

**DATE:** May 9, 2019**FILE:** 5280-15**TO:** Chair and Directors  
Committee of the Whole**FROM:** Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative OfficerSupported by Russell Dyson  
Chief Administrative Officer*R. Dyson***RE: Woodsmoke Reduction Program****Purpose**

To provide the Board with additional information about the Woodsmoke Reduction Program.

**Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:**

THAT staff be directed to proceed with the Woodsmoke Reduction Program as outlined in the “proposed” column of Table 1: Woodsmoke Reduction Program Updates Overview in the report dated May 9, 2019, and that further updates to the Woodstove Exchange Program be deferred to the future Regional Airshed Advisory Group that is in development.

**Executive Summary**

Air quality in the Comox Valley continues to be a complex and significant issue that touches on many aspects of the community including health, the environment, income, housing, density and social norms. Because air quality touches on so many aspects of the community, it also involves many local government departments and many stakeholders.

Because of this complexity, the approach to addressing air quality requires a financial, regulatory and communications and engagement approach from multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders working in coordination and collaboration.

Staff are developing a wood smoke reduction awareness campaign for 2019 to build awareness of the negative health impacts of wood smoke from woodstoves, to build commitment to responsible burning practices, to draw attention to financial incentives for switching to cleaner heating appliances, and with a particular focus on increasing rebate amounts, education and awareness in hotspot areas.

In parallel, a process has been established to develop a regional coordinated and collaborative approach via a Regional Airshed Advisory Group, and the Woodsmoke Reduction program is one small component of a more holistic approach that this group will consider to address air quality issues.

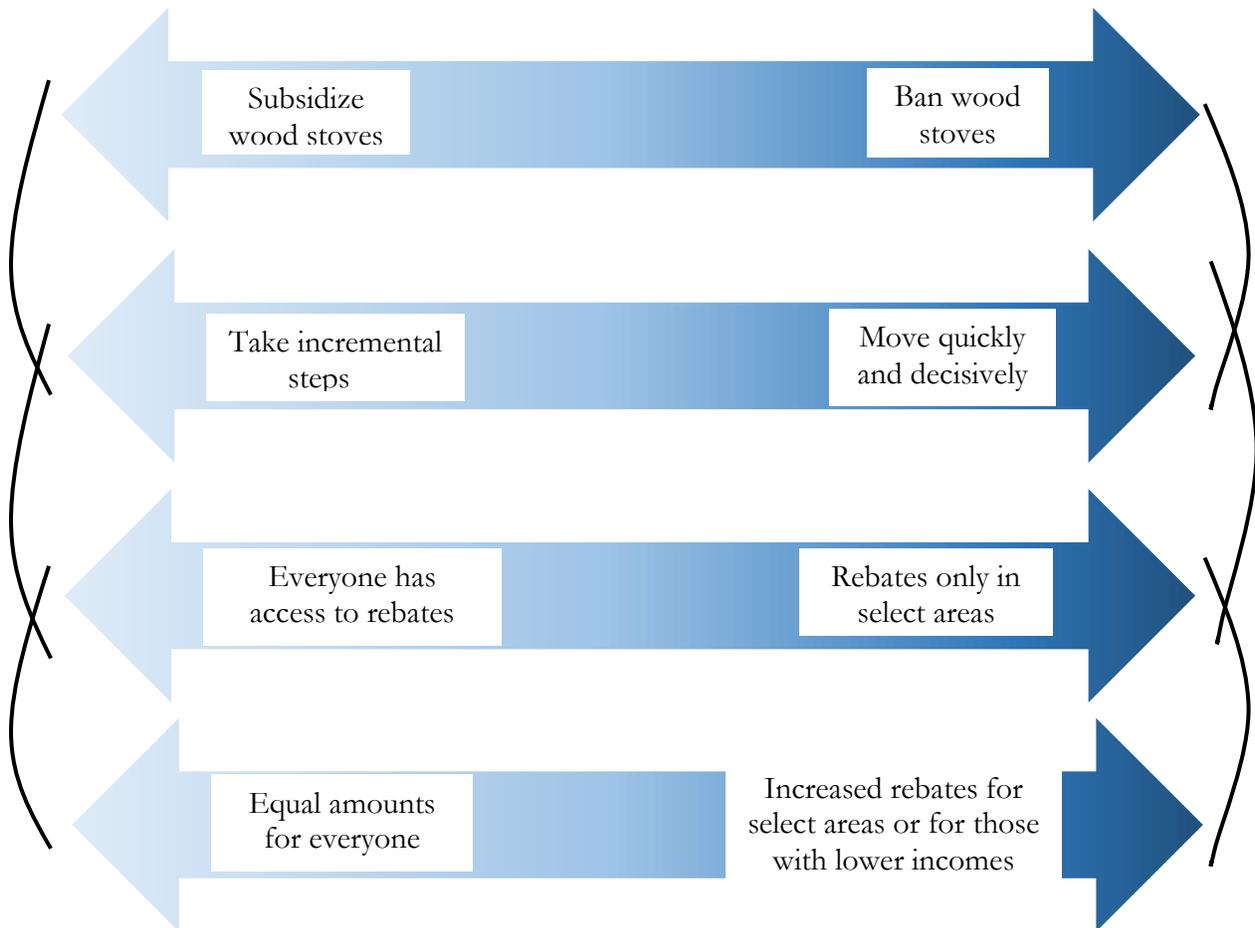
**Background***Working with the Complexity of Air Quality<sup>1</sup>*

With complex problems like air quality, the challenges are in part due to there being no clear one-way consideration. These issues feel stuck and circular because we move along a shifting continuum between the extreme positions about the questions we face. There are multiple polarities at play at the same time, and they interact to make things even more complicated. Below are just a few of the

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<sup>1</sup> This complexity model is from Human Systems Dynamics Institute. Learn more by clicking [here](#).

interconnected polarities related to the Woodstove Exchange Program that staff identified from listening to recent Board meeting discussions about the Woodstove Exchange Program. Note that the ends of each end of the spectrum illustrated below come with both risks and benefits.



The polarities illustrated above show some of the tension points that exist in the woodstove exchange rebates which is just one small part of the air quality discussion. A collaborative multi stakeholder approach is key to considering these complex polarities. Some of the key complexities with respect to the Woodstove Exchange Program which can be considered by the Regional Airshed Advisory Group include:

- Fuel switching – moving people from one energy source (e.g. wood) to another (e.g. gas, hydroelectricity) has pros and cons which need to be investigated.
- Social norms – cultural practice of wood heating is deeply rooted and any challenge to this needs to be carefully considered.
- Economic – Issues of income, costs associated with different heating sources and the effectiveness of various financial incentives amounts requires analysis.

Since 2016 staff have been implementing the Ministry of Environment’s Provincial Woodstove Exchange Program. Note that the CVRD is administering this program with grant funding as there is no established service to support this work. While this is a provincial program, there is some latitude for each community to customize the program to meet the unique needs of their community. With that in mind, staff have developed the following incremental updates to the Woodstove Exchange Program direction for 2019, with the understanding that the program details may change in the future once we have established a framework for a regional approach.

**Table 1: Woodsmoke Reduction Program Updates Overview**

<b>Existing</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
Woodstove Exchange Program	Woodsmoke Reduction Program
Very little discussion of health impacts	Media campaign focused on raising awareness of health impacts of wood smoke from wood stoves
Technical explanations	Plain language focused on three key messages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health impacts</li> <li>• Responsible wood burning practices</li> <li>• Financial incentives</li> </ul>
<b>Available rebates for new heating appliances</b> EPA Woodstove Exchange → \$250 Natural gas, propane or pellet stoves → \$600 Electric heat pumps → \$1,000	<b>(No Change)</b> <b>Available rebates for new heating appliances</b> EPA Woodstove Exchange → \$250 Natural gas, propane or pellet stoves → \$600 Electric heat pumps → \$1,000
Maximum heat pump rebate amount of \$1,000	Hotspot areas eligible for \$2,500 for heat pumps via an granting agreement with Island Health.
Free moisture meters as prize giveaways	Free moisture meters as part of a targeted education and outreach campaign.

Because of the complex nature of the air quality issue generally, and the Woodstove Exchange program specifically, staff are recommending that the CVRD proceed with the program updates noted above and defer the more significant and complex additional changes and discussion to the Regional Airshed Advisory Group.

### **Intergovernmental Factors**

The following stakeholders are in some way involved in local air quality: CVRD, Town of Comox, City of Courtenay, Village of Cumberland, Ministry of Environment, BC Lung Association, Island Health, Citizens, Retailers, WETT Inspectors, Home Insurance providers, and Firewood providers.

### **Interdepartmental Involvement**

The following departments are in some way involved in local air quality: Sustainability, Planning, Fire Services, Building Services, Bylaw Enforcement, Communications and Legislative Services.

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