

Fourteen municipal jurisdictions in Manitoba are looking for ways to implement GHG reductions

GHG emissions reduction needs local government action

BY LORRAINE STEVENSON
Co-operator staff

World leaders returning from Copenhagen last month will submit plans by January's end on how their countries will commit to lowering greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

But national and provincial governments won't achieve their emissions targets alone.

Manitoba, which has already set a goal of 20 per cent reduction over the next four years, is looking to local municipal leaders for help.

Last spring, it rolled out the Community Led Emissions Reduction pilot program, with 14 towns and rural municipalities agreeing to participate. The program provides resources to local government to do an inventory of GHG emissions and prepare action plans.

Communities are now doing those inventories and looking at strategies that range from recovering landfill gases to water-use reduction strategies and building more walking and biking paths through communities.

Trouble spots

Virден, which is included in the project has its own goal of a 20 per cent lowering of GHGs in its community, said Mayor Bruce Dunning. They are preparing an action plan to roll out in March.

What they know right now is that there's many trouble spots — from their energy-gobbling older street lights to poorly heated older buildings in town. They also know they need to build more non-motorized corridors through their community. Their new development plan will incorporate more green space, Dunning said.

"Some of the areas that we're looking at targeting are converting to alternative fuels and geothermal at our facilities," he said. "We also want to enhance our non-motorized walking corridors."



TOWN OF VIRDEN

NEED FOR GREEN: More cities and towns will pursue greenhouse gas emissions reductions strategies if they have resources to implement, and therefore demonstrate the cost effectiveness of doing so.

"If we can prove this works in fact rather than theory, it will benefit all municipalities."

— TOWN OF VIRDEN MAYOR BRUCE DUNNING

Their town is also looking at water-use reduction incentives and strategies including providing incentives for residents to switch to dual-flush toilets and low-flow shower heads and working on public education strategies to reduce habits like vehicle idling.

Finding the resources to do all these things is the biggest challenge ahead, Dunning said. If they can, and then demonstrate the lowered costs on municipal operating budgets

through GHG reduction strategies, other municipalities will follow suit, he said.

"If we can prove this works in fact rather than theory, it will benefit all municipalities," Dunning said.

Reductions

On the eve of the Copenhagen summit last month, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) released a report showing GHG emissions reductions will be most effec-

tively achieved through federal help extended to municipalities for cost-effective, community-based projects.

Entitled *Act Locally — The Municipal Role in Fighting Climate Change*, the report says municipalities will play a fundamental role in reaching GHG targets, given their indirect or direction control over transportation, land use and waste management activities which presently account for 44 per cent of all GHG emissions in Canada.

The report says municipal-level actions could collectively result in emissions reductions of anywhere from 15 to 40 per cent of Canada's emissions tar-

gets and says local government is best positioned to engage households and businesses in achieving that goal.

Without any municipal action taken, the report says emissions under municipal jurisdiction are projected to actually rise by an additional 23 per cent to 2020.

The FCM report says resources extended to municipalities for help implementing GHG reduction targets would achieve two-thirds of GHG reductions for less than \$25 per tonne, or less than the average cost of regulating industry or developing renewable energy.

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New land use policies expected by spring

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Revising Manitoba's land use policies (PLUPs) proved to be a bigger job than anticipated, pushing back what was expected to be a release last fall of new policies now to spring 2010.

Last April, the provincial government rolled out a full review of the PLUPs, and held public consultations around the province throughout spring and early summer.

Proposed changes in the draft policies aim for better protection of farmland and water resources as well as improved en-

ergy use. The policies came up for review in light of emerging issues such as climate change.

Bob Grodzik, a senior policy planner with Intergovernmental Affairs, said no one expected the complexity and diversity of views that were expressed during consultations. They frequently heard a far greater mix of opinions on matters they initially thought would generate a

strong view either for or against, Grodzik said.

"We knew this wasn't going to be simple... but we ended up getting a lot of comments and feedback that gave us a lot more to think about," he said.

"The complexity also relates to the fact that we have one set of PLUPs, but we have a province where one size won't fit all."

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— BOB GRODZIK, SENIOR POLICY ANALYST INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Grodzik said they also realized the language of the draft policies needed scrutiny, after so many municipal leaders interpreted them as impeding future rural development.

"Our policy language was seen as promoting depopulation," Grodzik said. "So we have had to go through this and say, 'did we really say that?' That certainly wasn't our intent."

The consultation process was also extended further into summer to hear submissions for key stakeholder groups such as Keystone Agricultural Producers and the Manitoba Professional Planners Institute.

"We really wanted to hear from those folks," Grodzik added.

KAP has indicated it is generally supportive of the draft policy, seeing it as giving positive consideration for agriculture, while supporting expansion and diversification of agricultural operations.

The PLUPs were last reviewed in 1994, with an amendment made in 2006 to address the development of livestock operations. They came under review last year so that they would reflect new and emerging issues such as climate change and need to protect watersheds.

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