

**REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD  
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2020**

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**SUBJECT**      **Accelerating CRD Response to Climate Emergency – Response to Notice of Motion**

**ISSUE SUMMARY**

To provide an approach for accelerating the Capital Regional District's (CRD) response to the climate emergency.

**BACKGROUND**

At the April 8, 2020 Board meeting, staff were directed to report back with options for accelerating the CRD's response to the climate emergency, including consideration of additional investments through the 2021 budget process and options for increasing regional collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The CRD Climate Action service provides the region's local governments with research and information, a venue for collaboration, climate action capacity and often facilitates partnerships to leverage external funds for regional initiatives. In addition, it supports services across the organization to address and include climate action. Execution of Board priorities are refined by input, and often active involvement of local governments participating in inter-municipal climate action working groups. Efforts are made to align, leverage and build upon programs and policies of local and senior levels of governments. Refer to the 2019 CRD Climate Action Annual Report as part of this committee's current agenda.

On February 13, 2019, the CRD declared a climate emergency and committed to taking a leadership role to work toward achieving carbon neutrality in the region by 2030. As an immediate response, the declaration and related actions were embedded in the Board Priorities and CRD Corporate Plan. The CRD approved a two-year increase of \$95,000 for the Climate Action service in order to (1) leverage BC Hydro grant funds toward a new term position focused on advancing community energy and greenhouse gas reduction (GHG) reduction initiatives and (2) complete regional GHG inventory and forthcoming modelling work.

**ALTERNATIVES**

*Alternative 1*

That the Capital Regional District Board extend the previously approved two-year increase of \$95,000 for climate action initiatives, including a potential extension of the BC Hydro matching funding for the Community Energy Manager and to provide staff support to seek grant funds and update the CRD Climate Action Strategy.

*Alternative 2*

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

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Climate Action Service Implications*

#### Short-term (2020)

In direct collaboration with local governments, staff will continue to facilitate inter-municipal working groups, deliver on regional sea level rise and tsunami modeling, community GHG emissions inventories, Electric Vehicle adoption corporately and in the community, existing building retrofits programming (including the investigation of innovative financing models), Energy Step Code implementation support, building energy benchmarking research, and execute an outreach programs feasible during the COVID-19 crisis. Refer to the 2019 CRD Climate Action Annual Report as part of this committee's current agenda.

#### Medium-term (2021-2022)

Staff recommend continuing the \$95,000 increase in budget requisition for the Climate Action service in order to leverage BC Hydro Community Energy Manager Grant funds for the Community Energy Specialist position. This would allow for the continuation of CRD-supported climate action mitigation and adaptation initiatives, and advancement of two additional key initiatives:

- *CRD Climate Action Strategy Update* – As the CRD's existing corporate climate action strategies end in 2020 and the region in 2021, staff intend to initiate a fulsome planning exercise to update and consolidate them. During this process, all CRD services will be re-evaluated with an explicit climate lens to identify how appropriate climate emergency responses can be accelerated. Building off of previous work and aligning with the CRD's coordination, education, community programming and corporate mandates, the Strategy will include opportunities related to:
  - Further acceleration of corporate climate action leadership (including policies, procedures, investments and asset management).
  - Increasing local government collaboration amongst various existing regional groups (local government staff committees, multi-stakeholder groups, etc.).
  - Advancement of priority community initiatives related to: education and capacity building, local data analysis and monitoring, regional and local government climate adaptation planning and preparedness, building and transportation programs (i.e., electric vehicle charging infrastructure, active transportation programming, new development and building retrofit programs, etc.).
- *Regional Building Energy Retrofit Program Scoping* – Increasing building retrofits is a key aim in existing CRD and local government climate plans and aligns with priorities of senior levels of government. Staff would undertake a comprehensive study to scope and develop a business case to develop a Regional Energy Retrofit Program. Components (such as coaching, industry support and incentives), GHG saving potential, job and green economy benefits, potential funding and partners would be defined and inform the strategy above.

Long-term (2023 onwards)

Staff will update the Board in late 2022 on climate action priorities and service implications developed through the updated Climate Action Strategy.

The CRD recently announced approval in principle of an agreement where FortisBC will purchase renewable natural gas (RNG) generated from Hartland landfill for beneficial use in its natural gas distribution system. Once approved by the BC Utilities Commission, the project is expected to reduce the region's GHG emissions by approximately 264,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent over the 25-year project life. In addition, the project has the potential to generate positive financial return for the region. In alignment with the climate emergency declaration, staff are investigating the potential to direct financial returns from this initiative toward region-wide climate action. This option will be further explored as the RNG initiative progresses, and in conjunction with the forthcoming climate action planning efforts.

*Intergovernmental Implications*

The CRD administers the Climate Action Inter-Municipal Working Group and Climate Action Inter-Municipal Task Force to support communication and collaboration between municipalities and electoral areas across the capital region, and provide information, feedback and support to programs and initiatives related to regional climate action. These groups would be utilized to inform the development of an updated CRD Climate Action Strategy.

*Regional Growth Strategy Implications*

The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) includes a target to reduce GHG emissions by 61% by 2038, from a base year of 2007. CRD climate action activities completed in 2019 align with the principles of the RGS.

*Financial Implications*

The Climate Action service is currently at its maximum requisition limit. Extending the supplemental funding would keep the service within its requisition limits. An increase in annual funding above \$95,000 would trigger a bylaw amendment process.

Additional financial implications associated with implementing priority climate action initiatives would be provided for Board consideration at a later date. This includes utilization of potential Hartland landfill RNG financial returns for implementing the updated Climate Action Strategy.

*Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

The CRD embedded the climate emergency declaration and leadership intentions to greatly accelerate greenhouse gas emissions reductions in the 2019-2022 CRD Board priorities. In addition to the three Board priorities related to climate change, the 2019-2022 CRD Corporate Plan includes eleven additional initiatives related to climate action.

## **CONCLUSION**

The CRD declared a climate emergency in February 2019. The Board directed staff to report back with options for accelerating the CRD's response to the climate emergency, including consideration of additional investments through the 2021 budget process and options for increasing regional collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas. Staff continue to advance initiatives in collaboration with local governments and other partners and have provided a recommendation for continuing these efforts, advancing planning processes and identifying funding opportunities moving forward.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Capital Regional District Board extend the previously approved two-year increase of \$95,000 for climate action initiatives, including a potential extension of the BC Hydro matching funding for the Community Energy Manager and to provide staff support to seek grant funds and update the CRD Climate Action Strategy.

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## **CRD DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **REPORT TO CRD ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY MARCH 25, 2020**

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"The truth about a city's aspirations isn't found in its vision. It's found in its budget."  
- Brent Toderian

#### **Recommendation**

That staff be directed to report back with options for accelerating the Capital Regional District's (CRD) response to the climate emergency, including consideration of additional investments through the 2021 budget process and options for increasing regional collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG).

#### **Background**

In February 2019, the Capital Regional District Board declared a climate emergency. The climate emergency motion included three items of relevance to this report:

1. That the Capital Regional District Board declare a Climate Emergency
2. That the CRD take a leadership role to work towards the achieving carbon neutrality in the region by 2030
3. That the Board Chair write to all local governments in the region requesting that they also declare climate emergencies and commit to working towards climate neutrality by 2030

All other local governments in the CRD have followed suit and also passed climate emergency declarations.

Since passing this motion, the CRD Board incorporated addressing the climate emergency into its four-year strategic plan. CRD staff have begun to use a climate lens on some issues, for example, consideration of the approach to power generation at the Hartland Landfill. And staff have also begun to report out quarterly on climate-related actions taken.

Yet despite the climate emergency declaration, in the 2020 budget process, staff did not bring forward – nor did the board request – substantial new investments to address the climate emergency and to accelerate GHG emissions reduction across the region.

The February 19th Environmental Services Committee service planning report (see Appendix A to Item 6.2) notes that declaring a climate emergency and taking a leadership role to pursue carbon neutrality and working with local governments to further reduce emissions from buildings, transportation and solid waste have no budget impact and can be absorbed into the core service. We don't feel that this is adequate.

Some local governments within the CRD have responded to their climate emergency declarations with significantly accelerated actions. These include multi-million dollar budget requests, as well as significantly more ambitious GHG reduction targets.

Investments made in mitigation and adaptation measures now save money in the future. In his landmark report, published in October 2006, economist Nicholas Stern warned that the cost of inaction would be far greater for future generations than the costs of actions taken today. In a 2016 article in the Guardian, he is quoted as saying, "With hindsight, I now realize that I underestimated the risks. I should have been much stronger in what I said in the report about the costs of inaction. I underplayed the dangers."

Considering the CRD Board has declared climate change to be an emergency, we feel that it is only appropriate for more to be done by the CRD to address climate change. The CRD has taken some solid steps forward in this regard, however there have not been substantial new accelerated actions or budget requests. Declaring an emergency on a singular issue is very significant, and should justify significant new budget investments and accelerated actions to address that issue.

Every municipality within the CRD has also declared a climate emergency. This presents an exciting opportunity for regional collaboration and coordination to reduce GHG emissions. Although the CRD has limited authority with respect to other local government practices, all local governments in the region have the same main sources of emissions: buildings, transportation and waste.

Buildings, for example, are between 40-50% of emissions in our communities. A massive home and building retrofit program is required to substantially reduce emissions through retrofits to existing buildings. What role, for example, could the CRD play in developing a program or service that could be accessed by all local governments and/or residents and businesses across the region to support the acceleration of building retrofits? This is just one example; there are others. We would like staff to turn their minds to creative approaches to accelerating emissions reductions and the potential budgetary impacts of so doing as part of the 2021 budget process.

## **Conclusion**

In February, 2019, the CRD Board declared a climate emergency. Shortly after, every single municipality in the CRD declared a climate emergency, as well. This lays the foundation for an exciting opportunity for the region to work together as a whole to collectively reduce GHG emissions and to become truly sustainable communities into the future.

Although the CRD has taken some new action to address climate change since declaring it an emergency, there have not been any substantial new budget allocations or accelerated actions to address this issue. A declaration that an issue is an "emergency" is a significant first step, and should propel significant additional action. This motion simply requests staff to consider this, and report back with options.

## **Recommendation**

That staff be directed to report back with options for accelerating the CRD's response to the climate emergency, including consideration of additional investments through the 2021 budget process and options for increasing regional collaboration to reduce GHGs.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Director Helps

Director Taylor