



Reducing carbon footprints puts fast money into the pockets of small business

New research shows that British Columbia businesses that reduce their carbon footprint not only lower their annual operating costs but also typically pay off the investment required within a few years.

The new white paper from the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions (PICS) entitled "*Are small-to-mid sized businesses the catalyst to a low carbon economy in BC?*" was produced by the Vancouver-based social enterprise, Climate Smart, which trains organizations to measure, manage and reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The report contains the detailed results of 11 Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island organizations that underwent GHG reduction training between 2010-2013, plus data from more than 500 other BC small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that have worked with Climate Smart.

Report co-author, and Climate Smart president, Elizabeth Sheehan, says there is a common misconception that a low carbon economy will burden businesses. But she says in fact the evidence shows that reducing emissions is good for your bottom line, not just your image.

"The eleven organisations profiled are now collectively achieving **annual** cost savings of \$288,650 after reducing emissions from sources including transport, electricity, waste-disposal and heating," she says. "With a projected payback period of 2.3 years on the \$671,000 they invested, this equates to a 43 per cent rate of return - plus annual emissions reductions of 485.6 tonnes CO₂e."

Project examples include: a Delta seniors' residence complex whose lighting retrofits slashed more than \$24,000 off its annual electricity bills; the Victoria Butterfly Gardens' new \$11,000 thermal insulation investment that took only 11 months to pay off; the wood restoration company CBR Products in Vancouver that halved its garbage pickups after sharing recycling and waste diversion cost savings with employees; and the hybridization of vehicle fleets for Nanaimo's Paradise Island Foods and Van Houtte Coffee Services that achieved up to 64 percent net fuel reductions.

Sheehan says more than 98 percent of BC businesses are SMEs (fewer than 500 employees) which makes them an important potential catalyst for environmentally sustainable and lower cost productivity across all industries. Government can assist by acting upon the following key recommendations:

1. Use government purchasing power and procurement contracts to request from vendors GHG reporting and/ or quantification of GHG reductions.
2. Expand BC's programs that encourage business energy conservation to also assist SMEs in reducing their overall GHG emissions.
3. Invest a portion of future BC Carbon Tax revenue in education and emissions reduction projects for SMEs province-wide. For more details on proposals, and the complete results, visit the [full report](#).

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