

In 2007, the SCRD signed onto both the BC Climate Action Charter and the federal Partners for Climate Protection Program committing us to become carbon neutral in our own operations by 2012. In addition, we pledged to measure and report on our community's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to assist all Sunshine Coast communities to become more energy efficient.

Local governments play an important role in climate protection. Up to half of Canada's GHG emissions are under the direct control or indirect influence of local governments. Carbon neutrality involves measuring the GHG emissions that come from government operations such as buildings and vehicles, reducing those emissions where possible, and then purchasing carbon offsets to compensate for unavoidable GHG emissions to achieve a net zero.

In May 2009 we took the first step towards meeting these commitments by adopting a 10 year Corporate Energy and Emissions Strategy. Our highest energy emissions and costs come from our buildings, followed by our vehicle fleet. Therefore the most aggressive part of the plan involves energy efficiency retrofits to SCRD buildings. There are challenges with how the Sunshine Coast has historically been laid out resulting in long distances between communities and a lot of vehicle travel for some of our staff. So the plan also includes conversion to more fuel efficient vehicles over time and changes to the management of the fleet to maximize efficiencies. Overall, our 2018 GHG emissions target is 27% below 2008 rates and the projected payback (from energy savings) for the costs of these changes is within the 10 year time frame.

Here are some other SCRD actions to address sustainability issues and climate change: We have a Manager of Sustainability Services who oversees all SCRD efforts in this area with particular attention to water and solid waste. We are conducting a pilot project (with a \$1million federal grant) to determine whether we can capture and convert methane to electricity at a small landfill like ours. We use gas tax rebate grants to improve transit and cycling infrastructure to encourage reduced automobile use. The SCRD has committed to the goal of zero waste and to achieve maximum diversion from the landfill. A recycling education program is being prepared to assist us in making the most appropriate improvements to our recycling services. Our bathroom fixture program helps conserve water and reduce stress on our water treatment system. Official Community Plans in Areas D and F are under review with expected changes to some of our land use patterns to increase walkability and improve infrastructure efficiency.

The SCRD has also committed to working with our municipal partners to develop a region-wide community energy and emissions plan.

What are your thoughts? email donna_shugar@hotmail.com.

The opinions expressed in this column are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of all members of the SCRD Board.