

## **Local Government and Climate Change**

### **Current Law and Urgent Action**

**UBC/Faculty of Law**

**March 6<sup>th</sup> 2009.**

#### **REPORT TO COUNCIL.**

On March 6<sup>th</sup> I attended a conference whose intent was to emphasize the role played by Local Government in the present state of Climate Change and to endorse the urgent action needed and highlight the current laws pertaining to this situation.

The emphasis throughout the conference was that municipalities will be expected to reduce their carbon footprint in all their operations. The B.C. Carbon Action Charter anticipates a significant reduction in Green House Gas emissions by 2012. Municipalities are asked to become active participants in Green Communities Committees, Green Communities Workshops and to work at developing sustainable green communities within their boundaries.

The following aids to becoming more "green" were mentioned;-

B.C. Climate Action Toolkit (launched in the fall of 2008)

Trees for Tomorrow

Community Gardens ( Best Practices guide for Community Gardens should be out very soon.)

District Energy Visionary Targets

It was recommended that emission savings should be demonstrated and measured

Definitive Green House Gas Reduction should be targeted. Vanderhoof has apparently become a model for this.

As a matter of interest Residential use of land is dropping off while Commercial is not, so the carbon footprint is getting bigger. This information will be given to all levels of government in British Columbia.

There are a number of Green Communities incentive programmes in the works, where action and performance in these areas will be rewarded. ( I'm not quite sure what the rewards might be but am sure they will be announced before long.)

The provincial government is aiming to have all construction carbon neutral by 2030. Local action is very important to help achieve these goals and contracted out services will be included in the carbon neutral commitment by 2012.

There will be conditions imposed on the Gas Tax to emphasise climate protection. Every time the population increases by 31% the Green House Gases emissions increase by 30%

WHISTLER was held up as a community that has entered the sustainability stakes with great energy.

The Whistler Centre for Sustainability is willing to share information.

The use of solar energy, geothermal heating, community composting are being encouraged. Their film festival is now carbon neutral.

Things to avoid were mentioned and the expression “..on spaceship earth there are no leaders, we are all crew.” was quoted as being worth remembering. In other words we all have to do our part if we are to combat the problem of climate change.

The fact that municipalities represent 86% of Canada is significant and the province has given a few more powers to local government in the form of Bill 10, which should be read before the final decisions are made on our OCP. OCP constrains council and the board or council shall not adopt a bylaw that is inconsistent with the OCP. The OCP does not regulate a private owner's use of land. Bill 27 talks about water conservation and the express authority given to control repairs or alterations as well as the greening of the building code.

Tax increment funding: Discussion on using future tax generated by improved infrastructure to borrow against.

Involve stakeholders, define corporate identity, focus on action and adopt 'a feed forward' orientation.

The Local Government cannot exceed the Building Code (which we do not yet have!), it was recommended that no change in hydrology should be allowed on development sites.

Conservation covenants on private land and a need for biodiversity were discussed as was resilience in water management and watershed planning and watershed zoning – strong emphasis was put on the latter topics.

Various forms of tax exemptions were discussed including a revitalization tax exemption, carbon containment boundaries and an allowance of up to 5% for trail or bicycle infrastructure.

It was suggested that these programmes should be implemented with the participation of the community. Local government should plan to start these initiatives working with the community by way of committees, where both council and staff were included with members either nominated by or selected from the community.

Further suggestions made by participants were anti- idling bylaws and encouraging such things as green roofs. I expect that we could do this, using grass etc. But would need to encourage goat keeping en sure those roofs were mown!

The conference ended on a high note with Government representatives offering the services of facilitators to map out the greening of municipalities.

Should you have any questions on the contents of this report, please ask me.

Respectfully submitted this 27<sup>th</sup> day of April 2009.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eunice Ludlow". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'E'.

Eunice Ludlow.

Chief Administrative Officer.