



WHISTLER

REPORT | ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: April 20, 2021
FROM: Resort Experience
SUBJECT: HELP CITIES LEAD CLIMATE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

REPORT: 21-045
FILE: 3009

COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Resort Experience be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Help Cities Lead campaign;

That Council direct staff to write a letter to the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District requesting regional endorsement of the campaign; and further

That Council direct staff to write a letter to the following provincial ministers to voice Council's support for the five policies detailed in this Report:

- Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
- Minister of Municipal Affairs
- Minister of Energy, Mines, and Low-Carbon Innovation
- Minister of Finance
- Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing

REFERENCES

Appendix A – Correspondence from Will Cole-Hamilton regarding PACE BC and Help Cities Lead

Appendix B – Correspondence from District of North Vancouver regarding endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign

Appendix C – Correspondence from City of Victoria regarding endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is twofold: first, to report back to Council on the following correspondence:

- Correspondence from Will Cole-Hamilton regarding PACE BC and Help Cities Lead which was received and referred to staff at the February 16, 2021 regular Council meeting (Appendix A).

- Correspondence from Mike Little, Mayor, District of North Vancouver, regarding endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign which was received and referred to staff at the April 6, 2021 regular Council meeting (Appendix B).
- Correspondence from Lisa Helps, Mayor, City of Victoria, regarding endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign which was received and referred to staff at the April 6th, 2021 regular Council meeting (Appendix C).

The second purpose of this report is to seek Council endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign to support climate action advocacy, which was presented within the subject correspondence. Help Cities Lead (helpcitieslead.ca) is an education and awareness campaign working to build support for more focused collaboration between the Province of British Columbia and local governments on building related climate policy. It is led by [Climate Caucus](#), members of the BC Hydro Community Energy Managers Network, and the Pembina Institute. The adoption of Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing in British Columbia, while included in a separate letter from Councillor Cole-Hamilton, is one of the measures proposed by the Help Cities Lead campaign and is therefore addressed in this report.

DISCUSSION

Background

On December 15, 2020, the RMOW Council adopted Whistler's Climate Action Big Moves Strategy and new GHG emission reduction target of reducing Whistler's greenhouse gas emissions by 50 per cent below 2007 levels by 2030. The new strategy focuses on climate change mitigation priorities that will accelerate climate action and achieve significant GHG emission reductions in Whistler. Even so, the Big Moves strategy acknowledges that it will fall short of achieving the targets and speaks to the need for additional policy and support from higher levels of government. If the provincial government implements the Help Cities Lead proposals, it would be one set of tools to better enable the RMOW to close the gap between the Big Moves strategy and its targets.

Emissions from buildings account for about 11 per cent of the province's GHG emissions. This is the third highest source of GHG emissions in BC after road transportation (27.1 per cent) and the oil and gas sector (17.6 per cent). For municipalities, GHG emissions from existing buildings account for 40-60 per cent of community emissions. In Whistler, this number is around 38 per cent of our community GHG inventory. This means that GHG emissions from buildings must be reduced to meet Whistler's climate targets.

The tools currently available to local governments to pursue these ambitious reduction targets are largely limited to information campaigns and incentives. Although helpful, on their own these tools are insufficient to achieve broad and deep energy and GHG reductions given limited budgets.

The Help Cities Lead campaign project team identifies five regulatory measures where additional authority would be instrumental for municipalities in accelerating climate action:

1. Regulating GHG emissions for new buildings – the BC Energy Step Code only regulates energy efficiency in new buildings. Leading local governments would also like the ability to regulate GHG emissions from new buildings.
2. Mandatory home energy labelling - In Canada and British Columbia, legislation requires energy labelling for a broad range of consumer products including motor vehicles, furnaces, windows, lightbulbs, and kitchen appliances. However, there are no labeling requirements for the single largest purchase a given Canadian is likely to make—their home.

3. Property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing - programs allow property owners to finance the up-front cost of building energy efficiency upgrades—such as more efficient heating systems, or windows—by paying the costs back over time via a voluntary property tax assessment. The assessment is attached to the property, not an individual; if, and when, the property is sold, the financing carries on with the new owner
4. Regulating GHG emissions for existing buildings – this would include the development of a new regulation that would set greenhouse gas emissions targets from existing buildings.
5. Mandatory building energy benchmarking and reporting - Energy benchmarking is the process of collecting and monitoring energy data from a large number of buildings over time so that governments and the private sector can compare the performance of any one participating building against similar properties.

Direction to implement the first three of these measures – enabling local governments to regulate GHG emissions for new buildings, home energy labelling, and PACE financing – were included in the ministerial mandate letters issued in November 2020. Help Cities Lead encourages the province to move as quickly as possible and in close consultation with local governments to develop and implement these measures.

Help Cities Lead would also like the Province to enable local governments to choose, when ready, to opt into the remaining two measures not addressed by the mandate letters – namely, regulating GHG emissions for existing buildings and building energy benchmarking and reporting.

While experience from other jurisdictions shows that, on their own, measures such as building benchmarking, home energy labelling or PACE financing result in some additional GHG savings, alone they are not likely to achieve the GHG emissions targets that have been established for the building sector by the Province and local governments. However, when integrated together, building benchmarking and home energy labelling can identify what degree and type of improvements are needed, a GHG requirement for new and existing buildings then sets requirements, and PACE financing helps to spread the cost of upgrades over a longer period of time than what is otherwise possible for most building owners.

The suite of initiatives is intended to complement what the provincial government and utilities are already doing in this area and help to lay the groundwork for eventual province-wide adoption of these measures. These five measures are expanded on at <https://www.helpcitieslead.ca/>

Advantages for RMOW

The Help Cities Lead project team worked with numerous leading local governments and civil society groups to identify an initial set of regulatory tools that would achieve deep emissions reductions in buildings and align with the aggressive targets set by these cities. During the next steps, the project team will work closely with leading local governments and key partners including representatives of the construction and renovation industry on the design and implementation of the five measures. The role of the RMOW would be to lend initial support for this campaign and would not result in additional work beyond letter writing for RMOW staff nor in any changes to the Climate Action Big Moves strategy or implementation plan.

The five expanded authorities being requested for local governments are considered as an integrated market transformation suite to drive deep GHG emissions reductions from the building sector, rather than standalone measures. If adopted by the provincial government, the five measures will allow the RMOW to more effectively meet its Big Moves targets and derive GHG savings from across the entire spectrum

of the building sector without having to develop incentive mechanisms and “workarounds”. Therein lies the potential to reduce staff time and effort while achieving the same or even deeper GHG emission reductions from the buildings sector.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Official Community Plan

This initiative directly supports Whistler’s Community vision and the following OCP goals:

5.4. Goal: Reduce the environmental and energy impacts of residential neighbourhoods to improve the quality of life and sustainability of the resort community.

10.1. Goal: Municipal decision-making is well-structured to achieve energy efficiency goals and GHG reduction targets.

10.3. Goal: Substantially reduce GHG emissions from buildings and infrastructure.

Other Relevant Policies

This campaign directly supports the 2020 Climate Action Big Moves Strategy, in particular the following:

- **Big Move 4, “Build zero emission buildings”**, with the goal that by 2030, all new buildings achieve the top step in B.C.’s Energy Step Code, use only low carbon heating systems, and embodied carbon emissions drop by 40 per cent. Key initiative 2 is to “Collaborate with the Province on low carbon performance requirements and GHG emission limits for new buildings”. The inclusion of a GHG metric to step code will allow for greater carbon reduction across all steps of the BC energy step code than what exists in the framework today.
- **Big Move 5, “Make existing buildings better”**, with the goal to reduce emissions from residential buildings by 20 per cent and from large commercial buildings by 40 per cent by 2030. Key initiative 7 is to “Collaborate with the Province on the proposed retrofit code”.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The advocacy recommended in this report would not have any direct budgetary implications. If in future, legislative changes were made, the RMOW climate action coordinator would begin exploration of these initiatives to focus on building emission reductions. A complete project plan outlining the costs and benefit, including budgetary impact, of each initiative would be brought to Council for consideration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Many of the Help Cities Lead initiatives have appeared as formal UBCM resolutions in the past and each of these resolutions are outlined in the resource documents at <https://www.helpcitieslead.ca/> that further explain each initiative.

However, despite the need for urgent action as a result of the climate emergency, there has been a lack of movement following these resolutions. To help meet climate action goals, Help Cities Lead has initiated a campaign that would allow the issues to be elevated to civil society groups, in particular the

environmental NGO community, industry and the broader community concerned with climate action.

Political endorsement and advocacy would strengthen this campaign and make legislative change much more likely. Therefore, it is recommended that Council formally endorse the Help Cities Lead campaign including writing letters to MLA's and Cabinet Ministers, to expedite the pace of change.

SUMMARY

Council endorsement of the Help Cities Lead campaign and formal support letters to the provincial ministers as outlined in the recommendation would send a strong signal to the Province of BC that the RMOW and other local governments require expanded climate action powers in order to meet ambitious GHG emission reduction targets.

Five measures where additional authority is requested are:

- Regulating GHG emissions for new buildings
- Regulating GHG emissions for existing buildings
- Building energy benchmarking and reporting
- Home energy labelling
- Property assessed clean energy (PACE) financing.

These additional authorities would let municipalities, ready to take bolder action on climate, lead the way in regulating emissions in buildings. This would provide a template for action for other jurisdictions and even for provincial regulation in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

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for
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GENERAL MANAGER OF RESORT EXPERIENCE