

**REPORT TO ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2024**

SUBJECT **Measures to Reduce Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

ISSUE SUMMARY

To seek direction on a proposed Climate Action Service budget amendment to increase capacity related to climate action community behaviour change and education programming, as well as innovative greenhouse gas reduction focused policy analysis approaches.

BACKGROUND

The Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) sets a target to reduce the region's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 61% by 2038, based on 2007 levels. To monitor trends and inform planning and programming focused on reducing emissions in the capital region, the CRD's Climate Action service produces regional and local government community GHG inventories every two years. The 2022 GHG inventory was provided to the Board on October 11, 2023 (Appendix A). It indicates that while per capita trends are decreasing, the region is not on track to achieve its 2038 GHG targets. Staff were directed by the Board to report back on "new and innovative and ambitious options and measures to reduce this trend in future years and achieve our existing 2038 emissions targets."

The CRD's Climate Action Strategy, approved in late 2021, identifies a pathway for how the CRD may achieve its regional GHG reduction goals (Appendix B). It recognizes that a collective commitment to climate action at all levels of government is required to achieve GHG targets. The strategy includes over 125 actions for how the CRD, through its various services, will play a role to advance regional and corporate climate goals through 2025.

Staff have reviewed the existing Climate Action Strategy actions and workplans, related Board directives, internal service planning processes, and considered recent input collected through the CRD Climate Action Inter-Municipal Working Group (IMWG) and Climate Action Inter-Municipal Task Force (Task Force) to develop recommended next steps.

Related Board Direction and Inter-Municipal Committee Recommendations

Transportation Governance

At the direction of the Board, the Regional and Strategic Planning (RSP) division is currently leading a process to review new transportation governance options. Changes to transportation governance will take time to enact. The first step is to establish a new CRD Transportation Service. As directed by the Board on December 13, 2023, through 2024, RSP will lead a service design and feasibility study to identify the functions, service levels and operating requirements for this new service. The scope of the feasibility study will be all existing CRD transportation functions and new transportation functions that better enable regional collaboration (e.g., connectivity, traffic flow and congestion) and enhanced service delivery (e.g., new mobility, behaviour change). Pending Board direction, the second step could be to establish a new transportation authority. This would require legislative change. The Province has also clearly communicated that no such

changes will be considered unless the region's 13 municipalities and three electoral areas agree. Additionally, the Province has signalled that such changes would not occur within this Board term. As a result, staff have recommended that the CRD Board focus on establishing a new CRD service in 2024 and begin preparing a business case for a new transportation authority in 2025.

All of these proposed governance changes relate to how decisions about transportation are made – what is the scope, who decides, who pays, and who is responsible for implementation. Governance changes in the short-term will not directly reduce GHG emissions. However, the changes could encourage faster implementation of transportation infrastructure and delivery of transit services. These changes are enabling, with the objective of reducing GHG emissions over the long-term.

Climate/Carbon Budgeting

After receiving a request from the District of Central Saanich for the CRD to adopt a carbon budgeting policy and support local governments in doing the same, in spring 2023, staff were directed by the Board to host a workshop with elected officials and local government staff to better understand the opportunities and implications for pursuing this work. A workshop was held in June 2023 and follow-up discussions occurred with the CRD's climate action inter-municipal staff and elected official committees to review and refine input collected and related recommendations. Refer to the January 17, 2023 staff report titled 'Carbon Budget Update' for further information and related staff recommendations.

Community Mobilization and Education

The Task Force is an advisory group to the Environmental Services Committee (ESC). During its discussions, and from input provided during these meetings, members have identified an interest in the CRD increasing its programming related to climate action behaviour change and community mobilization. While the Climate Action service has historically undertaken these efforts, these have been campaign-based and often linked to specific grant-funded programs.

Current staff capacity does not allow for broader programming; however, opportunities remain to expand current reach, enhance tools related to existing programs, and scope new programming with additional resources in 2024. As such, staff propose a 2024 budget amendment to support the hiring of a one-year auxiliary position, at a cost of \$90,000, to support this work. At its December 1, 2023 meeting, the majority of Task Force members reaffirmed their interest in including this consideration in a response to the Board.

Policy Mapping and Innovation

To better understand the current context for GHG reduction-related policy and opportunities for innovation in the region, staff, working with Introba Consulting, developed a GHG policy mapping summary. Interviews were held with representatives across government and other experts and input was collected from the CRD's climate action inter-municipal committees to collate for known policies per level of government that will change the trajectory of the emissions toward the region's 2038 GHG targets. Additionally, an initial list of future-looking more innovative policy approaches that would require additional analysis (i.e., regulatory reviews, advocacy pathways, and more detailed GHG modelling) were collected (Appendix C). This list prioritizes 'stretch/innovative' policies that are expected to have medium-to-high GHG reductions within the 2038 regional target timeline.

Staff recommend using the prioritized list as a basis for a one-time \$100,000 request to conduct additional analysis on the more aggressive 'stretch/innovative' policies that could be either undertaken by the CRD within its authority, or by local governments, with the CRD Climate Action service providing research and/or a coordination function (similar to other recent local government policies such as Zero Carbon Step Code and electric vehicle (EV) ready bylaws). Over the coming months, staff would further engage municipal staff and experts to determine which identified 'stretch/innovative' policy approaches (up to three), listed in Appendix C, are the top priorities for further study. Outcomes of this analysis would be reported to the ESC and inform the next iteration of the CRD's Climate Action Strategy.

Other Active GHG Emissions-Related Projects and Opportunities

Staff are actively undertaking several initiatives, as directed by the CRD Climate Action Strategy, which will inform future regional programming and associated workplans and service requests:

- Buildings – Home Energy Navigator Program iteration, regional benchmarking program design, low-income financing program design study, Zero Carbon Step Code policy support
- Transportation – EV policy toolkits, EV infrastructure investments and grant management, regional trails widening, lighting and trestle repair and additional active travel work on the Gulf Islands, transportation governance analysis
- Land Use – Growth and Mobility Study (led by RSP), GHG scenario analysis and Board consideration of the need to update the RGS
- Waste – Implementation of the Solid Waste Management Plan and related capital projects
- Corporate Leadership – Energy management initiatives, corporate GHG reduction projects and climate lens-related initiatives

As per the current Climate Action Strategy, staff anticipate future service requests starting in the 2025 budget year. These requests encompass an EV coordinator continuation of a full-time equivalent, regional benchmarking program, potential low-income retrofit financing, community mobilization programming and other corporate capital projects. Staff also plan to undertake a process to renew the CRD Climate Action Strategy in 2025 to identify future service priorities, including those related to climate adaptation. This would be informed by current program outcomes, inter-municipal engagement, and the ongoing research and policy analysis planned for the coming year.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Climate Action service initiate a 2024 budget amendment for \$190,000 utilizing existing service budget reserves to accommodate:

1. a one-year auxiliary term position to develop a community mobilization program and undertake regional education activities; and
2. additional policy analysis, regulatory reviews, and greenhouse gas (GHG) modelling related to innovative policy approaches identified through the GHG policy mapping initiative.

Alternative 2

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information.

IMPLICATIONS

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is embedded in the Climate Action & Environment Board and Corporate Priorities.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

Increasing resources to develop and undertake community mobilization and education activities to align with CRD Corporate Plan Initiative 6a-1 to “promote community capacity building on climate action.” While undertaking additional policy analysis is not specifically noted in the Board priorities or Corporate Plan, the 2021 CRD Climate Action Strategy includes an action to “identify innovative action to close the regional 2030 emissions gap.”

Environmental & Climate Action

The proposed approach will provide additional capacity to support residents in undertaking climate action and provide more information for decision-makers in the future. At this point, actual emissions savings per dollar invested is unclear. Additionally, current Board direction does not include climate adaptation considerations, which will need to be contemplated in the future.

Financial Implications

Existing Climate Action service reserve funds would be utilized for the 2024 budget amendment. Approximately \$90,000 would be allocated for a one-year term position, and approximately \$100,000 would be allotted to undertake additional policy analysis.

Intergovernmental Implications

Staff will continue to engage the region’s local governments through the CRD’s Climate Action IMWG and Task Force on better understanding new policy approaches and supporting implementation of existing programs and policies in a collaborative manner. Staff will continue to work with local government staff on any new efforts related to innovative regional and local government-focused policies and programs, as proposed.

CONCLUSION

The Board recently directed staff to investigate new initiatives related to achieving regional greenhouse gas reduction targets. Further, the CRD Climate Action Inter-Municipal Task Force is requesting that the Board consider additional resources to undertake more climate action focused community mobilization and education activities. As directives do not align with the existing service planning process, staff are recommending a one-time budget amendment within the regional climate action service to increase service capacity in the 2024 budget year. Outcomes through this work and other planning processes (such as those related to transportation governance) will support the Board in understanding future opportunities and inform service priorities through the CRD’s Climate Action Strategy renewal in 2025.

RECOMMENDATION

The Environmental Services Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:
That the Climate Action service initiate a 2024 budget amendment for \$190,000 utilizing existing service budget reserves to accommodate:

1. a one-year auxiliary term position to develop a community mobilization program and undertake regional education activities; and
2. additional policy analysis, regulatory reviews, and greenhouse gas (GHG) modelling related to innovative policy approaches identified through the GHG policy mapping initiative.

Submitted by:	Nikki Elliott, BES, MPA, Manager, Climate Action Programs
Concurrence:	Larisa Hutcheson, P. Eng., General Manager, Parks & Environmental Services
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A: 2022 Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory Summary
- Appendix B: Capital Region-Wide Greenhouse Gas Emissions Climate Action Strategy Scenario
- Appendix C: CRD Greenhouse Gas Emissions Policy Mapping – Memo from Introba (December 2023)