



# Media Release

February 16, 2024  
For immediate release

## RDCK shares public engagement results on draft Climate Action Plan

Nelson, BC: Results from the Regional District of Central Kootenay's (RDCK) public engagement process on the draft Climate Action Plan are now available and have been provided to the Board. The RDCK received 3,518 comments on the draft plan during the engagement period from April to October 2023.

"Thank you to everyone who came to our events, connected with our team and shared their thoughts on the draft Climate Action Plan," said Paris Marshall Smith, RDCK Sustainability Planner. "There has been some polarization around the plan, and we are pleased to see the shared values that have emerged through the engagement process. These shared values include the importance of ensuring we have clean air and water, protecting our ability to grow food in our communities, being prepared for the changes to the climate that are coming and creating solutions that reflect our rural way of life."

Residents had opportunities to provide feedback through a series of 20 open houses, a survey, dialogue circle conversations, emails, letters, webinars, an online discussion board, and Community Ambassador outreach at community events. The public engagement results highlighted:

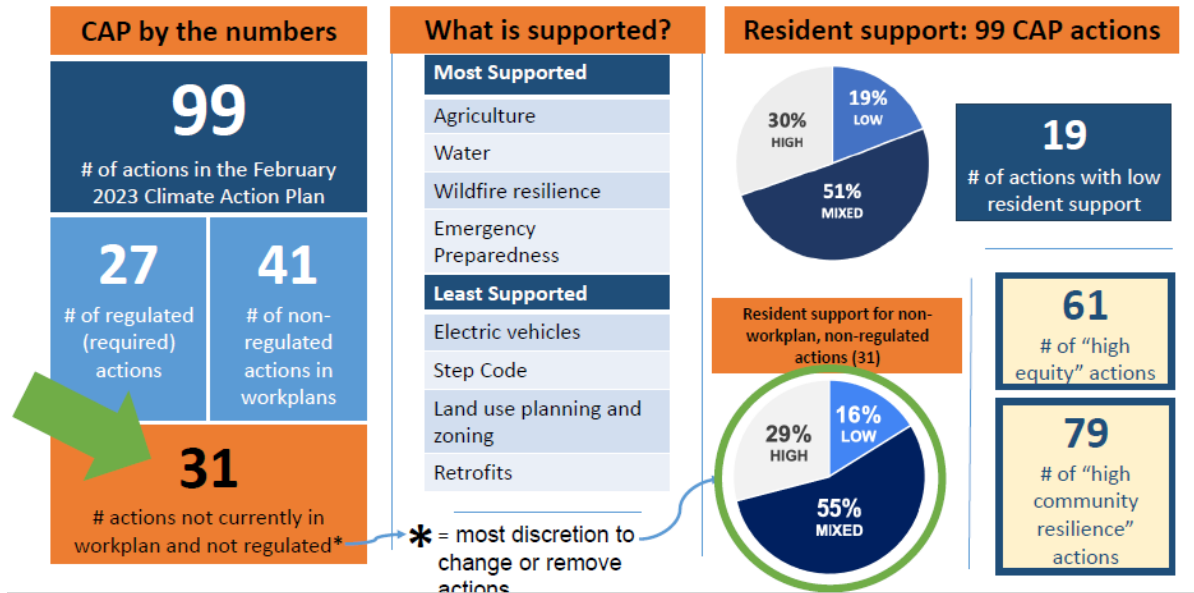
- Concerns with the engagement process, communications, and affordability;
- Desires for freedom of choice, a local perspective, and support for farmers;
- Cautions around building regulations and electric vehicles; and
- Interest in improved transit/active transportation, emergency preparedness, water stewardship, renewable energy, and grid resilience.

"Following our extensive community engagement process, we are looking forward to moving on to the next phase with the draft Climate Action Plan and continuing to strengthen our local resilience," said Stuart Horn, RDCK Chief Administrative Officer.

The draft RDCK Climate Action Plan is a list of ways the RDCK could support our community in reducing carbon pollution and its impacts on our communities. Many of the actions are already underway. The provincial and federal governments require the RDCK to take the lead on some of the actions, such as capturing methane at landfills. Additional actions underway, but that the RDCK is not regulated to take, previously went to the RDCK Board for approval. An example of these actions includes enhancing the Neighbourhood Emergency Preparedness Program. The remainder of the actions are new ideas for consideration.

# What does the data tell us?

**Note:** "Mixed" denotes a split between support and opposition, and includes people who are unsure and seeking clarification



For more information, visit <https://www.rdck.ca/EN/main/services/sustainability-environmental-initiatives/climate-action/get-involved.html>

Media are invited for an online briefing on the engagement results at 12:30 p.m. on Friday, February 16. To RSVP, please email [dditson@rdck.bc.ca](mailto:dditson@rdck.bc.ca). Please see below for a backgrounder on the engagement results.

Incorporated in 1965, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) is a local government that serves 60,000 residents in 11 electoral areas and nine member municipalities. The RDCK provides more than 160 services, including community facilities, fire protection and emergency services, grants, planning and land use, regional parks, resource recovery and handling, transit, water services and much more. For more information about the RDCK, visit [www.rdck.ca](http://www.rdck.ca).

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## Backgrounder: Climate Action Plan engagement feedback

*Due to challenges with coding functionality, the numbers of comments reported have shifted slightly from those in the February 15, 2024 board report. The most up-to-date numbers are reflected here.*

**The RDCK received a total of 3,518 comments on the draft Climate Action Plan.**

### **Engagement process – 550 comments**

Residents wanted more input into the engagement process and advocated for a **referendum (190)**, for **town halls (100)** and for more opportunity to be heard. The comments include dialogue between those opposed to the engagement model along with those in support.

### **Transit and active transportation – 351 comments (127 on transit, 113 on active transportation and 111 on active low carbon transportation)**

Residents want to see additional transit routes, increased transit frequency, secure places to store bikes at bus stops, safer road infrastructure to allow for more biking and walking, more transit access for rural communities, and more trails.

### **Right to choose – 324 comments**

Some residents interpreted the Climate Action Plan as a list of mandatory changes the RDCK was requiring of them. Residents want the freedom to choose what makes sense for their families and lives. They are opposed to having any changes imposed on them, such as water metering, water conservation, mandatory retrofits, etc.

### **Clear and direct communication – 244 comments**

Residents said the Climate Action Plan documents were too complex. They stressed the need for simpler language, definitions and terminology within the Climate Action Plan. They wanted more notification about the Climate Action Plan and the engagement opportunities.

### **Affordability – 198 comments**

Residents are concerned about the cost of living. They want the RDCK to be efficient and to keep costs down. Some examples of costs they find excessive are related to home building and the cost to purchase EVs.

### **Emergency preparedness – 191 comments (98 on fire mitigation, 56 on emergency planning and 37 on empowering residents)**

Residents want the RDCK to do more to prevent wildfires and to work with the Province to put fires out when they start rather than allowing them to grow. Residents also want to be empowered to take action to stop wildfires from impacting their homes and communities and want the RDCK to support them with training.

### **Support for farmers – 189 comments**

Residents expressed strong interest in supporting farmers and strengthening food systems. For instance, they would like farmers to have access to the water they need for their crops. Residents were very clear that any support for farmers must be voluntary.

### **Looking for local solutions – 188 comments**

Residents would like the Climate Action Plan to address the wants and needs of individual areas, while considering rural perspectives. Participants emphasized the heightened sense of environmental consciousness and sustainability that comes with living rurally. Residents talked about rural challenges (such as unreliable electricity and difficulty accessing public transit) and emphasized a desire to maintain their self-sufficiency.

### **Step code and retrofits – 177 comments**

Residents are concerned about costs related to building homes, especially when those costs are due to increasing regulations. There was strong opposition to the possibility of the RDCK implementing new Step Code regulations before being mandated by the Province to do so. Some residents misunderstood that retrofits are voluntary, not mandated.

### **Water protection and conservation – 170 comments**

Residents expressed support for increased conservation education and incentives, although some residents want any conservation to be voluntary. Residents are concerned about **water metering (43)** and misunderstood that the RDCK is not able to meter private water systems. Residents also expressed concern for **protecting lakes, streams and rivers (53)**.

### **Electric vehicles – 164 comments**

Residents have numerous concerns with electric vehicles. They voiced concerns about the Province banning sales of new gas vehicles. They are concerned about EV costs, grid capacity to support them, EV battery costs and disposal, as well as usefulness/efficiency in cold, rural mountainous terrain. Some residents misunderstood that they will still be able to drive their gas vehicles and that the Provincial regulations are specifically regarding the sale of new vehicles.

### **Discussion of climate science – 149 comments**

While the reasons for why the climate is changing vary amongst residents, many participants acknowledged the reality of a changing climate and want the RDCK to continue its course of action, while others do not.

### **Renewable energy – 136 comments**

Residents shared thoughts on **alternative technical solutions (39)**. The vast majority of their thoughts on renewable energy were captured in other topics noted here, including grid resilience, affordability and having the freedom to choose.

### **External forces – 129 comments**

Some residents are concerned that the RDCK is being unduly influenced or controlled by external forces, such as the Provincial and Federal government, the United Nations and the World Economic Forum. The majority of these comments **(78) are narratives of malevolent forces** damaging the environment and harming people.

### **Grid resilience – 106 comments**

Residents cautioned against an over-reliance on electricity. They are concerned about the impact increased demand for electricity (such as for charging electric vehicles) will have on the reliability of their power supply, especially in rural areas.