

Metro Vancouver moves to raise awareness of homes' energy efficiency

Idea is among several aimed at reducing region's greenhouse gas emissions

BY KELLY SINOSKI, VANCOUVER SUN FEBRUARY 26, 2014

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Metro's air-quality staff outlined several ways Wednesday of dealing with the greenhouse gas emissions, including a campaign this spring to raise awareness of electric vehicles. The electric vehicle campaign, which will start at the Vancouver Auto Show, is estimated to cost \$66,000 over the next two years.

Photograph by: Lenny Ignelzi, AP

Metro Vancouver is considering a campaign for "home efficiency labelling," which would allow homebuyers to see how their prospective new property rates in terms of energy efficiency.

The notion is being pitched as part of a raft of potential ideas aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Metro Vancouver by 33 per cent over the next six years, and 80 per cent by 2050.

"The ultimate objective is to raise awareness among homeowners about energy efficiency," said Eve Hou, of Metro's air quality division. "It's a roundabout way to get higher efficiency in our buildings despite the lack of authority over the Building Code."

The plan, Hou said, is to meet with the real estate industry, developers and local municipalities to develop a recognized label that would display the home's energy efficiency. It would initially start as a voluntary program focused on new homes, but could eventually extend to resale homes and become mandatory, she said.

Metro estimates the cost of coming up with a label, as well as branding and marketing it, at \$15,000. But if it is successful, the program could be grown over the next two years, Hou said, and Metro Vancouver could potentially see 6,250 homes signed up per year.

Buildings and vehicles are the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Metro Vancouver, each contributing to about one-third of all air emissions. Industry, waste and marine traffic also add to the problem.

Metro's air-quality staff outlined several ways Wednesday of dealing with the emissions, citing everything from a green trucking program to a campaign this spring to raise awareness of electric vehicles. The electric vehicle campaign, which will start at the Vancouver Auto Show, is estimated to cost \$66,000 over the next two years.

"The reality over the next 20, 50 and 100 years is we'll still have automobiles and trucks moving goods around the region," Hou said. "Our goal is to move these kilometres to a lower carbon form."

She noted Metro Vancouver has 237 electric vehicle charging stations, but many people haven't had a chance to experience an electric vehicle. The campaign will reach out not only to the public but to strata councils, which require a two-thirds vote to install electric charging stations.

"The public is not interested in electric charging stations, they're interested in the cars," Hou said. "We want to give them the feeling of driving an electric car."

Other options include a regulated commercial refrigeration program to ensure the fridges are running efficiently, using sewage to heat community buildings, and capturing and reusing landfill gas.

Metro's air quality manager Roger Kwan said Metro is trying to get feedback on its potential options, which all hinge on senior government financial support in terms of incentives and rebates for energy efficiency, as well as its commitment to its Climate Action Plan. "We're trying to add value to what we hope the senior governments are doing," he said.

ksinoski@vancouversun.com

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