

2023 AGM

Co-chairs Report



This past year has seen an increase in face-to-face activities as the pandemic restrictions have abated, and an increased sense of urgency as climate conditions remain critical. First Things First Okanagan added “Climate Action” to our branding to reflect this reality.

Thanks to the excellent years of leadership from Jim Beattie (who stepped down from chair to be replaced by co-chairs Margaret Holm and Khati Hendry this past year), and thanks to enthusiastic new members joining a strong and active Board team, it has been a busy year. The committee reports provide details, but among the highlights:

In-person outreach activities: We were able to sponsor an in-person “Clean Energy Expo” at the Lakeside Resort, including an impressively wide choice of different electric vehicles and electric power tools from local vendors. Volunteers stepped up to help organize and staff the event—thanks to all who did.

First Things First Board members staffed a booth at the Penticton Farmer’s Market and Naramata Market with the help of a summer intern and volunteers, with the goal of improving awareness and outreach. We also participated in the Summerland Earth Day event again.

Virtual outreach: Monthly “Deep Dive” sessions on Zoom have continued, and thanks to the communications committee, we now have improved curated video clips on our web site.

We continue to support the “Cool It” program and work with two educators delivering climate programs to over 250 students in Summerland and Penticton in 2022. Both municipalities give funding support to Cool It!

Local fossil fuel infrastructure issues: First Things First was a recognized as an intervenor in the BC Utilities Commission (BCUC) review of Fortis’ proposal to add an extra gas pipeline from Penticton through Naramata to service increase demand from new buildings. This clearly contravenes the warnings against new fossil fuel infrastructure from international agencies and the climate action plans of Canada and local governments. Nearly 100 people joined us to write to BCUC opposing this pipeline—thanks if you were one of them. The proposal was delayed, but has not disappeared, so please stay tuned to speak up again.

Local Government policies: While good climate action plans have been passed by local governments, the implementation remains critical. First Things First continues to participate in a variety of climate action networks, though we remain primarily locally focused. We sponsored a well-attended debate on climate issues for Penticton City Council candidates that highlighted the popular support for environmentally friendly

policies. As new development plans unfold, it remains necessary that we continue to urge consideration of the climate impact at every step.

Growing: We are pleased to note that we have added about 200 more people to our contact list through our work this past year. We welcome each one. Our valley and our earth need you. Thanks to the dedicated Board and all First Things First volunteers, members, and supporters. Become informed, spread the word, speak up, and join together to take climate action.

Margaret Holm and Khati Hendry, Co-Chairs