

COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

2. Ensuring Healthier Climate-Smart Homes

Submitted by: Councillor Carr

WHEREAS

1. The *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2023 Update for Policymakers* report states that: “Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases have unequivocally caused global warming with global surface temperature reaching 1.1 degrees C above 1850-1900. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase. Widespread and rapid changes in the atmosphere, ocean, cryosphere and biosphere have occurred. Increasing weather and climate extreme events have exposed millions of people to acute food insecurity and reduced water security. Impacts on some ecosystems are approaching irreversibility. In all regions increases in extreme heat events have resulted in human mortality and morbidity. In urban areas, observed climate change has caused adverse impacts on human health, livelihoods and key infrastructure”;¹
2. At least 25% of today’s global warming is driven by methane from human actions. Pipeline-grade natural gas suitable for residential consumers is over 90 percent methane. Methane has more than 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide over the first 20 years after it reaches the atmosphere and 28 times greater global warming potential than carbon dioxide on a 100-year timescale;
3. Evidence is also clear that the use of gas fireplaces and gas stoves, which burn methane, not only contribute to global warming, but pose health risks, including increased rates of asthma in children;²
4. The Province of BC recently enabled local governments to establish GHG limits for new buildings by creating the BC Zero Carbon Step Code, adding it to the BC Building Code on May 1, 2023;
5. The director of the Zero Emissions Building Exchange (ZEBx), an industry hub that is strengthening capacities for zero-emission buildings, has stated, “It is without a doubt, more than possible to require almost all new buildings to meet the highest level of the Zero Carbon Step Code today,” and that current trends indicate that “climate-friendly and all-electric buildings will be able to be constructed for less than what it would have cost had gas-fired equipment been used”;³
6. BC local governments such as Victoria, Saanich, and Burnaby have already adopted, or are in the process of adopting, the highest step of the Zero Carbon Step Code (“Zero carbon Performance”);

7. Vancouver's Building Bylaw effectively prohibits the use of gas for space and hot water in new buildings but still allows gas infrastructure connections for uses such as gas stoves and gas fireplaces in new homes (equivalent to the "Strong Carbon Performance" step of the BC Zero Carbon Step Code); and
8. Given Vancouver, British Columbia and Canada's commitments to being net zero carbon by 2050, and climate scientists' call to immediately transition away from fossil fuels, it makes no sense to allow building of new fossil fuel gas infrastructure.⁴

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT City Council direct staff to:

- i. Report back to Council as soon as possible on a plan to update the Vancouver Building Bylaw (VBBL) for new residential buildings, expanding the requirement of zero emission space and water heating in new residential buildings to include no gas hooks-ups for any purpose including cooking and fireplaces to align the VBBL with the Zero Carbon Performance step of the BC Zero Carbon Building Step Code.
- ii. Include in future reports, policies and timelines related to zero emission retrofits of existing buildings, requirements to phase out as quickly as possible the use of gas for cooking and fireplaces.

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¹ [The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change \(IPCC\) 2023 Summary for Policymakers](#)

² [After seeing how gas stoves pollute homes, these researchers are ditching theirs](#)
By: Emily Chung, CBC News. April 7, 2022

³ ['Long overdue': B.C. introducing new powers to limit emissions of new buildings](#)
By: Jake Romphf, Today in BC, April 4, 2023

⁴ [World is on brink of catastrophic warming, U.N. climate change](#)
By: Sarah Kaplan, The Washington Post, March 20, 2023