

2024 AGM Political Action Committee Report

Members of the Political Action Committee: Margaret Holm, Khati Hendry, Lori Goldman, Henry Sielmann, Jim Beattie, Sue Kirschmann (chair), Lynn Walford (community member).



In 2023 our committee continued to work on preventing new fossil fuel infrastructure. As interveners on FortisBC Energy Inc's proposed Okanagan Capacity Upgrade (a local gas pipeline project which would run above the Naramata bench), we submitted an argument to the BC Utilities Commission during September's final argument phase. Unexpectedly, and much to our delight, on December 22, 2023 the BCUC ruled against the OCU project stating "...it is not necessary for the public convenience and does not conserve the public interest". Our submission, as well as the comments many of you submitted to the BCUC, may have played a role in this decision. Thank you for your efforts!

Throughout the year we also gave presentations to Penticton and Summerland councils, encouraging them to adopt the new Zero Carbon Step Code (ZCSC). The ZCSC became available to municipalities in May 2023 as a tool to restrict carbon emissions in new buildings. Penticton subsequently voted to adopt the ZCSC, beginning at the first "measure only" level (EL-1) and moving to EL-2 when the building community is ready. Summerland has not voted yet.

Our committee was involved in other activities throughout the year:

- Presented to the BC Finance Committee on the Province's 2024 Budget. Our recommendations were to provide funding for: a) a BC-specific study with the goal of minimizing disruptions of our power grid due to natural disasters; and b) analysis of the use of micro power grids with battery storage in developing a resilient energy infrastructure with emphasis on rural and remote areas.
- Took steps to correct misinformation about so-called "Renewable Natural Gas (RNG)". We produced a myth-busting brochure about "RNG" which we circulated widely, gave a presentation on "RNG" at Penticton's Brown Bag Lecture series, engaged with the Thompson Okanagan Tourism Association (TOTA) on their promotion of "RNG", and wrote letters to news agencies providing an alternate view. It has recently been found that the industrial nature of "RNG", combined with methane leakage throughout the gas system, can make it as emissions intensive as coal.
- Gave further input on RDOS's proposal to remove Environmentally Sensitive Development Permit Area (ESDPA) requirements from private properties (this issue was outstanding from last year). The RDOS board voted to keep the ESDPA on private properties and work to improve the process rather than remove the requirement and have no protection at all. Thank you to those of you who also provided input.
- Continued to engage in local issues by meeting with councillors and staff, and by attending open houses, hearings and council meetings.
- Provided input into provincial and federal policy by participating in surveys, writing letters, and meeting with elected officials and ministers. We were fortunate to be invited to meet with MLA Roly Russell several times, and once with Minister George Heyman.

Respectfully submitted by Sue Kirschmann