like the Irving Refinery in Saint John. Gasoline is then pumped into our cars, vans and pick-ups at gas stations. The entire process of producing oil and making gasoline and then burning it to make our vehicles run generates greenhouse gas emissions that are destabilizing the climate. When we burn coal at Belledune or oil at Coleson Cove to generate electricity to heat and cool our buildings and run our equipment and appliances we add greenhouse gases to the air. When industry uses natural gas or other carbon-based fuel in their production processes or make fertilizers and other chemicals, greenhouse gases are generated. When we bury garbage, especially food waste in landfills a gas called methane, another greenhouse gas, is produced as the waste decomposes. When we cut forests to make pulp we remove living plants and trees that absorb carbon dioxide as they grow and release it when they. When we cut forests faster than they can grow back we add more greenhouse gases to the air because there are fewer trees to absorb carbon dioxide. When we use too much fertilizer another greenhouse gas called nitrous oxide is created as nature breaks it down.

3. New Brunswick is a small part of the problem, so why should we cut our greenhouse gas emissions?

Answer: New Brunswickers are being seriously harmed by climate change. Protecting our citizens requires collective action to bring down emissions the world over. All countries promised in Paris, France

in 2015 under United Nations negotiations to take action. New Brunswick needs to do its fair share, but also needs to show others that we take the risks to our citizens seriously so others will too.

In New Brunswick, the cost of post-tropical storm Arthur in 2014 exceeded $12.5 million. Combined with damage costs from other flooding events since 2010, the cost to New Brunswickers over the last five years exceeded $80 million. The cost of extreme weather will get worse unless serious action is taken to slow climate change.

The province estimates that the annual cost of damage to homes because of coastal flooding due to climate change could reach $730 to $1,803 per New Brunswicker by 2050, higher than any of the other Atlantic Provinces, and five times higher than the Canadian average. Add climate change impacts to health from more, hotter days and more disease carrying bugs like ticks, as well as to forests from fires caused by drier conditions, and it is not hard to see that inaction risks our pocket books.

4. Won't cutting greenhouse gas emissions raise costs for everyone?

Answer: Climate change solutions are often described as costs we can't afford, rather than opportunities we can't afford to miss. When we fail to regulate or price pollution we pay more. German households, for example, pay an average monthly electricity bill of $96.36, at a rate of 33.88 cents a kilowatt-hour and usage of 284.42 kilowatts. U.S. households, on the other hand, pay an average of $111.95 a month, at a rate of 11.88 cents per kilowatt-hour and usage of 942.33 kilowatts. In France, the monthly power bill is only $75.64, at an average rate of 17.51 cents per kilowatt-hour. Clearly, higher rates do not have to mean higher bills. The average electricity bill for New Brunswickers in 2013 for 1,000 kWh of electricity was $111.94. CCNB believes New Brunswickers pay more for electricity than they need to because low rates encourage overuse and waste.

When we fail to invest in modern energy systems we miss out on new jobs. According to the International Renewable Energy Association, renewable energy jobs in the United States increased 6% in 2015 while employment in oil and gas decreased 18%. In China, renewable energy employed 3.5 million people, while oil and gas employed 2.6 million.

According to Clean Energy Canada, the cost of solar has declined 82% and wind by 61% since 2009 making these sources of electricity increasingly cost-competitive. By 2025, the cost of solar power could be at par or cheaper than electricity from coal, oil or natural gas. With 96 cities, states, and countries already committed to going 100% renewable, the puck is going into the renewables net.

5. Why is the Conservation Council of New Brunswick's climate action plan so comprehensive?

Answer: Our Climate Action Plan is comprehensive because climate change is a big problem caused by multiple sources of pollution. Solve climate change requires big solutions. To put the province on a pathway to a low-polluting economy that creates jobs and sustains families and communities we need a comprehensive climate action plan.

6. Why is CCNB releasing its climate action plan now?

Answer: CCNB's climate action plan is being released now as our contribution to Canada's effort to develop a national plan to meet the commitments we made last December at the UN climate negotiations in Paris, France. The federal Government wants to conclude negotiations with provinces and territories by November on their contributions toward the national goal. The province has established a Select Committee on Climate Change to engage New Brunswickers in a conversation about what should be included in our climate action plan in keeping with Premier Gallant's commitment in the December 2015 Speech from the Throne to "finalize a new climate change action plan."

7. How did CCNB determine New Brunswick's fair share contribution to meeting Canada's national climate protection target?

Answer: Our proposals target opportunities relating to the 15 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2014 that come from burning coal, oil and gasoline, waste, and forestry and agriculture. Along with New England Governors and other Atlantic Premiers, New Brunswick has agreed to a regional goal of 35% to 45% percent below 1990 levels by 2030, a target implying a reduction of approximately 6.5 million tonnes.

8. What does the CCNB climate action plan cover?

Answer: The Conservation Council's Climate Action Plan proposes a three-part climate solution covering electricity, provincial investments and government policy. Our electricity strategy accelerates investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, electric vehicles, and the Smart Grid to balance a more distributed provincial and regional electricity system. These programs would allow the province to phase out coal to generate electricity as Ontario has done, and Alberta will do by 2030. The provincial investment strategy cuts pollution and waste from infrastructure and industry, forestry, and agriculture. The policy strategy regulates emissions limits; puts a price on pollution (which along with federal financial support would finance investments); commits to buying the most efficient, least polluting products and services; invests in zero emissions research; and requires infrastructure and land use planning to consider climate change impacts.

9. What's next? What do want government to do with this?

Answer: CCNB will continue to analyse its climate action plan proposals with the aim of assessing the potential for provincial investment and job creation. We also will be working to build support for climate action among provincial citizens and stakeholders.