Community Energy Association

Communicating for climate action

VICCAN/RSPN Quarterly meeting
July 9, 2026

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How to use this resource

This resource has been co-created by everyone in attendance at the meeting on July 7, 2026. It's complimentary to the meeting summary that can be found at https://www.communityenergy.ca/rspn/ and includes downloadable graphics, links to additional resources, and more.

This resource can be shared with people outside the network.

You will also find useful resources and links, identified by these icons:

Downloadable resource for presentations & reports

External resource link

Exercise or take-away activity

Communicating for climate action – July 9, 2026

Meeting Objective: To connect as a group and discuss communication strategies geared toward elected officials and senior staff.

Speakers & Topics:

- Gail Hochachka, University of Victoria & Jen Grebeldinger - Building support for climate action through relationship-based communication and engagement
- Allison Ashcroft, Municipal Finance Authority - How to build support for climate action by working effectively with finance departments and framing climate work as a risk-management issue

Highlights:

- Lead with relationships and shared priorities, not just climate messaging.
- Embed climate action into core municipal functions such as finance, asset management, and emergency management.
- Climate risk is increasingly a financial, insurance, and governance issue.
- Proactive risk assessment, planning, and disclosure help reduce future liability and costs.
- Early engagement and cross-department collaboration build long-term support for climate action.

Complete summary can be found at https://www.communityenergy.ca/rspn

Province of BC updates

Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) is developing guidance for local authorities to accompany the Province's emergency management regulations.

Key updates

- The guidance is currently in development and is intended to support implementation of the new legislative requirements.
- The Province is targeting January 2027 for completion of the guidance, aligning with the anticipated release of the regulations.
- Initial work may be shared at the 2026 UBCM Convention, although plans are still being finalized.
- Local authorities will have opportunities to provide feedback through future engagement and consultation processes, with details to be shared as they become available.

What local authorities can expect

The Province noted that the guidance is expected to be high level and may not address all of the detailed implementation questions raised by local authorities over the past year. Recognizing this, EMCR is exploring opportunities to develop additional supporting resources and supplementary guidance to provide further clarity and practical direction where needed.

Key takeaway: Guidance remains on track for release alongside the regulations in January 2027. While the primary guidance document will provide broad direction, additional resources may be developed to address more detailed implementation questions from local authorities.

About EMCR and EDMA

EMCR (Emergency Management and Climate Readiness) is the provincial agency responsible for emergency management in B.C.

EDMA (Emergency and Disaster Management Act) is B.C.'s emergency management legislation, introduced in 2023. The guidance being developed by EMCR will help local authorities understand and implement EDMA requirements.

Climate communications

Worldviews in Energy and Climate Engagement (WECE)

Presenters: Gail Hochachka, University of Victoria & Jen Grebeldinger, Community Energy Association

Research goal: understand how applied research can support local government staff to make sense of climate controversies and develop new approaches or tools or practices to support climate action.

Partners: ACET | CEA | Ministry for Energy and Climate Solutions

About Accelerating Community Energy Transformation (ACET)

ACET is a multi-partner initiative accelerating the global push for resilient and equitable clean energy solutions through community-based collaborations. Established in 2023 with support from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, ACET is a partnership between Royal Roads University, University of British Columbia, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières and Yukon University, led by the University of Victoria.

Why This Project Matters Now

- The context for climate communication has changed
- Affordability pressures are high
- Trust is harder to build
- Mis- and disinformation are shaping public conversations
- Debates over climate and energy policy have become proxies for broader conflicts over values, identity, and societal direction.
- Disagreements about climate and energy may not really be about the policies themselves, but about differences in worldviews.

- Yet, local governments still need to move projects forward

News / Local News

Climate action open houses shuttered in Nelson due to safety concerns

Protests against 15-minute cities concept at heart of cancellation

David Carrigg

Published May 18, 2023 • Last updated May 19, 2023 • 2 minute read

48 Comments

If the climate narrative has shifted, how does our approach also need to shift?

Information deficit model → relational model
Listen to constituents: what are people's priorities? How is climate showing up in peoples' conversations, even if they don't call it climate?

Persuasion → people-centric
We often try and persuade people to agree with us about climate change – but this can feel manipulative or patronizing and hits limits. Instead, focus on people and dialogue. This brings us into treating people as individuals with agency and fostering shared commitments. Focus on "We."

Using (or omitting) emotions → practicing empathy
What's under the surface that is driving people to respond?

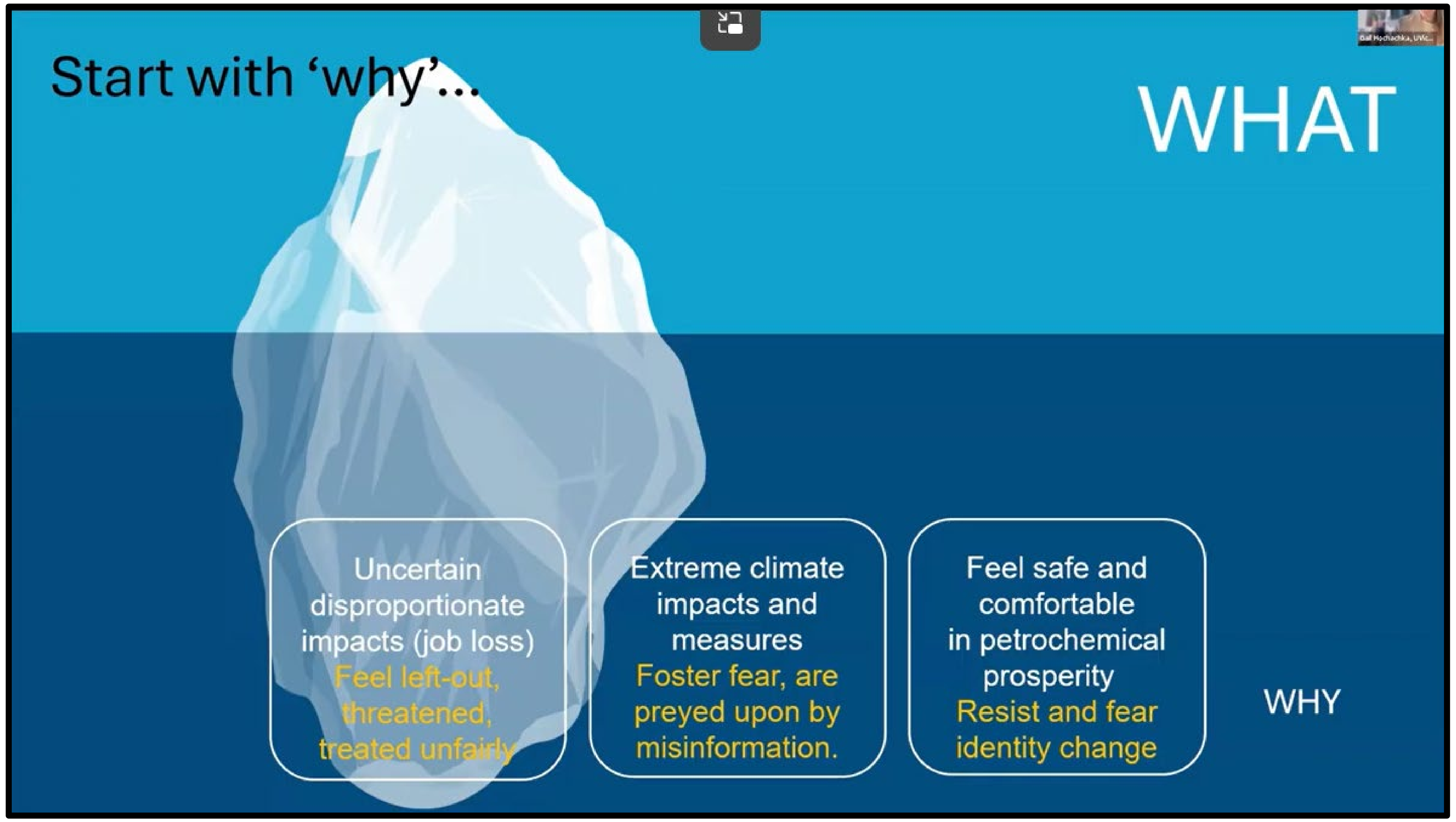
Technical mindset → integrative mindset
Integrate technical information where needed.

What vs. Why

In climate communications, it can be helpful to start with the "why." **<u>Why</u> are people reacting the way they are?**

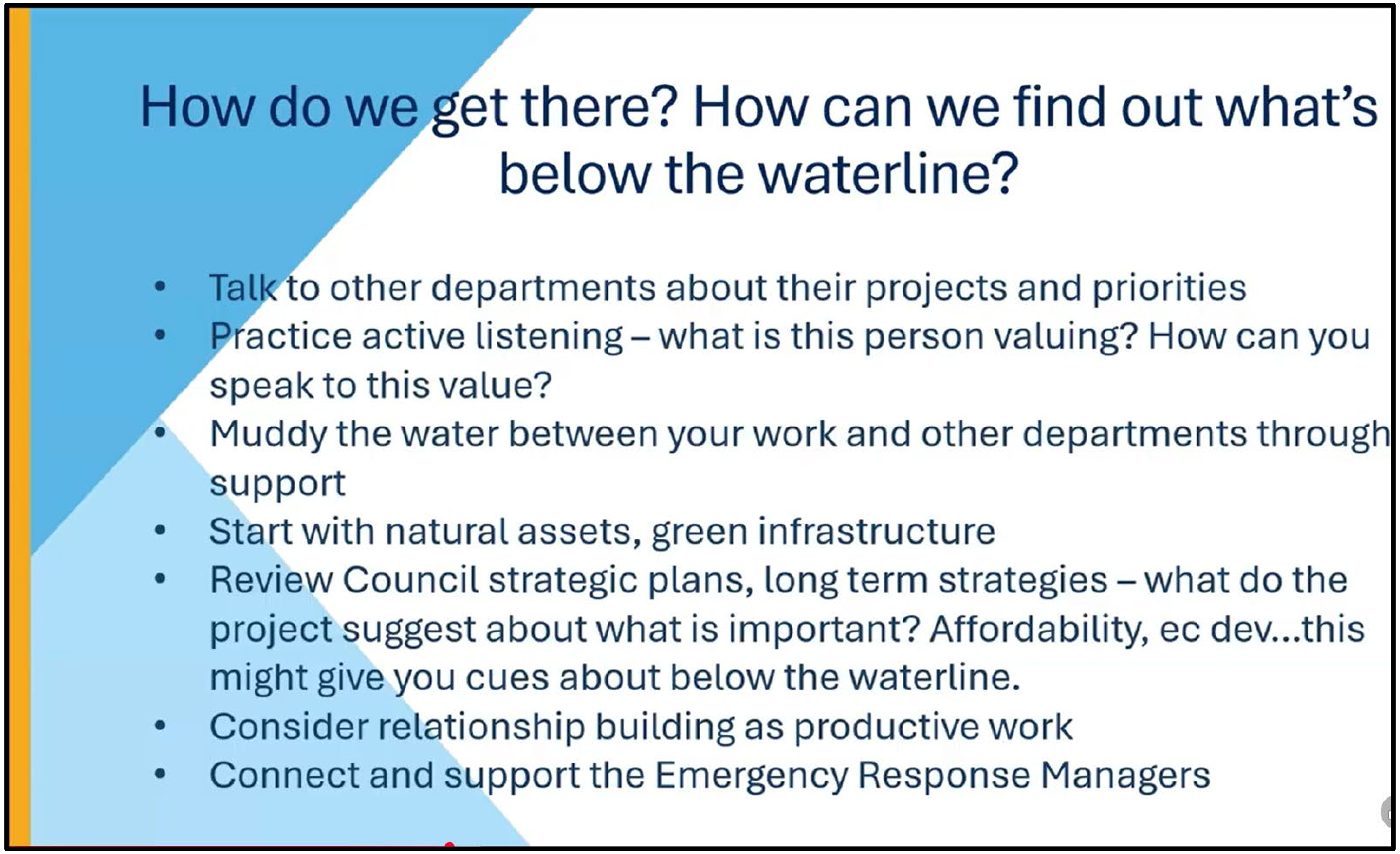
That means diving below the surface to understand:

- The factors that shape how people see the topic
- The things that matter to them
- How they really feel



What vs. Why

You can also start with the "what." **<u>What</u> matters to your community? <u>What's</u> below the waterline that you need to be listening for?**



Climate isn't its own silo. It affects everything. It's good to collaborate with other departments in your local government so you all work towards the same goals and leverage one another's work.

- Listen to council and senior leadership priorities. Does it give you a sense of what's below the waterline? How can you align your climate work with their priorities?

Most residents and councils understand the value of natural assets and green infrastructure. Focusing on these areas can help build collaboration.

How might we Fund Climate Adaptation?

Advice for local government staff

Presenter: Allison Ashcroft, Director of Sustainability, Municipal Finance Authority of BC (MFABC)

- What do you know about the mandate, motivations, and metrics driving your decision-influential colleagues in Finance?
- Do you perceive Finance as ally or adversary?
- Might it be you are just not talking their language?

About the Municipal Finance Authority of BC (MFABC)

MFABC provides long-term, short-term, and equipment financing, investment management, and other financial services to communities and public institutions in BC.

Funding BC Local Govt Infrastructure and Services

Balancing the Burdens on Past, Present, and Future Taxpayers

- **Locally through:**

  Property Taxes + **User Fees** + **DCCs** + **Reserve Fund Allocations**

- **Senior Government Contributions** (Federal/FCM, Province)
- **Financing from Municipal Finance Authority of BC** (as needed)

MFA is becoming a more important source of funding in the face of reduced funds from senior govts.

Key Challenges in Funding Infrastructure and Services:

- Limited revenue sources and authorities
- Downward pressure on tax rates and user fees -> inadequate reserves.
- Pushback from developers on raising DCCs
- Sr. govt grants/transfers uncertain – year-to-year and election-to-election

Approaching Finance Directors:

Finance folks are responsible for fiscal prudence and financial stewardship.

- They really don't like having to go back to Council for amendments to financial plans, nor having to explain large fluctuations in taxes year over year.
- Appeal to their inherent need for predictability and consistency
- Demonstrate how risk reduction and resilience delivers greater stability of cash flows, revenues, expenses.

Investments are more palatable when grants/contributions are available.

- Remind finance teams that most funding is now contingent on organizations having the following in place, and then support the integration of climate resilience and disaster risk reduction into them:
    - Asset management plans
    - Hazard risk and vulnerability assessments, emergency mgmt. plans, business continuity plans
    - Climate adaptation plans

Municipal borrowing will become more and more necessary and unavoidable

- Councilors have an aversion to borrowing as result of electoral approval requirements, but no VI municipality is anywhere near their borrowing limits, and approval-free limits have increased so electoral approval may not be required
- Examples of nearby climate disasters are available, arm your finance teams with costs, uninsured losses, economic impacts, service disruptions, class actions, etc. from these events to support greater inclusion of climate resilient investments in asset management planning, capital budgeting, and borrowing proposals/rationale.

Challenges with funding infrastructure

- Limited revenues.
- Counsellors and constituents alike don't want to increase property taxes and user fees by much.

Approaching Finance Directors:

Finance teams are under-resourced and over-tasked, with ever-increasing reporting burdens, and changes to accounting standards. Identify where you can support key organizational processes and requirements related to risk and financial management.

Support them in meeting these new requirements:

- Annual asset mgmt. reporting to the Province
- Climate-related financial disclosure
- EDMA (not led by Finance, but if insurability or access to sr gov funding is conditional on compliance, they'll care).

Provide your skills/time to contribute to the integration of climate change and disaster risk into:

- Broader enterprise risk management system, plan, and processes
- Asset management policies and strategies/plans,
- Asset/infrastructure exposure and condition//vulnerability assessments to different hazards and scenarios
- Hazard risk and vulnerability assessments, emergency management plans, business continuity plans (EDMA requirements for local authorities)
- Climate-related financial risk disclosures – supporting the translation from hazard risk to financial risk by outlining the actual/potential economic impacts to your organization, community (cascading effects) and broader financial system (feedback loops)

Be willing to put aside discretionary workplan items and master plans in favour of participating in legislated and accounting requirements that solidify your work in core strategy and risk documents and disclosures.

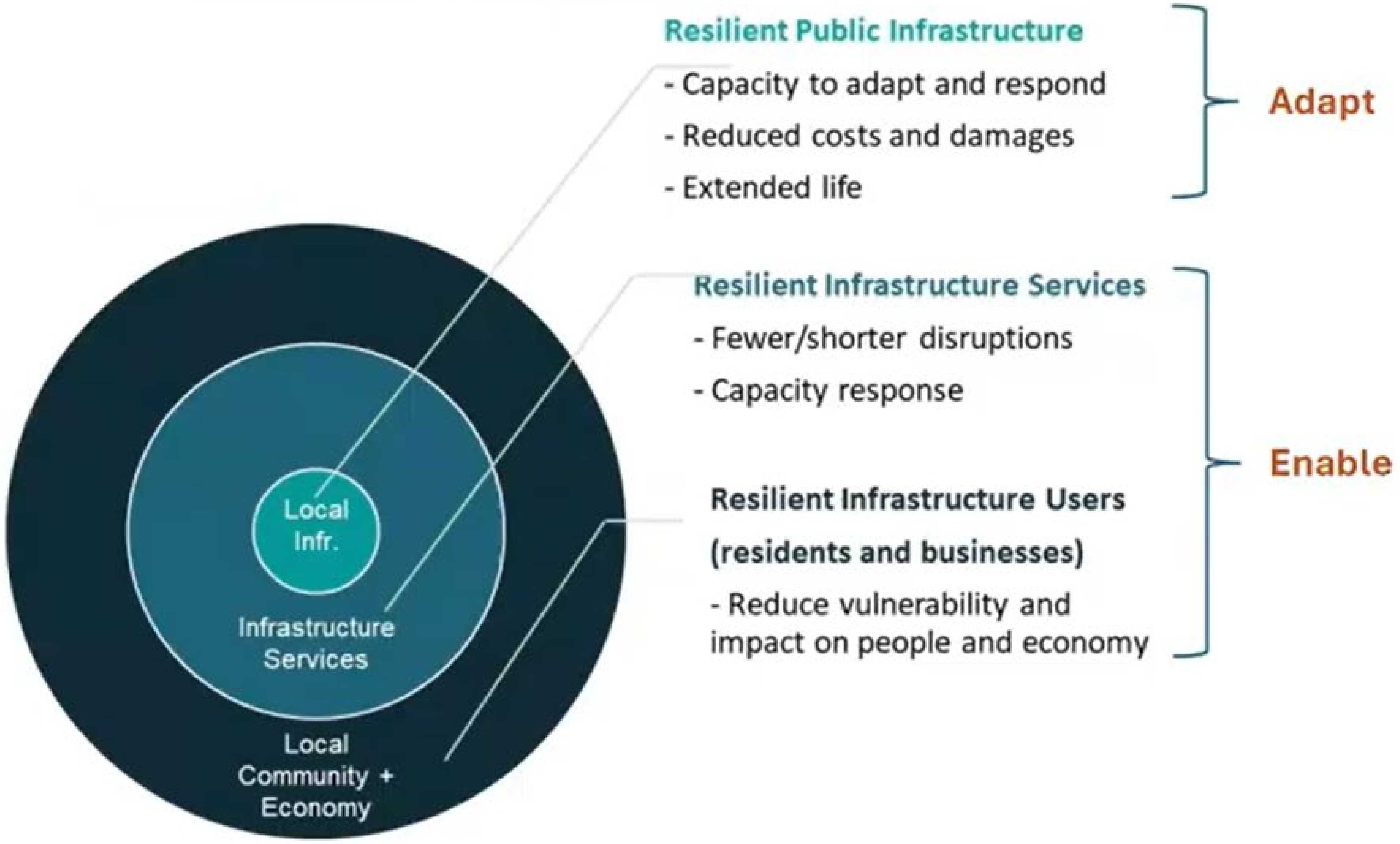
Talking points

- **Resilience investments improve financial stability** by reducing unexpected maintenance, repair, and recovery costs, helping stabilize revenues and expenditures.
- **Funding opportunities are still available.** Many grants and senior government contributions require communities to have hazard risk assessments, vulnerability assessments, or climate adaptation plans in place.

Motivating Asset and Risk Managers :

Local government investments to ‘adapt’ and ‘enable’ resilience

- reduce risk and uncertainty re local govt asset values, operating and capital expenses, service and taxation revenues and cashflows, and
- protect the long term financial health and stability of municipalities and their communities



Motivating Leadership/Council:

The Triple Dividend of Infrastructure Resilience Investments

1st dividend of resilience: avoiding damage and losses

- save lives, reduce the number of people affected
- reduce damage to infrastructure and other strategic assets
- reduce economic losses and disruptions

Benefits when disaster strikes

2nd dividend of resilience: unlocking economic potential

- promote business and capital investment
- increase employment
- support household and agricultural activity
- increase land value through protective infrastructure provision
- contribute to fiscal stability and enhance access to credit

3rd dividend of resilience: generating development co-benefits

- increase ecosystem services
- drive inclusivity

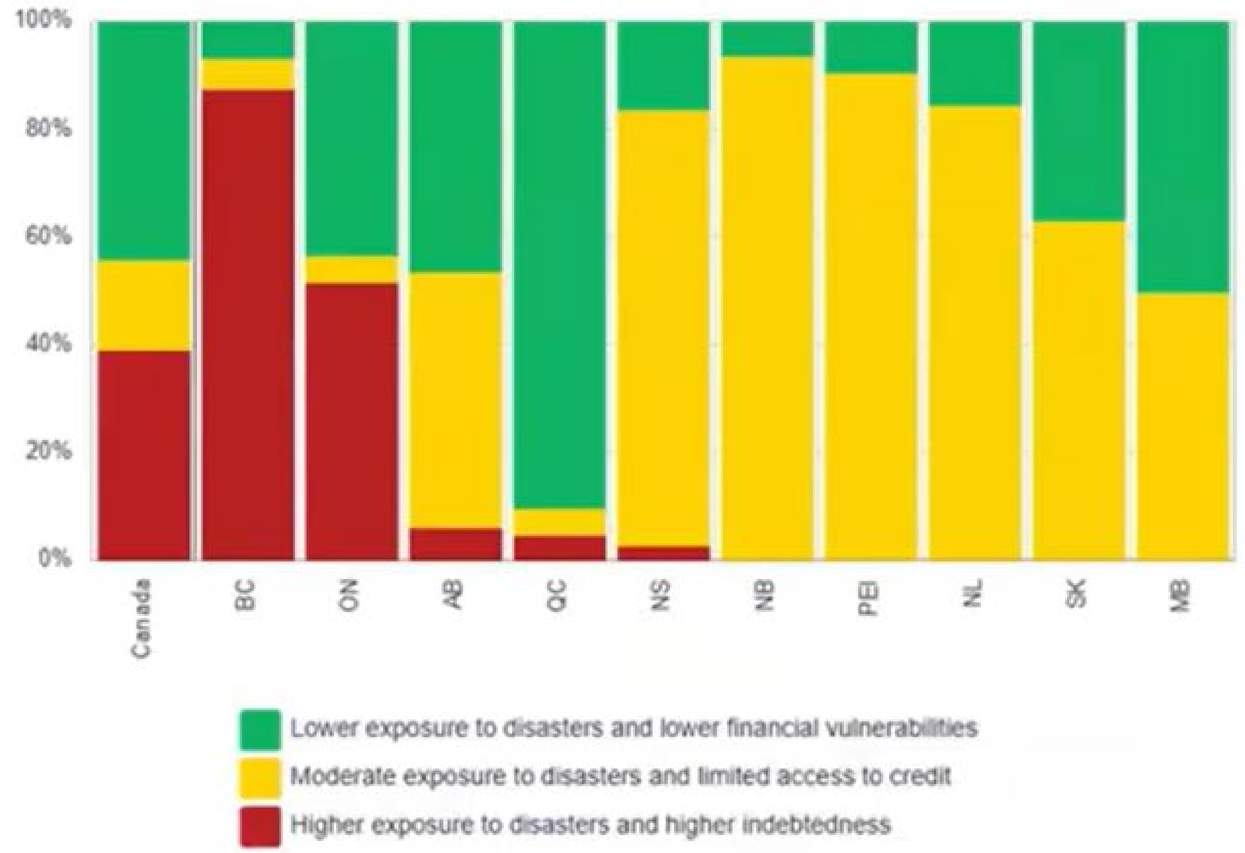
Benefits regardless of disasters

Source: Tanner et al (2015), adapted by Vivid Economics

Bank of Canada study of the combined effect of household financial vulnerability and exposure to natural disasters

Chart 4: Households that are both financially vulnerable and exposed to natural disasters hold a large fraction of household debt

Household debt with varied exposures to natural disaster and financial vulnerabilities as a share of national and provincial household debt, respectively



Sources: Canadian Disaster Database, TransUnion and Bank of Canada calculations
Last observation: 2020Q3

Nearly 90% of BC household debt is held by households highly exposed to disasters and having high indebtedness (more than 2x national average).

The destruction of leveraged physical assets such as housing could amplify financial system losses broadly, but more specifically, could have direct impacts on the financial stability of local governments in the event of large-scale disasters affecting their community.

The existence of insurance and disaster financial assistance will determine how directly and swiftly communities and local governments are impacted, but regardless, both will be impacted over longer time horizons through various feedback loops.

Let's take a look at climate risk transmissions channels Buckle up…

When a disaster hits a community that is already financially vulnerable, the impacts can be especially damaging. If key financial buffers, like insurance coverage or disaster assistance, don't materialize or fall short, the community's financial health can deteriorate over the long term and ultimately affect the financial stability of the local government.

Discussion Highlights

- **Social media plays a key role, for good or bad, in the context of climate work.** The media people consume affects their opinions and how they show up. For those creating social media, short-form content is often more effective than lengthy reports.
- **The iceberg model isn't "soft."** This is important and challenging work.
- **This is a tough time to work in climate.** It's essential to frame resilience around affordability, risk reduction, and community well-being to build public support and avoid backlash.
- **Equity matters:** financially vulnerable residents are often most at risk from climate impacts and need additional support before, during, and after disasters.
- **Local context is critical:** rural, remote, and resource-constrained communities face unique resilience challenges.
- **Resilience planning has financial benefits,** helping reduce costly disaster recovery and long-term cleanup expenses.
- **Engage early and broadly:** build buy-in with senior leadership, local businesses, and the public before disasters occur and misinformation spreads.