

Low Carbon Leadership Conference 2024 Attendee Summary

The final session of NSFM's Low Carbon Leadership Conference was an Idea Pollination session. Utilizing [Open Space principles](#) to support freedom of movement and the cross pollination of ideas amongst tables, conference attendees had the opportunity to discuss a range of questions related to the conference. Below is a summary of the key findings from the discussion.

How could municipalities support community-scale renewable energy projects?

- Dedicating land and existing infrastructure for renewable energy projects.
- Increase capacity through staffing or provincially-funded programs. Have decision makers who are willing to champion these projects.
- Improved communication and education within and between municipalities.

How can we enhance our understanding of how energy can play a role in our community?

- Energy literacy – using people friendly words/phrases to convey info about energy. Also framing energy in other terms (e.g. affordability, housing, equity) – many don't have the 'luxury' of thinking about energy efficiency and generation (not immediate concerns day to day).
- Localize the benefits of energy in communities (e.g. energy security especially for equity deserving communities, job creation, etc). Leave no one behind and leverage local knowledge and skill sets. Build strong relationships from the start.

What are the existing challenges and opportunities for supporting the development of sustainable and affordable net zero housing?

- Building code presents an opportunity to achieve sustainable/net zero housing, but can also pose additional regulatory barriers.
- Opportunity to reframe the cost conversation to recognize that net zero options are usually cheaper in the long term. Need to provide convincing incentives for developers to build housing.
- We need housing inventory, but we are rushing and not future proofing our housing by not currently building climate resilient and energy efficient housing as a baseline. End up pitting two crises against each other. Need to mainstream solutions to achieve economies of scale.

How can residents be involved in implementing low carbon community projects & how do we make people more aware of low carbon programs?

- Residents need to be involved in projects to share diverse experiences and provide direction. Decision makers need to listen and reply.
- Need to answer the common questions that residents ask, namely: how do we do this, how do we get involved and what will it cost me? Keep things simple: plain language, accessible, approachable communication and awareness raising. Listen to what people need and motivate them to apply to programs. Reassure people they won't go into debt and it's not a scam. Residents and communities can benefit from foundational training in low carbon project basics.

How can we address energy equity & how can we add an energy equity lens to energy planning?

- Energy equity: recognition that some communities have been historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution, underinvestment in clean energy infrastructure and a lack of access to energy-efficient housing and transportation.
- Need additional supports and adequate funding to address energy equity. Community needs assessments that utilize local knowledge and build capacity for the future can be a starting point. Need communities at the decision making table. Equity should be imbedded, not a value add. Cost is the biggest barrier when it comes to energy planning.
- Listening, learning and knowledge sharing are key. Use culturally appropriate language and meet people where they're at. Listen to communities about what they need, not telling them what they need or overloading with too many requests/asks/emails. Have a cup of tea and take the time to build a relationship.

How can we encourage municipalities to participate in climate action programs?

- Make projects achievable within 4 year political timeframe (council turnover)
- Encourage friendly competition between municipalities and share staff (thereby increasing capacity) between smaller municipalities.
- Focus on long term fiscal benefits of taking action now.

In which areas do you think we need more governmental actions for transitioning away from fossil fuels to renewables?

- Municipalities can fund more renewable energy projects through incentives and rebates. Municipalities can own their own power generation.
- Provincial government can establish microgenerators acts like in Alberta which allow for small scale generation.
- Federal government can be more stringent on emissions reduction (e.g. banning fossil fuels by 2050).

What are some of the low carbon opportunities in your neighbourhood?

- Transportation: active transportation (rural and urban)
- Community: gardens (local ownership of assets and social connection)
- Energy: solar everywhere, district energy, biodigesters for farms, retrofits, more passive homes