



Northern BC climate action network

Notes from the inaugural meeting: April 4, 2022

Prepared by Rob van Adrichem, Director of External Relations, Community Energy Association

Background

The idea of a climate action network in and for Northern BC emerged from the Community Energy Association and the Northern BC members of the BC Municipal Climate Leadership Council. It was conceived in response to concerns about low levels of capacity in the North and frustration that the expertise and capacity that *does* exist is at a low level of concentration, spread between sectors and across a huge region. Greater collaboration and information-sharing was seen to be one critical way to overcome isolation, identify opportunities for collaboration, and implement initiatives that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance opportunities for northern communities in a low-carbon economy.

The Northern Context

Northern BC currently accounts for 9.9% of British Columbia's non-industrial GHG emissions and has about 6.6% of the BC population. There is a prevailing attitude in the North and elsewhere in the province that communities in Northern BC are behind other communities in BC in regards to policies, regulation, and adoption of programs/technologies that reduce local greenhouse gas emissions.

What is CEA?

The Community Energy Association grew from a committee established more than 25 years ago by the Government of BC and the Union of BC Municipalities to raise local government awareness of energy efficiency and community energy planning. Today, CEA has 46 members, including 32 local governments. It also has more than two-dozen staff, based in 17 communities. CEA's activities in support of local government climate action include support for networks, coaching and capacity-building, planning and research, and actual implementation of projects. communityenergy.ca

What is BCMCLC?

The BC Municipal Climate Leadership Council was established in 2010 and was the first organization of local elected officials (mayors, councillors, and regional directors) committed to climate action. It is currently chaired by Arjun Singh, a city councillor from Kamloops. Northern BC members include Casda Thomas (Councillor, Town of Smithers) and Amber Hipkiss (Councillor, District of Mackenzie). BCMCLC is focused on peer-mentorship and supports events, coaching, and government relations.

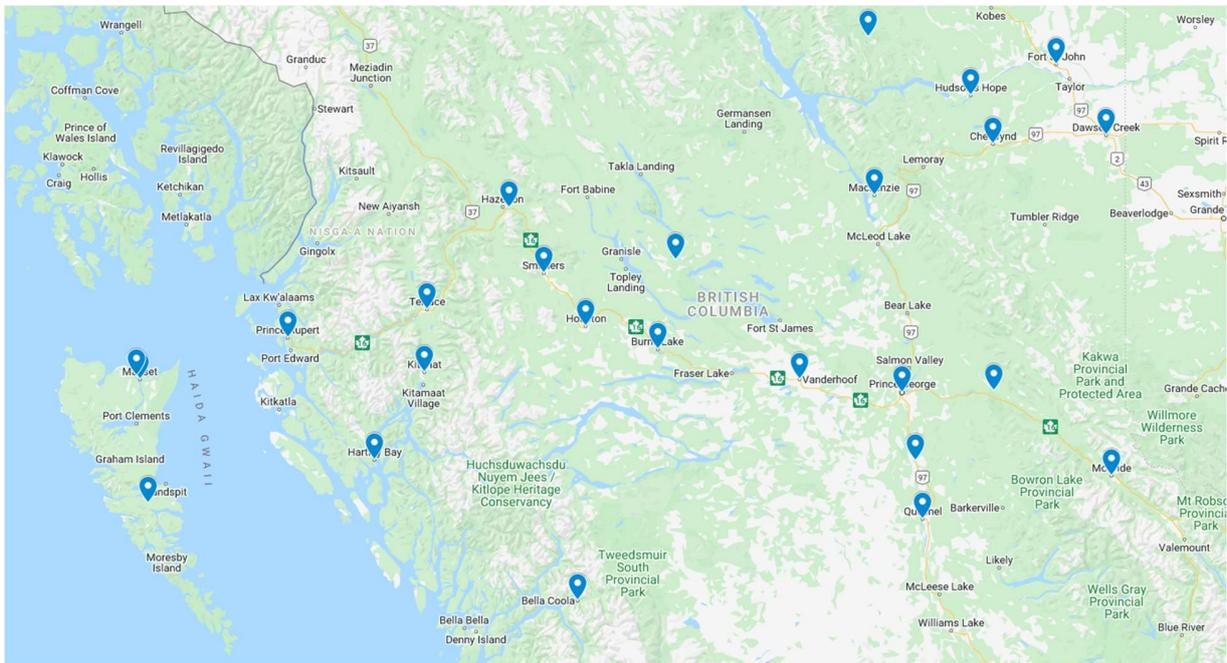
Meeting – April 4, 2022

The invitation to the meeting was distributed to members of CEA’s peer networks, CEA member-municipalities, recent attendees of BCMCLC workshops/events/webinars, and Northern BC organizations, individuals, and corporations that were discovered through research.

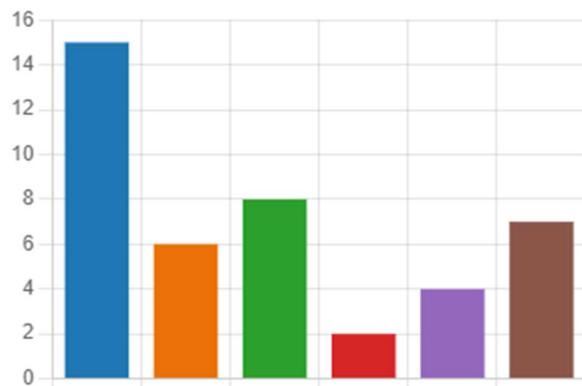
Attendees

Approximately 85 people registered for the meeting and 70 participated. They are from two-dozen communities across the region and represent multiple sectors.

Location of registrants



Government	15
Education	6
Business/Industry	8
Non-Profit Organization/Associ...	2
Health Care	4
Other	7



Topics and discussion

Break-outs

Energy step code: participants discussed how northern builders often find that they are already building to energy efficiency standards above code because the cold climate necessitates this. High performance builder, Joe Hart, commented that building this way is "a piece of cake" and that by focusing on greater airtightness, most builders can easily hit Step 3 without changing anything else in their builds. David Claus from UNBC concurred, and offered UNBC passive house builds as future training/teaching locations. The Regional District of Fraser – Fort George outlined why they adopted step 1 ahead of the provincial mandate. Members of the group lamented that not all local governments would adopt Step 1 before Step 3 becomes mandatory, which would help the industry transition more smoothly. Participants discussed the importance of compliance standardization by using the pre-built and as-built forms, provided by the Province of British Columbia.

Charge North: The group was provided an update on the status of Charge North, which is a collaboration involving local governments from across Northern and Central BC to increase the number public EV charging stations. Installation of these stations will begin this coming summer. Alongside infrastructure implementation, the project is also seeking to increase awareness of Electric vehicles (EV) and EV charging. A survey has been launched to inform the education activities:

<https://forms.gle/hdap1JMDGhUMWtXi9>

Education and training: New programs at colleges are needed in areas such as solar and carbon capturing. Research institutions, meanwhile, need to look to smaller communities for pilot programs/projects. This program and research expansion could also involve working with Indigenous communities to develop renewable energy: geothermal for power production, heating, and food production (greenhouses, farming).

Budget 2022 and Government funding: opportunities to collaborate with the health authority, businesses, and non-profits to demonstrate "bang for the buck" in terms of local benefits, capacity, and communications. Key areas for funding: EV infrastructure, retrofits, and emergency preparedness/response. Some regional opportunities exist with biomass and district energy. Collaborative staffing models should be considered.

Snack table: broad discussion about the value/development of this network with regard to education/training, advocacy, connecting the public and private sectors, advancing the consideration of co-benefits along with GHG emission reductions, and enhancing awareness/understanding of new technologies such as heat pumps. Also, that something called a "snack table" should have actual snacks!

Links from the chat

Climate Leaders Playbook: www.bcclimateleaders.ca

Building A Legacy North: www.communityenergy.ca/bal-north (this page also has a webinar on cold climate heat pumps)

Step Up to Step Code Week: <https://www.communityenergy.ca/cea-and-northern-bc-homebuilders-join-forces-to-host-step-up-to-step-code-week/>

Charge North: <https://chargenorth.ca/>

Survey on increasing awareness on electric vehicles and EV charging in the North: <https://forms.gle/hdap1JMDGhUMWtXi9>

Contact info shared in the chat:

Chantal Wentland, North Coast Regional District: planning@ncrdbc.com

Wil Wedel, Utilities Manager, City of Prince George: wil.wedel@princegeorge.ca

Angele Heinrichs, Energy Advisor, drafts person, and CHBA NBC Vice-President: angdraft@telus.net

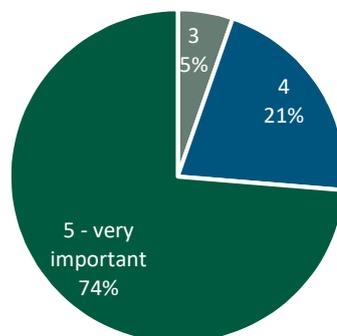
Paula Tait, Northern Health: paula.tait@northernhealth.ca

Leo Hebert, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council: techserviceunit@cstc.bc.ca or hebear56@gmail.com

Support for the Network

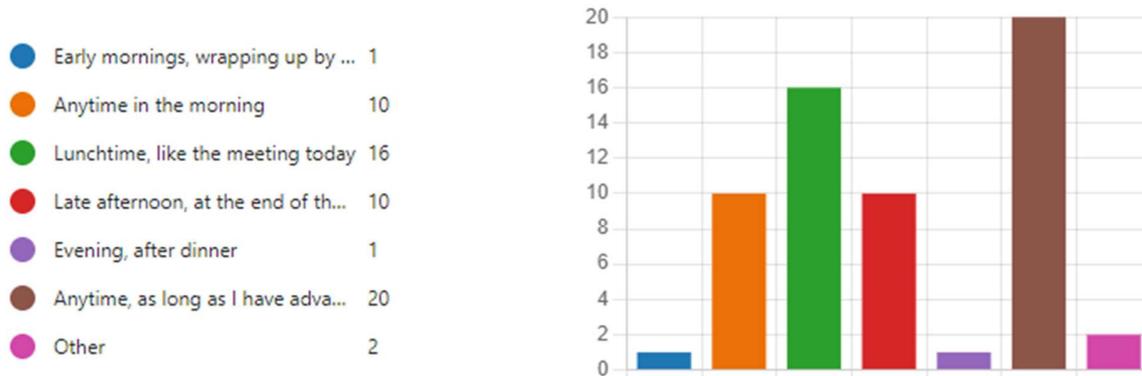
During the meeting, a poll was launched to determine the perceived importance of a Northern BC climate action network. Nearly three-quarters of participants feel the creation of this network is very important.

How important is this network to advancing climate action in Northern BC?



“There’s a need for local government staff to form a network with each other – sharing knowledge – especially the smaller ones that have limited resources to bring in people and diverse expertise in everything from EVs, to housing, to carbon capturing, etc”

Preference for Future Meeting times



Some Next Steps

1. Distributing this meeting summary and meeting recording to participants, those who registered but were unable to participate, and the broader invite list
2. Following-up with those who volunteered to help establish a network terms of reference, which will include the network's purpose, membership, and how it will operate, using feedback provided during the inaugural meeting
3. Establishing a web page for this network
4. Possibly publicizing this network in order to welcome additional members

CEA is arranging updates to regional districts around Northern BC about various CEA-related activities around the region, such as Charge North (the public EV charging project) and Building a Legacy – North (training builders and government staff about the Energy Step Code). These updates will also include this new network.

**Thank you to BC Hydro for providing funding
to establish the Northern BC Climate Action Network**

**I am grateful for being able to work on the traditional and unceded territory
of the Lheidli T'enneh, in Prince George.**