

DATE: January 20, 2021

FILE: 5280-15

TO: Chair and Directors
Regional District Board

Supported by Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Russell Dyson
Chief Administrative Officer

R. Dyson

RE: 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction Program

Purpose

To present the proposed 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction program to the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction program, outlined in this staff report dated January 20, 2021, be approved.

Executive Summary

- The CVRD has been approved for \$29,000 in grant funding for 2021 from the Ministry of Environment (MOE)/ BC Lung Association; \$20,000 of which is earmarked for rebates. The board has also allocated \$20,000 from the 2020 Island Health Community Wellness grant for rebates in the 2021 program. An additional \$27,500 is carried over from past Island Health funding for Hot Spot areas in Cumberland and West Courtenay. Rebate funding in the 2021 program is therefore \$67,500. Households in the electoral areas, member municipalities, and K'ómoks First Nation will be able to apply for a rebate.
- Staff is proposing a 2021 program that will align with the ongoing work of the Airshed Roundtable; the CVRD's participation in the CleanBC Better Homes Program; and implementation of the CVRD's Transition 2050 Residential Retrofit Market Acceleration Strategy (T2050).
- In 2020, 35 rebates amounting to \$32,000 were provided and the program was well subscribed. Notwithstanding minimal advertising and late rebate issuance due to COVID-19 the take-ups demonstrate a growing awareness of the program.

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Government Partners and Stakeholder Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Town of Comox	✓
Village of Cumberland	✓
K'ómoks First Nation	✓
Airshed Roundtable Co-ordinator	✓

Background/Current Situation

Since 2016 staff have implemented the MOE's Provincial Wood Stove Exchange Program, which changes out wood stoves (5 years or older) for cleaner heating options including heat pumps, gas or pellet stoves. The program aims to reduce wood smoke pollution by providing rebate incentives, education and outreach on wood smoke pollution reduction. The program aligns with the CVRD's strategic drivers for climate action and environmental stewardship and protection, Indigenous relations and community partnerships.

2020 Wood Smoke Reduction Program

In 2020, a total of 35 rebates amounting to \$32,000 were issued for the following exchanges: six electric heat pumps, 28 gas stoves (propane or natural gas) and one pellet stove. There was a good uptake of rebates despite the discontinued rebate issuance for certified wood burning appliances. A successful moisture meter campaign targeting wood burning residents was launched and the CVRD distributed 39 moisture meters together with smart burning tip flyers to residents. A radio advertisement and web campaign were undertaken. Due to COVID-19, staff was unable to proceed with typical in-person promotional events.

Top Up Rebates in Wood Smoke Hot Spot Areas

In 2019, Island Health provided a \$35,000 grant to the CVRD to issue top up rebates in wood smoke hot spot areas, which was carried forward to 2020. The hot spot areas were identified as the areas with high population concentrations and also identified as having a high degree of wood smoke in the 2017 Mobile Monitoring Air Quality Study. In 2020 only three of the 14 top up hot spot area rebates were issued. Staff attributes this, in part, to limited in-person targeted outreach. Furthermore, rebate amounts may not have been sufficient in incentivizing households to replace their wood burning heating appliances.

Moving Forward: 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction Program

It is widely held that any reduction in PM_{2.5} levels has a positive impact on human health. Providing top up rebates in an area with higher density and high concentration of particulate matter aims to further reduce harmful PM_{2.5} levels. Furthermore woodstove exchanges that improve energy efficiency will help in the reduction of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. The 2021 program continues with additional top-ups in the "hotspot" areas (i.e. Cumberland and West Courtenay).

The proposed program is directly related to the board's declaration of climate crisis and is aligned with the strategic priority of improving air quality. The program is further intended to align with the work of the Airshed Roundtable, implementation of the T2050 Strategy and the CVRD's participation in the CleanBC Better Homes program.

Table 1: Recommended Rebates for the 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction Program (WSRP)

Replacement Appliance Type	Rebate Incentive (MOE/BC Lung)	Rebate Incentive (Island Health)	Island Health Hot Spot Top Up (Cumberland and West Courtenay)	WSRP Total Rebate Potential
Gas stove or pellet stove	\$500	\$500	\$0	\$1,000
Electric Source Heat Pump	\$500	\$500	\$0	\$1,000
Electric Source Heat Pump *	\$500	\$500	\$2,500	\$3,500

* Hot Spot Area

The following funding and allocation is available for the 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction program from the MOE/ BC Lung Association Grant: \$20,000 for exchange initiatives; \$8,600 for advertising and \$400 for program materials. \$20,000 is also available from the Island Health Community Wellness Grant. Therefore \$40,000 is available for rebates in the 2021 program. Staff is proposing 40 x \$1,000 rebates funded by equal rebate contributions of \$500 from the MOE/ BC Lung Association Grant and the Island Health Community Wellness Grant. The MOE recommends \$500 rebates for Red Zone communities. Red Zone communities are areas that exceed Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards and the Comox Valley has been identified as a Red Zone community. The proposed \$1,000 rebate amount would support the program's targeted number of 40 rebates per year.

In 2019, the CVRD received \$35,000 in funding from Island Health to provide top up rebates for the identified hot spot areas (West Courtenay and Cumberland). 14 x \$2,500 rebates were available for cleaner energy sources (i.e. electric heat pumps). Only three of the rebates were issued and the remaining \$27,500 will be carried over into the 2021 program subject to the funders' approval.

Alignment with CleanBC Rebates

The CleanBC Better Homes program offers rebates to accelerate energy upgrade retrofits that contribute to a reduction in GHG emissions. The CVRD also offers top up rebates on select CleanBC rebate programs including fuel switching to electric heat pumps, electrical service upgrades and evaluations by an energy advisor. The rebate programs align with the Wood Smoke Reduction program's mandate. Table 2 depicts possible rebate combination amounts.

Table 2: WSRP Rebate Potential with CleanBC Combinations

Replacement Appliance Type	WSRP Rebate Potential	CleanBC Rebate Potential	CVRD Top Up Rebate	Total
Gas stove or pellet stove	\$1,000	\$0		\$1,000
Electric Source Heat Pump	\$1,000	Up to \$6,000 **	\$2,000	Up to \$9,000
Electric Source Heat Pump *	\$3,500	Up to \$6,000 **	\$2,000	Up to \$11,500

* Hot Spot Area

** This is a doubled amount until 31 March 2021

Policy Analysis

Part 13 of the *Local Government Act* (RSBC, 2015, c. 1) outlines the purpose of a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). The RGS is a regional vision that commits regional districts and municipalities to a course of action to meet social, environmental and economic objectives. The legislation is broad enough to address regional matters including air quality.

Options

The board has the following options:

1. Receive this staff report and information to proceed with staff recommendations to increase rebate amounts from \$700 to \$1,000 as shown in Table 1. Furthermore, to align the program with the ongoing work of the Airshed Roundtable and the CleanBC Better Homes Program. This is in keeping with the CVRD’s strategic drivers for community partnerships and responding to the climate crisis.
2. Provide direction to staff to revise the Wood Smoke Reduction program.

Financial Factors

The Wood Smoke Reduction program is funded through grants provided by MOE, BC Lung Association and Island Health. Staff time to oversee the program is proposed to be funded through the RGS Service (Function 512).

Funding Summary

Table 3: 2021 WSRP Funding Summary

Funding Source		Funding Allocation	
MOE / BC Lung	\$ 29,000	Exchange Rebates	\$ 42,400
MOE / BC Lung (from 2020)	\$ 900	Hot Spot Rebates	\$ 27,500
Island Health Grant	\$ 20,000	Advertising	\$ 8,600
Island Health (from 2020)	\$ 1,500	Program Materials	\$ 400
CVRD staff time	\$ 4,000	CVRD staff time	\$ 4,000
Island Health Hot Spot (from 2020)	\$ 27,500		
Total	\$ 82,900	Total	\$ 82,900

Legal Factors

No legal factors to consider.

Regional Growth Strategy Implications

The RGS, Bylaw No. 120, being the “Comox Valley Regional District Regional Growth Strategy Bylaw No. 120, 2010”, supports clean air relating to “a high quality of life through the protection and enhancement of community health, safety and well-being” (Goal 7: Public Health and Safety) and “protecting, stewarding and enhancing the natural environment and ecological connections and systems” (Goal 2: Ecosystems, Natural Areas, and Parks). Reducing GHG emissions from buildings relates to regional climate change goals (Goal 8: Climate Change).

Intergovernmental Factors

The Wood Smoke Reduction program is a regional initiative: rebates are available in the electoral areas, the municipalities and through K’ómoks First Nation on reserve lands. CVRD staff administer the program and are working closely with provincial staff, through the Air Quality Roundtable initiative and the CleanBC Better Homes program to ensure alignment of local and provincial initiatives.

Interdepartmental Involvement

Planning staff, with Communications staff assistance to promote the program, are responsible for the administration of the Wood Smoke Reduction program.

Citizen/Public Relations

A communications plan will be prepared for the 2021 Wood Smoke Reduction program, which will include promotion of rebate programs and education through the CVRD website and social media platforms, radio and newspaper advertisements. Promotional material will also be shared with intergovernmental, community and industry partners.