

PRAIRIE CLIMATE CENTRE - BACKGROUNDER – October 2015

The reality of climate change is increasingly evident in the Prairie Provinces and Canada as a whole, and climate models clearly indicate that very substantial—if not dramatic—changes will occur in the coming decades, even if global carbon emissions are reduced. Given that communities, cultural and traditional landscapes, and economic activities across the Prairie region may be particularly susceptible to the negative impacts of climate change—including droughts, floods, heat waves and other extreme events—it is imperative that potential stakeholders be aware of and prepared for the anticipated changes. To date, adaptation planning and implementation has been limited, thereby increasing the vulnerability of our economy, infrastructure, social systems and natural environments to the adverse consequences of a changing climate. This situation is largely the result of a lack of resources and expertise available to citizens, planners and policymakers.

The Prairie Climate Centre will address this gap. It will provide stakeholders in Manitoba and across the Prairies with up-to-date and high quality data, maps and toolkits depicting the nature of climate changes that are expected to occur. The highly technical output from global climate models will be translated into formats and language accessible to varied audiences, with a specific focus on what the models are projecting for the Prairies throughout the remainder of this century.

Importantly, an interdisciplinary team of researchers and networked partners affiliated with the Centre will offer advice and policy guidance to governments, businesses and community members. The primary goal is to build an innovative and stakeholder-driven team that will collaborate with Manitobans and Canadians who will be affected by climate change on how they might position themselves to take advantage of new opportunities, identify and rank risks, build capacity, and enhance community, economic and environmental resilience. The Centre will have a diverse yet accessible communication strategy. It will ensure that people have the information they need to see the value of adaptation as well as the need for reductions of our collective greenhouse gas emissions.

The University of Winnipeg and the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) are the founding partners in this joint initiative. Stantec has also been very involved in the conception of the Centre. Earlier this year Great-West Life generously donated \$250,000 to the project. The newly announced funding of \$400,000 from the Province of Manitoba will greatly enhance the capacity of the Centre to conduct applied research, mobilize knowledge, seek additional partners from across the region, and build the team of experts that will develop informed planning and policy advice to those who need it.

The Prairie Climate Centre will be hosted by the Richardson College for the Environment at The University of Winnipeg, 599 Portage Avenue (subject to approval by The University of Winnipeg's Senate and Board of Regents).