

CIP Forays into *Climate Change*



by Beate Bowron and Gary Davidson

Ask planners across Canada whether they are concerned about climate change and you get a resounding “yes”. Ask any one individual about his/her contribution to mitigating the effects and helping their communities to adapt and you find a few examples of “expert” planners, mostly in the environmental field.

Sure, as a profession, we have always considered hundred-year storms or the constraints of building in hazardous areas. However, most of us do not view climate change and its undisputable effects as an additional lens through which we have to examine every aspect of our work. Goodbye car-dependent low-density suburbs and power centres or trucking garbage to Michigan. Hello green roofs, energy-efficient building standards, trees in parking lots and more density... lots more density.

During 2007 and 2008, CIP entered the climate change field in a decisive way. With funding from the Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation Program of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) – and in cooperation with NRCan’s Earth Sciences Sector Enhancing Resilience in a Changing Climate Program – CIP launched the CIP/NRCan project with the somewhat long handle of “Promoting

Adaptation to Climate Change in the Professional Planning Community”. Consider it the beginning of mainstreaming climate change in the profession. The total project funding was over \$350,000 with an even larger “in-kind” contribution by CIP members.

The project’s strength was its ability to draw from the talents of members – over 100 of them from all across the country. Ably supported by CIP’s office staff, a small Steering Committee quarterbacked the efforts, with each member taking responsibility for one or more project components.

We will describe the project’s five components in turn: A National Policy Framework; Continuous Professional Learning Opportunities (CPL); Research Fellowships and Studio Projects Awards; Community Capacity for Adaptation; and a Climate Change Symposium in Iqaluit, Nunavut in July of this year.

National Policy Framework

CIP’s Strategic Plan commits the Institute to “reduce the rate of climate change, mitigate its effects and plan for adaptation”. Bold words, but will any action follow? CIP embarked on a member-driven quest for a proactive climate change policy. A group of very creative planners

and climate change scientists from across the country caucused to craft such a policy. From this beginning in late 2007, CIP’s climate change policy grew and matured. The policy, now widely circulated, begins with a bold declaration that reads:

“The Canadian Institute of Planners believes climate change is real and immediate. The impacts of climate change affect and will continue to affect all aspects of our mission to ensure a sustainable future and to shape better communities.”

This straightforward declaration spawned specific policies that commit CIP members to take climate change issues into account in their evaluation of all projects, and indicate the impacts of any development on climate change. This is a tall order. CIP has been working on several initiatives to create access to information that will allow planners to meet the challenge of climate change and incorporate it into their day-to-day work.

Climate change – both mitigation and adaptation – transforms many of the basic assumptions through which we plan, and dramatically alters the way we work. This fundamental truth has led CIP to develop its first national policy

around climate change. We are the first national professional organization to have a substantive policy on this high profile and critical issue.

Continuous Professional Learning

Substantive policy, while an excellent start, is only a start. While many planners are aware of climate change and its impacts, there is an urgent need to diffuse a solid understanding of the issues and appropriate actions throughout the profession. To ensure this, the CIP/NRCan project focused one of its major components on developing continuous professional learning (CPL) opportunities. Three CPL vehicles were designed and are being provided to all affiliates and planning schools.

The first is climate change planning 101. This is a short presentation ideal for affiliate conferences or evening seminars. It takes climate change adaptation planning and mainstreams it across the profession. The next is an intensive two-day workshop aimed at planners who are involved in climate change issues on a regular basis and need specific tools to assist them in their work and evaluations. Finally, a basic climate change module (two to three sessions) that can be included in introductory planning courses has been completed and circulated to Canadian planning programs.

These three learning opportunities have been developed for CIP by CitySpaces. The three elements are moving through the profession as affiliates incorporate

them into their CPL offerings and planning schools use them as part of their curricula.

Research Awards

The climate change challenge is a long-term endeavour and will continuously require new knowledge and research. To respond to this need, CIP established a student fellowship and class studio program for 2008. Under this program, 10 graduate students from recognized Canadian planning programs received a research fellowship of \$5,000 each to study climate change issues. The fellowships were awarded to planning students right across Canada, and some of their research will be presented at the national conference in Winnipeg.

To further promote action research, CIP awarded five planning studios of \$2,500 each to support class projects on climate change. These studio awards were distributed nationally and are also scheduled to be showcased at the national conference in Winnipeg.

The results of the research and studio projects help CIP start to build a database of planning-related work on emerging climate change issues. It represents the largest support program for planning students ever mounted by CIP.

Community Capacity for Adaptation

In cooperation with NRCan's Earth Sciences Sector, David Mate, CIP selected two pilot communities in Nunavut for climate change adaptation action planning, Clyde River and Hall Beach. Clyde River

is located on a fjord on the northeastern shore of Baffin Island, and Hall Beach is nestled on Foxe Basin, close to the most northern part of the western shore of Hudson Bay. Both hamlets are located above the Arctic Circle and have between 600 and 800 inhabitants, most of them Inuit. Both had invited CIP assistance, and NRCan scientists are working in both communities.

A call for expressions of interest for "expenses-only work" elicited a strong response from CIP members, and the following teams were selected: Christine Callihoo of Hemmera and Dan Ohlson of Compass Resource Management, both from Vancouver; for Hall Beach, and Rory Baksh of Dillon in Ottawa and Brian Render of Render Planning Services in Yellowknife for Clyde River.

Working in Canada's north presented its own peculiar challenges: having to rely on others to prepare for the teams' visits in small communities, where leaders have multiple roles; transacting virtually all official business, including community meetings, in translation; and a turn-over in Hamlet Councils during the project. In addition, the work of the two teams was somewhat compressed, due to the relatively short timeframe between the approval of the total project and its end date of March 31, 2008. For the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans for Clyde River and Hall Beach and an evaluation of the planning processes used, please consult CIP's web site.



Climate Change Symposium

From July 20-23, 2008, Nunavut's capital Iqaluit will host a groundbreaking event, an interdisciplinary symposium on *Planning for Climate Change: Weathering Uncertainty*. Some 200 professional planners and climate change scientists from across Canada, the US and beyond

The symposium will be a truly leading-edge event, offering the first formal venue for scientists, professional planners, and local community representatives to come together to face the challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation by feeding science into planning practice.



will gather to share information and experiences about the effects of climate change on northern and southern communities. They will explore ways to mitigate these effects through new planning approaches and tailor adaptation planning strategies to the issue(s) at hand.

All delegates will participate in mobile workshops, learn from each other in concurrent sessions and work their way through specific challenges posed by climate change during intensive workshop sessions.

A CPL seminar on CIP's draft Climate Change Policy will be delivered, as will the results of and lessons learned from the climate change adaptation action planning processes in Hall Beach and Clyde River.

A number of impressive keynote speakers have been confirmed, including Mary Simon, President of ITK, and a panel of Nunavut Elders moderated by the former Commissioner of Nunavut. Delegates will be able to experience the local culture through traditional food, dress, dancing and Inuit throat singing and participate in excursions "out on the land and bay" to discover the area's natural and cultural history. There will be lots of time to bask in virtually 24 hours of daylight.

Space is limited to 200 participants, so register now at www.planningforclimatechange.ca. First Air is offering special airfares from Edmonton, Ottawa and Montreal.

As a professional organization, CIP is now fully engaged in climate change mitigation and adaptation and is helping its members learn, adapt and influence. This is the start of an exciting adventure at the heart of how we plan for the future of our communities. ■

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