

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
BRANCH-ORIGINATED INFORMATION NOTE**

November 25, 2014

File:

CLIFF/tracking #: 211150

Prepared for: Honourable Mary Polak, Minister

What: Raising the profile of adaptation in new provincial climate initiatives

Why: Recent extreme weather events have highlighted impacts to individuals' property, the economy and the need for effective climate risk management.

Required by: ASAP for incorporation into discussions on Climate Action Plan (CAP) 2.0

Briefing: Yes (if not covered at December 1st Roundtable Meeting)

Recommended Attendees: Minister Mary Polak, Wes Shoemaker,
Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, Thomas White, Liz Lilly

BACKGROUND:

For the next 30 years, the climate we experience will be influenced by greenhouse gases that have already accumulated in the atmosphere due to historical emissions, and expected emissions from new and existing infrastructure that has not reached the end of its useful life.

Many aspects of climate change and associated impacts will continue for centuries, even if anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are stopped now.

In British Columbia, anticipated impacts include sea level rise and ocean acidification, decreasing snow pack, longer and hotter summers and more intense rainfall. These, in turn, impact coastal communities and infrastructure, shellfish aquaculture, water supply and power generation, human health, and, agriculture and forestry (through disturbances such as mountain pine beetle and longer forest fire seasons).

British Columbia's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions complement global efforts to limit the long-term consequences of climate change. However, under any scenario of GHG emissions, BC will have to adapt to the impacts of climate change in order to mitigate the risks to human health and safety; infrastructure and property; economic activity; and, ecosystem services.

DISCUSSION:

Much of BC's leadership on climate change has focused on GHG emission reductions. Adaptation was not part of the 2008 Climate Action Plan. The British Columbia Climate Change Adaptation Strategy was released later in 2010. The Strategy has three elements:

1. Build a strong foundation of knowledge and tools.

2. Make adaptation a part of the Government of British Columbia's business.
3. Assess risks and implement priority adaptation actions in key climate sensitive sectors.

The strategy has resulted in significant progress managing climate risks. It:

- Provided decision-makers in organizations exposed to climate risk, such as BC Hydro, the Provincial government and local governments, with the scientific information, analyses and tools needed to evaluate and plan for changes in climate risk;
- Encouraged action in relevant business areas within government, such as agriculture, environment, forests, tourism, mining, coastal flood protection and health;
- Engaged stakeholders, including professional and industry associations and the general public, through awareness and outreach initiatives, such as the King Tides photo initiative; and
- Facilitated partnerships with the Federal government, who provided more than \$4.2 million since 2009 for BC adaptation projects and launched a new phase of funding for 2012-2016.

Successful adaptation to climate change is a long-term effort that will require sustained attention and much more needs to be done. In particular, the Province needs to engage and support the needs of four specific groups:

1. Provincial government ministries and Public Sector Organizations, with responsibilities for land-use decision-making, long-lived infrastructure investments and asset management, public health, economic development, and electricity supply;
2. Local governments, with responsibilities for land-use management and the provision of public infrastructure, such as flood protection works;
3. Industry, businesses and private interests, who own real-estate and other assets that are exposed to climate risk; and,
4. First Nations communities facing risks and challenges posed by climate change impacts.

Investment in adaptation in the short term will alleviate costs associated with weather-related disasters and sea level rise. For example: updating flood plain maps to support safer development in flood plains; investment in fire management to reduce the risk to homes and infrastructure. A recent report prepared for the United States Geological Survey estimates a 5:1 return on investment for enhanced mapping to support floodplain mapping and wildfire management.

Many national and sub-national jurisdictions are updating their approaches to adaptation in legislation, policy or programming and have established accountability mechanisms to regularly assess their performance.

NEXT STEPS:

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Contact:

*Susanna Laaksonen-Craig, Head
Climate Action Secretariat
250-387-9456*

Alternate Contact:

*Liz Lilly
Climate Action Secretariat
250-356-7917*

Prepared by:

*Thomas White
Climate Action Secretariat
250-953-4883*

Reviewed by	Initials	Date
DM	WS	Dec 2/14
DMO	VJ	Nov 27/14
ADM	SLC	27/11/14
Dir./Mgr.	LL	25/11/14
Author	TW	25/11/14