

September 7, 2016

Submission to the Select Committee on Climate Change

Who we are:

Aster Group Environmental is a group of like-minded people that have formed a worker (or worker-owned) co-operative to deliver environmental services to various clients, including municipalities, non-profit organizations, consulting firms, and governments. We value communities, and the work environmental organizations do in the province.

Sabine Dietz:

Biologist, naturalist, volunteer, consultant - for over 29 years in the environmental field. Since 2010 actively working in climate change adaptation (regional collaborative New Brunswick coordinator); since then working with the climate change secretariat, municipalities and environmental non-profits on adaptation work - increasing resilience and capacity in communities as major focus.

Points:

- Focus on adaptation, it needs full consideration in any climate change plan
- We are stuck with needing to adjust to change, whatever we do know, increased flooding, heavy rainfall events, erosion, and overall damages are increasing
- Some communities are harder hit than others (Le Goulet, Sackville, Pert Andover, St. George), but that's likely going to change, with more communities seeing more impacts as the impact of climate change increases.
- Huge expenses if we just react and not plan in advance - example: Aboujagane one culvert, 1 million \$
- Who is responsible?
 - Individuals, businesses, industries
 - Individuals (their properties, their houses)
 - Businesses (build resiliency into their plans; not endanger others)
 - Developers
 - Real Estate associations
 - Communities/ municipalities
 - identify at risk areas
 - set development bylaws
 - planning locally, zoning
 - provincial government
 - federal government
- Who can help?

- need a full, broad climate change agency
- ENGOs have been doing work with communities and individuals, as well as governments for many years, can collaborate extensively
- for small to medium-sized communities, trained environmental facilitators are needed - since communities need to gain expertise & build their capacities!
- Infrastructure (in some cases grey infrastructure is necessary to mitigate impacts, but in many cases looking at how nature works makes things a lot easier)
 - focus on using and maintaining natural systems that already function to mitigate climate change:
 - wetlands buffering from floods (acting as sponges);
 - forests slowing down and absorbing run offs (clear-cutting: drying up streams during droughts, and causing flash floods when heavy rainfall occurs)
 - beaches acting as barriers (buildings, breakwaters, hardening causes reduced resiliency; they are naturally dynamic)
 - saltmarshes (barriers, slowing down storm surge waves)
 - building green infrastructure as it is cheaper, and will provide other services:
 - swales, rain gardens, wet ponds, wetlands, adding vegetation along streams, rivers, brooks, etc.

Recommendations

1. Community Planning Act & Municipalities Act changes
 - a. provincial statements of interest
 - b. climate change and adaptation need to be key
 - c. maintenance of natural systems essential as buffers
2. Adaptation plans: if they become mandated, ensure that building capacity is part of these plans
3. Financing
 - a. climate change lens on all infrastructure funded or subsidized by government
 - b. ensure funding is equally available for building human or leadership capacity to deal with change (not infrastructure only!)
4. Using natural systems & green infrastructure versus grey infrastructure as a key focus and emphasis