

Resolution 6A

INCREASING ACCESS TO COMMUNITY ENERGY DATA (PASSED)

⇒ Town of Bridgewater

WHEREAS the UNSM recognizes the significant threat posed by climate change, and has signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Climate Change (2009) with the Province of Nova Scotia, affirming the commitment of municipalities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS the Province of Nova Scotia has required all municipalities to develop Municipal Climate Change Action Plans that included energy and greenhouse gas emissions inventories, energy reduction targets based on these inventories, and mitigation plans that will require these inventories to be maintained and updated in subsequent years; and

WHEREAS Nova Scotia municipalities are making concerted efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions not only from their own operations, but also from the communities they serve, through initiatives such as more efficient land use planning, public transportation, active transportation, community energy systems, energy reduction programs for homeowners, etc.; and

WHEREAS one important measure of success for such programs is to determine their ability to reduce the overall energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions of the community, by means of establishing a baseline year, and then comparing future emissions against that baseline, similar to the approach of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program, in which over a dozen municipalities are currently participating; and

WHEREAS accurately measuring energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions of municipal operations and of the broader community requires compiling data from municipal records, energy providers such as power utilities and fuel companies, the transportation sector, the solid waste sector, and other information sources including provincial energy and housing data, but where there are not standard processes for requesting this data, and energy companies frequently do not comply with municipal requests to submit even summarized community energy data, resulting in significant inaccuracies in the energy and emissions accounting process; and

WHEREAS the collecting and reporting of energy and emissions data is only becoming more important as municipalities increase their efforts to participate in energy reduction activities and community energy planning, and to comply with provincial and federal reporting requirements;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the UNSM request that the Province establish standardized, effective, and timely procedures within the Provincial government for handling information requests from municipalities relating to energy and emissions account; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the UNSM request that the Province develop legislation requiring energy companies and utilities, and relevant transportation and waste sector organizations, to establish standardized, effective, and timely procedures for handling information requests from municipalities relating to energy and emissions accounting.

BACKGROUND:

On May 26, 2014, Town Council approved a recommendation from staff to join the national Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program, and on June 25, 2014, Town Council appointed Town representatives to the program. Following the submission of this information to PCP, the Town has been formally enrolled in the program.

Since that time, staff has worked to compile energy and greenhouse gas emissions data from Town operations as well as the community of Bridgewater, as part of the Town's submission for achieving its "Milestone 1" requirements (create a GHG emissions inventory and forecast). During this time and during earlier attempts, staff has encountered challenges in acquiring this information, as utility providers have failed to comply with requests to provide data on the sales of fuel products to the community, even when it was indicated that this information would be kept confidential and that any publicly released documentation would only consist of aggregate data with no identifying information. There have also been challenges in acquiring community energy data from the Province of Nova Scotia, as there is no clear process for requesting this information.

As a result of these challenges, staff believes that bringing forward a resolution on this subject to the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) fall conference may be a good opportunity for communicating these challenges to the Province, and improving the situation.

Staff has provided the attached draft resolution for Council's consideration for bringing forward to the UNSM as part of the fall 2014 conference. The resolution calls on the province to take two actions on this matter:

1. Establish standardized, effective, and timely procedures within the Provincial government for handling information requests from municipalities relating to energy and emissions accounting;
2. Develop legislation requiring energy companies and utilities, and relevant transportation and waste sector organizations, to establish standardized,

effective, and timely procedures for handling information requests from municipalities relating to energy and emissions accounting.

Staff believes that if these measures are properly enacted by the Province, future energy and emissions accounting will become significantly easier, and the results more accurate. The collecting and reporting of energy and emissions data is only becoming more important as municipalities increase their efforts to participate in energy reduction activities and community energy planning, and to comply with provincial and federal reporting requirements.

Response from:
Department of Energy

RESPONSE:

The Department of Energy understands municipalities have concerns with access to information relating to energy and emissions accounting. We agree this is an important issue. However, before we commit to implementing new government procedures for handling information requests or legislating requirements on energy companies, we want to better understand current capabilities and carefully consider any stakeholder issues. We are willing to work with UNSM and other stakeholders to better understand the practicalities of energy companies collecting and providing energy and emissions data electronically.