

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCY:

Opportunities for Community Action



*Climate change is an environmental issue.
Resilience is a social issue.*

How can we translate the global issue of climate change into terms that people can relate to and act on? The answer lies in community engagement on climate resilience.

Climate resilience is how people anticipate and prepare for the impacts of climate change such as extreme weather, power outages, wind damage, and flooding.

Resilience is the result of investments made in infrastructure, strong local economies, and urban design, but it is also the result of choices we make in our families and in our communities that insulate us from the effects of extreme weather

Community resiliency translates a distant, global issue into real, local action. It empowers people to take steps to adapt to changing climate and weather conditions, as well as prepare for emergencies. It also helps build capacity through local initiatives and organizations and volunteers to help those at risk in emergency situations.

Developing Community Resiliency

Climate adaptation and resilience are addressed in federal, provincial and municipal climate plans, but we still face a significant challenge in motivating citizens and employees to take action. The challenge is to connect with people in a way that leads to meaningful action, at home and at work.

An as yet untapped resource is available through community engagement, giving access to the array of community initiatives and community-based organizations that have direct connections and engagement with citizens.

The Government of Ontario is already investing in strong communities - supporting community hubs for improved service delivery, developing a provincial cultural strategy and a climate change strategy, promoting conservation and green energy, and promoting compact, livable communities through Places to Grow. These are strong foundation elements that support communities and can connect efforts to address climate change in Ontario's Climate Strategy.

Ontario's municipalities are also playing a lead role in fighting climate change. There are 70 municipalities in the Partners for Climate Protection supported by the federal Green Municipal Fund. Municipalities will be at the front lines of organizing community resilience.

Related to these efforts are many NGOs that support community planning and action. They are a tremendous resource and will be key partners in community resilience projects.

ONTARIO IS WELL-PLACED TO DELIVER A COMMUNITY RESILIENCY PROGRAM AS PART OF ITS CLIMATE STRATEGY

Designing a Community Resiliency Initiative

A community resiliency initiative needs to integrate several levels of activity:

1. Understanding, agreement and partnerships with and between established organizations (the formal / institutional level currently responsible for climate adaptation, mitigation, emergency preparedness and overall resilience)
2. Cultivating community leads and projects
3. Enabling and supporting voluntary action by residents and local businesses and organizations

COMMUNITY ACTION: Building Layers of Support

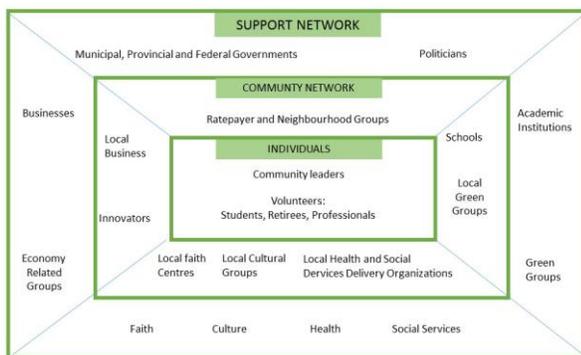


Figure 1: Layers of support for individual action

This approach provides many opportunities to engage and contribute, and as a result it has potential to connect with a range of organizations, including:

- Provincial and federal governments
- Municipal governments and associations
- Insurance and financial businesses
- Energy businesses and utilities
- Environmental and social organizations

Offering Solutions and Encouraging Action

The goal of a community resiliency initiative is to give people tools to deal with new and growing challenges, and to do so in creative and innovative ways. For example, most of us have experienced an extreme weather event and power outage. When we do, we have questions like – How do we best cope with the situation? Exploring a range of

options allows people to plan for an incident or emergency, and possibly do more, such as reducing energy needs, invest in backup solutions or renewable energy options.

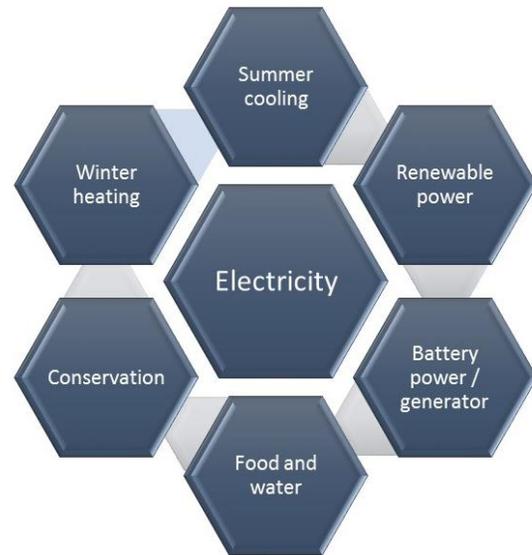


Figure 2: Mapping options for electricity resilience

The range of options has to be flexible, allowing for different community types, income mixes and diverse individual motivation for action.

The solutions will help on a number of fronts – take steps to adapt to climate change, prepare for emergency situations, reduce emissions and impacts, and can also help with long term solutions as people transition to healthier, conserve lifestyles. And power outages are simply one example, the initiative will address a full range of topics such as food security, transportation, stormwater management, healthy communities, and local economies.

In addition, there's a real opportunity to develop Green Economy jobs, for example with community youth employment efforts connected to developing and implementing these actions.

About Us

The Community Climate Resiliency Initiative is being proposed by a collaboration of professionals and organizations who have been working on community action and climate change for a number of years. The lead proponents are:

- Ron Nielsen
- Madelyn Webb
- Chris Winter