

**City Staff Report**

**Report Date:** February 8, 2021  
**Meeting Date:** February 16, 2021

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Original signed by: City Manager Johnson

**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Carbon Review Coordinator  
**Subject:** Quesnel Climate Action Plan engagement with stakeholders, the community and internal City staff.

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**Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to review the results of the Quesnel Climate Action Plan engagement with stakeholders and the community towards the implementation of climate actions in 2021.

**Summary**

- The Carbon Review Coordinator has worked with staff and directors to develop a Climate Action Plan unique to Quesnel that would meet the specific targets adopted by City Council.
- Council approved the plan to be made public and to engage stakeholders, the community and organizations before final decisions are made on a climate action implementation plan for 2021.
- Involvement from the community in the development of a final Climate Action Plan is essential for buy-in and increasing the chances of a successful outcome in seeking emission reductions.
- Due to Covid19 the ability to have effective engaged consultation with the public has been limited.
- A survey was released through December and January with approximately 143 responses.
- Presentations to the Rotary and Chamber were completed in addition to direct community conversations to obtain feedback.

**Recommendation**

None – brought forward for informational purposes regarding future decisions on climate change.

**Statutory Requirements**

The B.C. Climate Action Charter is a voluntary agreement between the B.C. government, Union of B.C. Municipalities and each local government signatory to take action on climate change. Under the Charter, local government signatories commit to take actions to become carbon neutral in their corporate operations and reduce community-wide emissions by creating more complete, compact and energy efficient rural and urban communities. As a signatory to the BC Climate Action Charter the City of Quesnel has agreed that reducing emissions will generate environmental and health benefits for individuals, families, and communities AND that governments urgently needs to implement effective measures to reduce GHG emissions.

The Quesnel Climate Action Plan is a response to the commitment made under the Climate Action Charter and an attempt to operationalize the greenhouse gas targets set by City Council October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

**Council Policy**

New GHG emissions reduction targets were approved by City Council October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019.



*Council's policies are as follows:*

- The City's corporate emissions reduction target is 3.5% annually for the years 2020 - 2022.
- Reduce community emissions from 2007 levels 40% by 2030, 60% by 2040, and 80% by 2050.

## **Financial Implications**

Engagement was done by the Carbon Review Coordinator in conjunction with the City of Quesnel Communications Department. Other than internal staff time there were no further financial implications associated with our climate engagement in the community. Thanks to the Quesnel Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club for invitation to speak about the Climate Action Plan and helping to spread the word about our survey.

Please see the Quesnel Climate Action Plan for a breakdown of costs associated with individual climate actions proposed. If all the climate actions in the Climate Action Plan were adopted it would require City finances to accomplish. Determining what actions could be implemented without significant funding, those that are most likely successful for external funding and those that would require internal City funding will have to be carefully considered with implications for the 5 year capital planning process.

## **Background**

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2019 the Quesnel City Council approved new emission reduction targets for the community of Quesnel as well as for City corporate operations to address the challenge of climate change. The City received 75% funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program (MCIP) for a Carbon Review Coordinator to develop a climate action plan to meet the targets specified and to implement that plan.

The Climate Action Plan has been created to address both corporate and community emission reduction goals. Following consultations with directors and staff a draft of the Climate Action Plan was distributed for a review period and climate action planning discussion was held. Following this internal feedback a second draft of the plan was developed and was presented to Quesnel City on Council June 2, 2020.

Once the Climate Action Plan was properly branded and the final survey questions were agree upon the City started too engage stakeholders and the community. Internal staff were engaged in more depth on specific climate actions from the plan and how implementation of those action may be funded and managed. Traditional engagement was been difficult through the Covid 19 pandemic but we have done our best to hear from those in the community who may be affected by the Climate Action Plan so a final decision on aspects of the plan can be determined by Council for 2021. If climate actions are done in concert with other City initiatives then services can continue to improve in the City while at the same time addressing the climate challenge.

The Climate Action Plan survey and engagement were originally planned for September-October but were delayed until the December-January period. This proved to be a difficult time to solicit responses on climate change. In the initial two weeks of the survey we were encouraged by the response rate with over 113 taking part in the survey. Over the next 6 weeks of the survey (Christmas holidays and January) there were only 30 more survey participants for a total of 143. Survey results like this can be misleading as they represent only a very small sample of the community. The results should therefore be viewed with caution. In addition to the survey, the Carbon Review Coordinator was able to present to the Quesnel Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club of Quesnel and speak to many Quesnel citizens directly about their concerns. This person to person feedback will be reviewed next, before the survey results are provided.

***Feedback from discussions:***



There were discussions with builders, educators, West Fraser employees, non-profit organizations, citizens and anyone else who called as a result of the survey or engagement. It would be difficult to review all of these discussions but here are a few comments that were consistent or stood out are below.

- Climate change is a problem we will all have to address together. Yet, if Quesnel acts and others don't then we will be at a financial disadvantage.
- Most builders are already building to Step Code efficiencies. The first step of step code is a simple blower door test and does not even require anything above code to achieve.
- It is hard to suggest to people to use heat pumps when they are so expensive and have yet to be proven to work well in Quesnel with current technologies available.
- Public transit use won't increase unless it is improved here. Public transit use needs to increase in order to improve the system. The chicken or the egg was mentioned as an analogy.
- Decommissioning the airport for passenger service would mean Quesnel residents would need to burn more fuel to drive to Prince George to fly.
- Curbside recycling is wanted but many see an obvious issue if Quesnel City residents get this and garbage pickup when the Regional District still doesn't even pick up garbage.
- Safe active transportation is needed to 2-mile flat and out North.
- The City should support and promote alternate power (like wind and solar) and increase building codes to include efficiency standards.
- Joe Hart is the owner of Icon Homes and is also the President of the Canadian Home Builder's Association of British Columbia. Mr. Hart has built net-zero homes right here in Quesnel and is willing to speak with Council directly about his thoughts on Step Code implementation!

#### ***Survey results overview:***

As mentioned above there have been challenges that have made effective community engagement difficult to complete this past year. We cannot assume these results are a full reflection of our communities' attitudes and desires towards climate change based on the number of responses received. It is suggested that Council continues community engagement while taking on climate actions. It is important to have the community be a part of the climate solutions here in Quesnel but any further delay in taking climate actions will mean missing all of the targets Council set in 2019. Even with this limited engagement and small survey response rate there are some interesting findings that may be of interest or warrant further investigation. The full results of the survey can be found in the attached appendix.

1) There seems to be an acknowledgment and understanding of the connection between energy use and climate change.

- When asked if people were ready to reduce energy use to tackle climate change 68% said they agree or somewhat agree. Another 72% said if renewable energy was the same cost they would switch (89% said yes or to some extent). Only 36% said they would switch if renewable energy cost a little more.
- When asked if governments should increase incentives for people to reduce climate change 72% agree or somewhat agree.

People want to act and know what actions are effective but they need financial assistance to do it and want better choices as we will see later.

2) When asked if enough was being done by certain groups to address climate change the results were not favorable to many.

- Corporations and Industry. No = 67%
- Citizens. No = 46%



- National and Provincial governments. No = 50%
- Local governments. No = 48%
- Environmental groups. No = 22%
- International organization. No = 41%

### 3) Motivations to action/inaction on climate change.

*Why are people taking action to fight climate change?* The top three answers were:

- "Desire to live in a healthy and clean environment" 77%
- "You are concerned about future generations" 65%
- "If all changed behaviour it will have an impact on climate change" 62%.

*What is stopping people from taking action?* The top two answers were:

- "Alternative consumer options are not broadly available to me" 60%
- "It is the duty of governments, corporations and industry" 37%

### 4) When asked if people were aware of the emission reduction goals set for the City, Community and Province the results were somewhat concerning.

- Only 18% of the respondents answered yes o this questions. (48% yes or to some extent).

If these goals are not known by the community and it is not understood why it is important to meet them then Quesnel citizens are less likely to get behind climate actions. This will be especially true if climate actions are taken over other desired or wanted services by the community. If we want to meet the targets that we chose to set then this goal and challenge needs to be better communicated.

In the past and with all levels of government, this lack of knowledge about emissions reduction targets by the general public means there is little repercussion politically from missing the targets and therefore limits the action taken on climate change.

### ***Engagement Summary:***

The results of this limited engagement are still useful as a guide for further investigations and as a call to climate action from the community. The goal of engagement was to have our community members feel like they are part of the climate change fight by sharing their capabilities, desires and thoughts towards what actions are best suited for Quesnel. Community members can still be involved in all individual climate actions taken by the City of they are better informed about them, the reasons behind them, and the benefits they will have. This engagement that has been reviewed in this report cannot be considered over and must continue as projects are budgeted for and implemented. There is no doubt a concern about climate change in the community of Quesnel and a wiliness to take action.

Even with the forestry industry concerns, the cost of living increasing, and local taxes going up people still seem willing to pay for climate action. When asked if people were willing to pay more taxes for improved climate outcomes only 46% said 'no' with the others saying 'yes' or 'to some extent'. I hope this encourages Council to take action on the implementation of climate actions towards meeting the reduction targets set for Quesnel.