

## A Community Climate Change Consultation -2007 and Beyond

In 2001 the Manitoba Climate Change Action Plan first took shape as a report issued by a committee headed by Lloyd Axworthy. There was a lot of public support for the proposals at the time, and the plan was adopted by the province in 2002. Much has been accomplished since then, but the government feels there is a need to update the plan, particularly in areas where there is still a lot of work to be done. On June 27, 2006 The Climate Change Connection, a non-governmental coalition, organized a community consultation with representatives from environmental groups, universities, high schools and other stakeholders. I was there representing both Councils of Women. We were not there to learn about climate change but to make recommendations and offer suggestions both on mitigating the problem and in helping people to adapt to the change that is already becoming manifest. The conclusions of the consultation will soon be posted on the web.

Jane Gray, the Provincial Director of Climate Change and Green Initiatives, presented a backgrounder to the consultation. Since the plan was adopted, wind energy has been greatly expanded. Heat pump sales have soared. Over half of the country's heat pump installers work out of Manitoba. We export hybrid buses to many North American cities, and next year we will even see some of them on the streets of Winnipeg. The biofuel industry is taking off. In 2001 Manitoba was rated 9<sup>th</sup> in efficiency. We are now number 1. Bill 11 establishes a fund to promote energy efficiency. Everyone acknowledges we are just getting started.

Two areas that need attention are agriculture, which accounts for 32% of greenhouse gases in Manitoba and transportation, which accounts for 33%. The government would like to see a Commuter Challenge operating year around. They are looking for ways to make agricultural practices more sustainable without hurting producers.

The assembled environmentalists made recommendations but also made some broader criticisms. Mark Burch, who is known for his promotion of simple living, pointed out that the premise of the original plan was that the appropriate market signals would have to be in place first before the plan could be implemented, but Mark pointed out that there are no market signals for climate. He also pointed out that the report adopted in 2002 was not actually a plan. A plan would have to link all departments and set strategic objectives. He felt that the current programs are just nibbling at the edges of serious structural problems. People already know enough about the problem. It is time for action, not more education. The challenge will be more difficult as we move beyond peak oil. New technology is not entirely the answer. Others pointed out that infrastructure has to be in place before people will make green choices.

The larger group was divided into three to address three policy areas: transportation, agriculture and the City of Winnipeg. In the area of transportation, the group felt that it was not enough to make more fuel-efficient cars or even to find alternative fuels, it was necessary to change the mindset and move away from the single occupant vehicle. In urban areas there needs to be infrastructure in place to make it easier for people to walk and cycle. There were many suggestions for encouraging carpooling and for improving transit. Many felt that it was imperative to revive rail transportation and get trucks off the highways. One suggestion was that foods be shipped in bulk and that final bottling or packaging be done locally to avoid the transport of those materials. Some green taxes were suggested.

The group on the city of Winnipeg looked at changes to the policy framework, transportation and waste management. The city needs to be held accountable for implementing Plan Winnipeg. Reports should be mandatory. There was considerable overlap between two of

the groups on areas of transportation. There were many suggestions for waste reduction: revival of garbage fees, commercial and institutional recycling, municipal composting, product bans at the landfill, methane collection at landfills, and the reestablishment of a sustainable development coordinator.

There were no farmers present, but the small groups working on agricultural issues pointed out the need to make sure that farmers are not putting more nitrogen into the soil than their plants are able to absorb.

In the afternoon a number of other issues were address. While climate change can be mitigated, it is unavoidable and is already beginning. The impacts will be serious for agriculture and forestry, and businesses of all kinds will be affected. It is vital for us to start learning how to adapt to change. It was also recognized that in order to anticipate changes we will need to have more information. Funding for climate change research needs to be increased.

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