

## Bowen signs on Climate Action Charter (Oct 2008)

The Bowen Island Municipality has endorsed the BC Climate Action Charter, at a special council meeting September 17. Council resolved that the mayor should sign the charter on behalf of the community following a request from the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). The document sets out a joint local-provincial commitment to climate change and greenhouse gas reduction.

Bowen Island was one of 62 local governments from across BC that signed the charter, committing to a goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2012. Premier Gordon Campbell joined with UBCM president, Brenda Binnie in signing a memorandum of understanding at the union's convention in late September.

"Our government is committed to taking action on climate change and, by working in partnership with local governments, we will be more effective in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions," Premier Gordon Campbell said.

In addition to a goal of becoming carbon within five years, local governments signing the charter agree to measure and report on their community's greenhouse gas emissions profile and work to create compact, more energy efficient communities.

Governments achieve carbon neutrality by reducing emissions where possible, by purchasing carbon offsets to compensate for its greenhouse gas emissions or by developing projects to offset emissions. Such projects may include converting to energy efficient buildings and replacing old fleet vehicles and buses with hybrids.

UBCM and the provincial government will establish a Joint Provincial-UBCM Green Communities committee and Green Communities Working Groups to define a range of actions that can affect climate change, build local government capacity to plan and implement climate change initiatives, support local governments in taking actions to make their own operations carbon neutral by 2012, and share information to support climate change activities.

## Council sets target aimed at reducing greenhouse gas (May 2008)

Following the lead of the provincial government and Metro Vancouver, Council unanimously agreed to set a community greenhouse gas reduction target of 33% below 2007 levels by 2020, and 80% below 2007 levels by 2050. Council has directed staff to work with the Sustainability Framework Working Group and the Advisory Planning Commission (APC) to develop a greenhouse gas strategy that will consider how to reduce pollution locally.

They have asked the APC to look into the process of revising the Municipality's land use regulations and policies – the Land Use Bylaw and the Official Community Plan. The goal is to ensure that future development leads to "a complete, compact, more energy efficient rural community" and one that can realistically achieve the gas emission targets.

Setting the targets, Council agreed, sends a signal that the Municipality is willing to "do its part" and act as a leader by working on provincial and regional energy reduction pilot projects and strategies. It potentially allows Bowen to be able to invest carbon neutral offset funds back into the local economy.

## Staff take steps towards becoming Carbon Neutral (May 2008)

Staff of the Bowen Island Municipality are taking the lead in finding ways to ensure operations of the local government become carbon neutral. Several members of the BIM staff and Council attended a workshop in Vancouver in March aimed at identifying strategies to meet commitments entailed in signing the BC Climate Action Charter. The primary obligation of the Charter is becoming carbon neutral in operations by 2012. Upon return from the workshop, staff proposed a number of initiatives, which were quickly approved by Council.

BIM staff will conduct an energy and Green House Gas (GHG) emissions inventory of municipal operations, assessing Bowen Island's carbon footprint and identifying financial costs and estimated GHG production. Once complete, they'll search for ways to reduce energy use and emissions.

In a report to Council in April, Bryan Kirk, BIM's Chief Administrative Officer, noted that the staff will identify "low hanging fruit" – those ideas that can be quickly turned into action with immediate results.

The Engineering and Operations Department has already begun work on the carbon audit, building on a partial inventory that was completed in 2005. It is roughly estimated that municipal operations contribute about 100 tonnes per year of GHG emissions. The largest source comes from the road maintenance fleet and the consumption of heating fuel used in its various buildings and facilities. The provincial carbon tax, to be applied to fossil fuel purchases, will be introduced in 2008, at \$10/tonne and rising by 5% each year to reach \$30/tonne in 2012.

Upon completion of the audit, staff will design projects that effectively reduce carbon emissions. They've already taken some small, but significant steps including replacing all the incandescent bulbs with CFL bulbs at municipal hall, reinstalling baseboard thermostat with a programmable unit and educating their crews regarding the adverse effects of idling their vehicles.

## Municipality supports Re-use It Shop (May 2008)

Trash to you, but perhaps a treasure for someone else? Soon you'll be able to drop off those unwanted items still in good condition to a re-use it shop, right here on Bowen Island. A grass-roots group is moving forward towards opening the Knick Knack Nook shop, a place for the exchange of goods that might otherwise end up in landfills. And the Municipality is stepping up to help out with a location for that shop.

Council gave its support for the establishment of such a place in March, and later agreed that it might be well situated in the Municipality's North Work Yard. The recycling advocates, who include local school students, are hoping to open a second-hand store within proximity to the Bowen Island Recycling Depot. They envision building a 1000 square-foot building where they can accept people's excess possessions and sell to those who require more stuff in their lives. Money raised will be channeled to local organizations.

Council has instructed staff to consult with users of the Work Yard and the Knick Knack Nook contingent to come up with an appropriate plan.

## Bowen becomes an Idle-Free Zone (May 2008)

The Bowen Island Municipality (BIM), following the lead of many communities in the Sea-to-Sky corridor, has enacted an anti-idling bylaw. It will prohibit the idling of a vehicle or boat engines for more than one minute in a 60-minute period, with some exceptions. The Municipality adopted the bylaw as a way of addressing concerns about pollution and health problems caused by toxic emissions. BIM is committed to improving air quality as part of the Sea of Sky Air Quality management plan.

In deciding to move ahead with the local legislation, Mayor Bob Turner noted that the Municipality had received numerous letters in support of the bylaw. Residents are interested in taking action to protect the environment and promote healthier habits, he noted. Vehicle emissions have been directly linked to significant respiratory health effects while exhaust contributes to smog, acid rain and climate change. Wasting fuel, especially at the current hit of \$1.35/litre, is avoidable, as is damage to vehicles caused by idling.

While the bylaw brings into effect penalties, the Municipality hopes to encourage compliance through education and understanding about the benefits of living in an idle-free zone. An anti-idling ambassador will be stationed in the Sea-to-Sky area to help explain why adding nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, sulphur oxide, volatile organic compounds and greenhouse gas emissions to the air we breathe just doesn't make sense.