

## **Crisis or Opportunity? Addressing Climate Change in the North Country**

This position paper has the goal of uniting our vision for greenhouse gas reduction in the North Country. Who is creating this vision and who will lead the actions necessary to make this vision a reality? We will find out on February 1<sup>st</sup> when political leaders, community members, researchers, educators and students come together to Focus the Nation on the solutions of climate change. Join me and many other North Country Leaders as we unify our visions and determine our actions necessary to stop climate change.

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### **Framework for Action**

***Understand and educate on climate change and the expected impacts of climate change on our local economy and quality of life.*** As a community, we are still largely ignorant, complacent or in denial about climate change. Unless we see a need for action, we will continue with business-as-usual. What are greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions and where do they come from? We have heard about melting ice caps, rising sea levels and increased storm activity, but what does it mean for us? How will climate change affect our economy, land use patterns, resources, energy prices, security, etc. in the North Country?

***Understand and educate on the benefits of reducing greenhouse gas (ghg) emissions for North Country communities and businesses.*** There is a lot of hype about how much it will cost to “fix” the problem. In fact, the benefits of addressing climate change outweigh the costs of business-as-usual. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions should be viewed as an investment opportunity that has many collateral benefits including: job creation, building operation and maintenance savings, household energy savings, greater energy security, improvements in health and comfort, higher productivity, affordability, industrial development, reinvestment, improved building stocks, natural resource protection and enhancement, community revitalization, etc.

***Identify major local sources of ghg emissions, engage the public, commit to ghg reductions and make a plan.*** Okay, so there’s a problem and it’s a good idea to fix it. What do we do now? Many communities across the country are conducting ghg inventories, benchmarking current emissions levels, holding public forums, setting reduction targets and passing resolutions committing themselves to ghg reductions at or above State or international targets. Ghg emissions from projects such as the Integrated Agriculture/Ethanol Facility proposed by Bion Environmental Technologies, Inc. should be assessed to be sure they are within targeted limits. Community ghg inventory and planning resources are available <http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=800> and <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/index.htm>

***Focus on energy efficiency.*** In 1987-88, Royal Dutch/Shell asked Amory Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute to estimate how much oil used by the US in 1986 could have been saved if the most efficient available oil-using technologies had been fully deployed that year. Lovins’ shocking conclusion: 80% of 1986 US oil could have been saved at an average 1986 cost of \$2.50/barrel [*Winning the Oil End-Game*, by Amory Lovins & others]. Governor Elliot Spitzer, in presenting his 15 x 15 energy efficiency strategy in February 2007, said, “the cheapest and cleanest power plant in the world is the one you never have to build.” Spitzer’s comprehensive State energy plan caps statewide

electricity and gas consumption and mandates 2% reductions by 2015. A 10% ghg emissions reduction is mandated by 2019. Ultimately, we will have to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels by over 80% to stabilize ghg emissions. Implementing the actions below will take us beyond current State mandates and put us on the road to ghg stabilization.

#### Actions for greater efficiency

- ✓ Install programmable thermostats in all homes, replace all incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs or LEDs, and reduce driving speed to 55 mph. These are easy and cost effective actions we can all do immediately that will achieve significant reductions.
- ✓ Target all existing residential, municipal, commercial and institutional buildings for energy efficiency improvements. Make use of technical and financial assistance offered by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) and state and federal tax credits for efficiency improvements. Allocate more resources for household energy improvements in the low-income sector.
- ✓ Target all new construction for ENERGY STAR® or higher efficiency standards. Some communities (e.g. Lake Placid) are passing higher than code standards for new construction.
- ✓ Build an infrastructure of professional service providers, retailers and financial institutions to deliver energy saving products and services:
  - Train energy professionals required for this work at local schools and colleges: energy analysts, builders and contractors, energy managers, facilities operators and managers, architects, engineers and designers. For more on workforce development go to <http://www.urbanagenda.org/projects.htm> - growing
  - Encourage local retailers to carry energy saving products and train their staff to educate customers
  - Encourage local banks to offer energy efficiency mortgages and loans
- ✓ Employ Energy Managers in municipalities, colleges, hospitals and other large institutions and task them with identifying all cost effective means of saving energy in facilities, operations, procurement and transportation. Energy Managers often pay for themselves in their first year, sometimes simply by reviewing energy bills and correcting anomalies.
- ✓ Buy locally produced food and support efforts by local farmers' markets and cooperatives to increase supply and availability of local foods year round.
- ✓ Organize carpooling and invest in improved public transport systems.

***Switch to renewable energy sources.*** As we reduce energy waste through energy efficiency, renewable energy systems become more affordable.

- ✓ Solar hot water, photovoltaic and wind generation systems are proven technologies that work in the North Country. We need more trained technicians and distributors.
- ✓ Bioenergy, in particular wood and grass pellets for heating and potentially co-generation, may offer the biggest renewable energy opportunity for the North Country. Development of a pelleting sector will add value to farms and woodlands, create jobs, and displace ghg emissions from oil that is currently being used for heating.
- ✓ Hydrogen is still a wild card in the renewable energy sector, but could become an important energy source. The North Country would do well to explore our options for hydrogen production from renewable energy sources.

We have outlined an agenda for mobilizing the community, planning and implementing greenhouse gas reductions. Let's put on our overalls and go to work.

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