

Partners for Climate Protection

Greenhouse Gas Reduction Initiative of the Month

FCM GHG Emission-Reduction Strategies



Profile

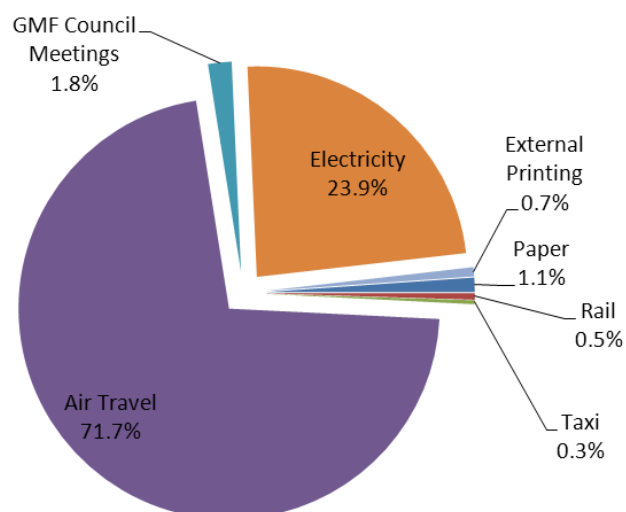
The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) has been the national voice of municipal government since 1901. With more than 1,900 members, FCM represents the interests of municipalities on policy and program matters that fall within federal jurisdiction. Members include Canada's largest cities, small urban and rural communities, and 21 provincial and territorial municipal associations.

The Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program, started in 1998, is a joint program of FCM and ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability. (See *related ICLEI article.*) As of June 2011, 216 municipal governments participate in PCP.

Background

In 2010, FCM prepared greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy use inventories of its offices and operations. These inventories will help FCM zero in on emission-reduction approaches, policies and practices that can be implemented now and in the future.

FCM has a staff of approximately 126 people. From the baseline year of 2009, the inventory showed that the total carbon footprint of FCM's operations was about 638 tonnes annually. (All GHG emissions were calculated as carbon dioxide equivalents, or CO₂e). The majority of FCM's emissions related to air travel (more than 70 per cent). The second-largest percentage came from office-based electricity use.



Breakdown of FCM's GHG emissions for 2009

FCM Implementation and Approach

As the voice of Canada's municipal governments, FCM believes in the importance of leading by example. As a first step, the Federation established a Green Team comprised of at least one member from each FCM division. FCM CEO Brock Carlton sits as a member of the Green Team. Members meet regularly to discuss ways to improve the organization's overall environmental performance and also act as liaisons for other staff members.

LEED Certification: When FCM moved one of its offices in 2010, it decided to apply the LEED® Canada for Commercial Interiors standards. These standards help improve energy efficiency in new or existing tenant-occupied buildings.

Before moving into the new 121-metre-square (1,300-square-foot) office location - – a historical landmark in Ottawa’s downtown core - , the Green Team members provided feedback on the office set up and relayed staff concerns and issues to FCM’s Building Committee.

Nick Pisani, FCM’s facilities manager, says the space (*pictured at right*) consisted of a concrete slab with new electrical and mechanical systems. All windows had either been recently replaced or recaulked. As a tenant, the Federation could do little in terms of the building envelope, but applied the LEED commercial interiors standards to ensure newly installed systems and components were sustainable.



FCM office space at 10 Rideau. Photo courtesy of FCM.

“All of our furniture and finishes (carpets, paints, etc.) are all low-VOC (volatile organic compound) and are LEED-certified,” says Pisani. He adds that low-flow shower heads, faucet aerators and low-flow toilets and urinals with electronic sensors were also installed. Overhead lights were replaced with energy-efficient T8 lamps; light-emitting diodes (LEDs) are used for task lighting; and offices are equipped with occupancy sensors. “All the lighting is on a relay system,” Pisani explains, “so it’s timed to come on or be shut off at a certain time.”

Please visit [LEED Canada for Commercial Interiors](#) for more information.

Webinars and Teleconferencing: Since January 2008, PCP has offered a series of free webinars (online seminars) detailing various aspects of climate change action.

PCP members benefit from not having to travel to another city or province to attend the seminars (and thus reduce the emissions associated with such travel), while still gaining the information traditional face-to-face meetings provide. “The webinars are peer-to-peer, with topics that are relevant to the audience,” says Donna Chiarelli, FCM’s Manager, Capacity Building Programs. “Participants like hearing from others who are working through the same issues as they are.” Using a simple online platform, webinar participants call in to hear the session, view all presentations online and are able to ask questions throughout the session. “We can address specific needs right in the webinar,” says Chiarelli.

Access past [webinars](#) or listen to past [podcasts](#).

As with the webinars, FCM has instituted several teleconferencing initiatives, not the least of which is the Green Municipal Fund (GMF) council meetings. The GMF council used to meet in person four to six times per year; with teleconferencing, the council now meets monthly. “It has reduced the emissions associated with people having to travel to Ottawa and sped up the GMF process, which makes our applicants very happy,” says Michelle Osborne, FCM’s project officer, National Programs.

FCM CEO Brock Carlton admits that reducing the emissions from FCM-related air travel will be a challenge. “It’s our biggest issue, and we need to focus on ways to either participate in offsets or find more technical tools that we already have but haven’t yet built into our system.”

Paper Reduction: The per capita consumption of paper for printing in Canada is close to 91.4 kilograms, which is an increase of about 20,000 pages per person since 1983. FCM began its paper-reduction initiatives by holding a friendly competition to see which department could reduce the most paper. Staff jumped on board, finding numerous ways to cut their paper use (i.e. not printing emails, referring to online documents or research papers, etc.).

The organization also produced its own green publishing guide, which provides tips on reducing the need for paper, while helping staff determine their actual paper needs. FCM also purchases 100 per cent certified sustainable paper.

The Federation's Information Technology Department has added sustainability requirements to all its printing-related requests for proposals (RFPs). "It's something our senior management wants to incorporate in all of its RFPs," says Osborne.

One paper-reduction strategy in particular has worked extremely well. GMF applicants used to receive paper copies of their contracts once they were awarded funding. However, with the advent of new technologies, FCM has now moved all applications and supporting materials to multiple locations on its computer network.

Teleconferencing has also helped cut paper use. "We used to send out huge binders of information to each GMF council member," recalls Osborne. The meetings now rely on *SharePoint*, an online application that allows multiple users to access information from one central web location. Thousands of pages no longer need to be printed, collated and transported to council members. This reduces paper use and staff time.

Sustainable Transportation: In 2010, FCM's Green Team conducted an employee commuter survey. On an annual average, most employees (~33 per cent) use active transportation modes such as walking and cycling. About 32 per cent use public transit (which increases to almost 43 per cent in the winter). Personal vehicles are used by less than one-third of all staff, a figure well below the Canadian average of 86 per cent (Statistics Canada 2005).

To support employees who regularly use public transit, the Federation began offering a discounted transit pass, purchased through Ottawa's transit agency, OC Transpo. The EcoPass offers a 69 per cent savings over the purchase of a regular express pass. (FCM employees pay for the EcoPass through payroll deductions).

For those who use active transportation modes, FCM has showers and bicycle parking at each office building. When the organization moved one office, in 2010, it took advantage of an adjoining shopping mall parking lot to create a bicycle parking area. The secure bicycle cage was built within the lot, and employees need only enter a code to park their bicycles safely and securely. Osborne says about 15 employees use the bicycle parking regularly, while employees at FCM's second office can park for free under a canopy to protect their bicycles from the elements.

Carlton is among FCM's active commuters. "I cycle spring, summer and fall. It's important for me to lead by example," he says.

The commuter survey highlighted more work that can be done on sustainable transportation initiatives. On a yearly basis, employee commuting produces almost 50 tonnes of emissions. As a result, FCM is actively seeking ways to encourage more sustainable commuting, such as carpooling.



Offsets and Compressed Schedules: For the past several years, the Federation has offset its carbon emissions at FCM-sponsored conferences. **Carbonzero** provides the offsets for conference delegate travel (voluntary) and venue energy usage at both FCM's annual meeting and Sustainable Communities Conference. Additional initiatives include reusing plastic badge holders, offering online registration, using bulk water over bottled water, using local suppliers where available, and reducing the amount of waste at conference venues.

Compressed work weeks can save on energy costs – lighting, heating and air conditioning – by limiting the number of people working in an office. Throughout the year, FCM employees work extra hours, to compress their work week from five days to four during July and August. Employees can also choose to telework throughout the year (usually on Wednesdays).

Results

LEED Certification: The retrofit has only just recently been completed, so data on both lower water use and energy use is not yet available. However, Pisani says that even though the cost of retrofitting to a higher standard can cost up to 20 per cent more, energy savings should offset those costs over time. Pisani is also confident that, once the Canadian Green Building Council certifies the retrofit, FCM will meet the LEED Gold standard.

Webinars/Teleconferencing: To date, more than 800 people have taken a PCP webinar, and participant feedback has been very positive. Participants are able to post questions during the webinar, learn from other municipalities and have instant access to presentations. Although not every webinar participant would have travelled to a face-to-face seminar – the webinars have cut almost 31 tonnes of GHG emissions from avoided travel.

Osborne says that in 2009, each face-to-face GMF council meeting produced about 2.2 tonnes of GHG emissions. Teleconferencing eliminates those emissions. FCM is also able to hold monthly GMF meetings (rather than four to six times per year), which has sped up the application process.

Paper Reduction: FCM staff members have reduced their paper use so much that the money saved has been used to purchase 100 per cent Canadian recycled paper. Using SharePoint for teleconferences also eliminates the need to print and collate binders for council members.

Sustainable Transportation: Thirty FCM employees use the EcoPass, about 15 employees actively commute year-long and many more choose active modes during the spring, summer and fall. FCM's Green Team has hired an extra summer intern for 2011 to look at how FCM can expand its sustainable transportation initiatives.

Lessons Learned

LEED Certification: Osborne says that having a building committee (staff members who worked with the facilities manager and the retrofit designer) helped immensely. "They liaised with the rest of the staff and pointed out any issues or concerns, which made the transition to the new office much easier," she says.

Webinars/Teleconferencing: Chiarelli says that any municipality interested in conducting webinars should always do a dry run with their presenters. This ensures technical issues are addressed ahead of time. "Keep the platform and the presentations simple," she says, "because it makes for a much smoother webinar."

In terms of increasing the number of people teleconferencing, Osborne says that all the technology an organization needs is already available. “Teleconferencing is such an efficient way to work,” she says. “It saves time and money, and you can make that business case to people.”

Paper Reduction: Osborne says a friendly competition among staff members to reduce paper use, which was supported by senior management, helped meet their objectives. The department with the highest paper reduction received an award and “bragging rights.” At staff meetings, additional “Greenie” awards also highlight the work of a department or individual. “Having those multi-stakeholder discussions has been a key to our success.” She adds that the awards help foster positive behaviour change.

Sustainable Transportation: Osborne says that organizations have to make it as easy as possible for people to choose sustainable transportation. “We’ve provided showers, bicycle storage and the EcoPass. All those things support those who want to walk, bike or bus to work.”

Leading by Example: Carlton says that leadership must be seen as coming from both the bottom and the top. “As a leader, you have to state that sustainability is a priority for you, and then enable leadership to emerge within the organization,” he maintains. “Others can bring their skills to bear. My job is to make sure there’s a wide dialogue on the issue.

“I try not to discuss sustainability in terms of how others lead their lives, but in terms of how we work in our office,” Carlton adds. “If that translates into other areas of life, so much the better.”

As with its member municipalities, Carlton says FCM recognizes sustainability as a journey that will never truly end. “We’ll never walk away saying that file is closed. There will always be more work to be done.”

Future Direction: FCM

FCM plans to update its sustainability inventory each year. Its Green Team is developing a sustainability charter of the Federation’s current and proposed emission-reduction policies and practices. Carlton says the charter will focus on tangible measures, such as building maintenance, heating and cooling. As well, the charter will continue the initiatives FCM has already started, to reduce the organization’s carbon footprint.

“We want to demonstrate our commitment to sustainability within FCM,” says Carlton, “and the charter would give us an opportunity to do that. It also gives us a chance to have a discussion with our staff, so that they have input, and we get a broader sense of commitment.”

Further Information

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The Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program is a network of Canadian municipal governments that have committed to reducing greenhouse gases and acting on climate change. PCP is the Canadian component of ICLEI’s Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) network, which involves more than 900 communities worldwide. PCP is a partnership between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability. PCP receives financial support from FCM’s Green Municipal Fund.