



CIP-ICU
Canadian Institute of Planners
Institut canadien des urbanistes

Policy on **Climate Change Planning**

POLICY CONTEXT

The global climate is changing, leading to increased hazards, extreme weather conditions, and transformations to the physical environment in Canada and beyond. Public awareness and global support for taking action on climate change are increasing, and targets have been adopted in Canada and globally. Achieving these targets requires immediate and committed action at every level of government and society, and across all communities and sectors.

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) recognizes that climate change planning (or, more accurately, climate change-informed planning) is the domain of all planners, including those working on energy, land-use, transportation, infrastructure, and community planning. Reducing emissions and preparing for the unavoidable impacts of climate change requires a drastic shift in the way our communities are built and function. Climate change planning includes the mitigation of future climate change, primarily by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to existing and projected environmental changes, and disaster risk reduction measures.

Climate change-informed planning must balance multiple – and sometimes competing – considerations. Interventions must avoid burdening already vulnerable populations, such as Indigenous people, the young and elderly, and those living in resource-dependent communities and remote areas. Actions taken to mitigate climate change may come into conflict with adaptation measures and addressing different climate-related risks may entail seemingly contradictory solutions. The complexity and breadth of climate change requires an integrated and collaborative approach. Planners are uniquely positioned to bring together officials, citizens, and allied professions in a program of careful, equity-oriented planning.

WHAT IS CLIMATE CHANGE PLANNING?

“Climate change planning” and “climate change-informed planning” are used interchangeably throughout this document to refer to planning activities that seek to mitigate or adapt to climate change. These activities are not simply the work of a specialized few, but encompass all aspects of planning, including energy planning, land-use planning, and community planning in addition to the development of specific climate change adaptation or mitigation plans.

POLICY GOAL

CIP envisions a future in which Canadian communities are planned, designed, developed, and managed to contribute to climate stability and to be more resilient in the face of unavoidable changes in the climate, and in the process, to become more liveable, prosperous, and equitable.



POLICY OBJECTIVES

To achieve the climate change policy goal, CIP supports the following objectives for the built, natural, and social environments:

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ Communities integrate mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction considerations into all regional and local planning and intentional design.
- ◆ Urban areas are compact and walkable, and neighbourhoods in all communities have a mix of land uses, to reduce transportation-associated emissions and infrastructure.
- ◆ Communities have robust multi-modal transport systems in place, including infrastructure for active transportation, public transit, and evolving zero-emissions vehicular technologies.
- ◆ New and existing residential, commercial, and industrial developments have near- or net-zero energy and/or emissions profiles, and avoid introducing climate vulnerabilities (e.g., no buildings on coastlines or in flood plains).
- ◆ Regional and metropolitan bodies have robust strategies in place to incorporate climate change considerations for new developments, as cities grow and boundaries change.
- ◆ Waste management systems are configured to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from the transport of waste materials and their disposal.

- ◆ Communities are designed to support the circular economy, which minimizes the use of virgin materials, the energy used in manufacturing, and the production of waste over the full life cycles of material goods.
- ◆ Communities work collaboratively with utilities to facilitate energy conservation, efficiency, and the integration of distributed energy resources, especially in remote areas. This may include renewable energy and thermal technologies and systems.



NATURAL AND RURAL ENVIRONMENTS

- ◆ Communities assess, prioritize, and mitigate the risks posed by extreme events (e.g., flooding, wildfires).
- ◆ In areas facing changing physical surroundings (e.g., sea level rise, thawing permafrost), land use and infrastructure are adapted to new and evolving circumstances.
- ◆ In response to changing precipitation patterns and temperatures, water resources are protected and usage is planned.
- ◆ Natural areas and their ecological characteristics, including biodiversity, are recognized as playing a vital role in adapting to the impacts of climate change and are protected accordingly.
- ◆ Planners support sustainable food systems and strive to mitigate agriculturally-related emissions.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- ◆ Public and professional perspectives on climate change fully recognize scientific evidence, contributing to a broad societal commitment to reduce impacts from climate change.
- ◆ Solutions to climate change support the social development and well-being of all citizens.

- ◆ Communities are more liveable and successful, as they adopt climate change solutions that reinforce other principles of good planning.
- ◆ The impacts that climate change and associated hazards have on mental health (post-traumatic stress, anxiety, etc.) and social health (social fragmentation, declining sense of place, etc.) are minimized.
- ◆ Local Indigenous knowledge and planning traditions are integrated into planning processes, respecting the rights of Indigenous peoples.

THE ROLE OF PLANNERS

CIP recognizes that planners have a key role to play in reducing GHG emissions from energy, housing, transportation, waste management, and agriculture, and in adapting communities to environmental changes that are already happening and are forecast to occur in the future. Accordingly, planners have the following professional obligations:

ENSURE EFFECTIVE DECISIONS

- ◆ Act in the public interest, incorporating measures to mitigate climate change and adapt to its impacts in all relevant planning decisions.
- ◆ Champion climate change solutions that counteract, rather than exacerbate, impacts on vulnerable groups and under-resourced areas.
- ◆ Be familiar with federal emissions reduction targets and frameworks, as well as provincial/territorial, regional, and/or local targets where they exist, and advance policies and regulations that work towards achieving those objectives.
- ◆ Know the climate and hazard projections for their regions and make decisions accordingly.
- ◆ Account for increased disruption and unpredictability by incorporating flexibility and redundancy into their plans.
- ◆ Plan for worst-case scenarios and incorporate risk-reduction measures into their plans, in line with the precautionary principle or “no-regrets” approach to decision-making.
- ◆ Base planning advice on authoritative climate and energy data and projections.
- ◆ Use established metrics and approaches to data collection, wherever possible, to facilitate sharing data with other communities.

- ◆ Model environmentally responsible decision-making in their professional practices.
- ◆ Ensure maximum transparency of the decision-making process to improve community engagement and accountability.

COLLABORATE ACROSS SECTORS

- ◆ Collaborate across sectors, departments, and jurisdictions to ensure an integrated and comprehensive approach to climate change planning, as well as effective implementation of climate change, energy, sustainability, or other similar policies.
- ◆ Collaborate with each other and other professionals – including landscape architects, architects, engineers, environmental scientists, public health practitioners, and first responders – on climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions.
- ◆ Seek to develop a shared language with others working on climate change and avoid siloed or compartmentalized approaches.
- ◆ Collaborate with other professionals to monitor the impact of planning decisions on GHG mitigation and progress on climate change adaptation, and revise plans and policies accordingly.

ENGAGE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, STAKEHOLDERS, YOUTH, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

- ◆ Consult and engage elected officials and leaders, the private sector, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, youth, and the general public in all aspects of planning for climate change;
- ◆ Be inclusive and respectful of Indigenous peoples, striving to promote understanding, validation, and respect of Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices to ensure decisions and interventions are culturally relevant and appropriate.
- ◆ Ensure that the perspectives of vulnerable communities and populations are actively considered in planning processes and reflected in the climate change solutions adopted.
- ◆ Work with relevant partners to develop effective communication strategies that inform the public of any mitigation, adaptation, or disaster response measures that require the public to be informed and prepared.

- ◆ Be ready to experiment with innovative methods and technologies for engaging and collaborating with the public and special interest groups.
- ◆ Communicate information to elected officials – and the public – on how climate change planning will strengthen communities and bring economic, environmental, and social benefits.
- ◆ Build on CIP’s national-level work to improve public awareness of, and support for, climate change planning by promoting the multiple benefits of climate change planning solutions.
- ◆ Encourage local, provincial/territorial, and federal governments to update development standards, planning regulations, and incentives to address adaptation and emissions.
- ◆ Encourage the development sector and utilities to update business models and planning processes to incentivize climate change mitigation and adaptation.

CALL TO ACTION

The global climate is changing, leading to increased hazards, extreme weather conditions, and changes to the physical environment in Canadian communities. CIP recognizes that all planners have an ethical obligation to consider climate change in their practices and strives to ensure that members have access to the resources, data, training, and other support they need to do so. CIP is also committed to collaborating with other professions, planning associations and governments, stakeholders, and the general public to help address the climate change that Canadians are facing.

THE ROLE OF CIP

CIP strongly believes that addressing climate change is an essential part of planning in the public interest. To support implementation of the policy, CIP will undertake the following actions to ensure the organization contributes to the advancement of climate change-informed planning:

- ◆ Promote climate change planning in its communications, policy advocacy, educational standards, professional development activities, and its work with other professions.
- ◆ Make developing and deepening partnerships with other professional organizations a priority in its approach to climate change planning.
- ◆ Ensure that practicing planners have access to the resources, data, training, and other support they need to fully integrate a climate-change lens into their work.
- ◆ Advocate for international and federal policies and actions that contribute to more robust climate change planning.
- ◆ Consider additional implementation priorities, based on an annual environmental scan and membership survey.

ABOUT THIS POLICY

The Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) is a professional body that works on behalf of over 6,900 members nationally and has served as the voice of Canada's planning community since 1919.

CIP's policies guide the organization's daily work and special initiatives to advance best practices in Canadian professional planning.

This policy was led by the CIP Climate Change Committee and developed through a thoughtful and extensive consultation with professional planners, climate change researchers, advocates, and other partner organizations using interviews, surveys, and focus groups. The policy was ratified by the CIP Board of Directors in November of 2018.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For additional resources on climate change produced by CIP, including thematic annotated bibliographies, model climate change adaptation plans, and a range of case studies and resources, please see the [CIP Climate Change website](#).

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Adaptation describes interventions to natural or human systems intended to reduce risks or exploit beneficial opportunities arising from changes in climatic conditions.

Climate change describes any systematic change in climate elements (e.g., temperature, pressure, or winds) sustained over several decades or longer. Although the climate can change for reasons including internal processes of the climate system or changes in solar emission, scientists agree that the current warming trend is largely due to anthropogenic (human-caused) factors.

Disaster risk reduction is described by the [UN Office of Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (2017) as “aimed at preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development.”

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are gases in the atmosphere, both naturally occurring and produced by human activity, that absorb and emit radiation at specific wavelengths within the spectrum of thermal infrared radiation. This property causes the greenhouse effect, trapping heat within Earth’s atmosphere and causing climate change. The primary greenhouse gases in the Earth’s atmosphere are water vapour (H₂O), carbon dioxide (CO₂), nitrous oxide (N₂O), methane (CH₄), and ozone (O₃).

Mitigation describes interventions to reduce climate changes caused by human activities and includes measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to enhance greenhouse gas sinks. Mitigation measures are used to slow the rate of climatic change and also have economic and social co-benefits.

The **no-regrets approach** adopts the precautionary principle which will involve plans, actions, and measures that consider all possible perspectives and factors to avoid or mitigate future harm and negative consequences.

