

July 6/22 Penticton Herald

Dear Editor:

Why do today what you can put off 'til tomorrow unfortunately does not apply to climate action — we can't keep putting it off.

Kudos to Penticton Council for recognizing this and adopting the Climate Emergency declaration — and now it is time to take climate seriously into account with the new housing development applications.

The Canadian Horizon's Spiller Road development is a good place to start. New developments need to be assessed for the two main culprits of carbon emissions in Penticton — transportation and housing heating.

Given that most people still use personal gas-powered vehicles, urban sprawl will only make those emissions worse, so developments on the periphery are problematic.

Putting in new housing that expects gas heating as an option is also counterproductive — we will never meet our climate goals unless we stop adding to the problem.

The STEP codes and retrofit loan programs are in place because it is better not to build in gas to begin with, and it is expensive to retrofit. Penticton needs to be sure that any new developments build it right the first time and fully support clean energy solutions.

We may be able to learn from some creative approaches in other communities. For example, in Squamish, which has adopted a "Low Carbon Incentive Program," only fully electric homes can be built to full size.

Homes using carbon have home size reduced by one third of maximum allowed for lot size. There must be new ways of thinking.

The transportation and housing emissions concerns are in addition to the climate effects that we see from destroying existing wildlands and increasing fire danger at the urban interface, not to mention the citizen concerns about maintaining a liveable Penticton in line with existing community plans.

This decade is critical for taking climate action — heat domes, floods and fires tell us this and we don't have the slack to proceed with business as usual. Trees take decades to regrow, electric vehicles and heat pumps will gradually increase, and it takes time for other climate measures to work — so we have to stop right now from making it worse. Stop approving projects that will increase emissions.

First Things First Okanagan urges that Council approve no new developments without a serious climate screen and reject projects that will increase fossil fuel emissions. The Spiller Road plans do not pass muster.

Jim Beattie, Chair

First Things First Okanagan