For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on December 11, 2024

4.   Partnering on a Carbon Offset Project to Fund Energy Retrofits of Non-Profit Housing

Submitted by: Councillor Carr

WHEREAS:

1.   During the 2021 "heat dome" 619 people died in BC; more than 100 in Vancouver. Most of the deaths occurred amongst older residents in older buildings without cooling;

2.   The City of Vancouver has developed a *Climate Emergency Action Plan* and associated policy that has been widely praised for its focus on reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The largest source (about 57 percent) of Vancouver's GHG emissions is buildings – specifically the heating of space and hot water. Policy to date has largely focused on regulating new building construction—the easiest, least costly and most effective strategy. More challenging is the energy retrofit of existing buildings. A Council decision on November 26, 2024, maintained policy that restricts the use of fossil fuels in new housing which will mean fewer buildings in the future will need to be retrofitted, leaving the focus on older buildings, which largely contain the most affordable housing, constructed prior to the policy's implementation;

3.   Vancouver City Council has allocated $5M in capital budgets that helped to retrofit civic buildings which resulted in almost all of the city's Branch libraries getting air cooling equipment (HVAC or heat pumps), enabling them to serve as "safe places of retreat" for vulnerable residents during extreme heat events;

4.   Amongst the most challenging, and most impactful, of existing buildings to retrofit include affordable, non-profit housing, where it's important to ensure that the cost of retrofits doesn't fall on residents or affect the affordability of the housing;

5.   A working group, established by Councillor Carr in 2023 and originally comprised of representatives from Vancouver City (Council and Mayor's office), Metro Vancouver, the Zero Emissions Innovation Centre (ZEIC) and Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR), began exploring strategies to establish a voluntary carbon offset program to offer YVR air travellers. That work has continued through 2024 and expanded to include the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA);

6.   BCNPHA is an independent society that receives no government funding for its own operation. It supports non-profit housing providers that own and/or operate affordable housing in Vancouver and other BC municipalities, including affordable, transitional, supportive and subsidized housing. The society is engaged in assisting in the retrofits of buildings, including in measuring GHG reductions to enable reporting on outcomes;

7.   YVR, as part of the working group in developing this project, has indicated its interest in pursuing a trial "carbon offset" program that could include offering travellers to and from Vancouver an opportunity to voluntarily purchase carbon offsets to support energy retrofits in local non-profit housing that achieve measurable carbon reductions, possibly in the time period around FIFA 2026; and

8.   To date the project has been facilitated off the side of a Councillor's desk. There is a need for a lead coordinating body to facilitate the communications between project partners, coordinated implementation and follow-up.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

THAT Council direct staff to:

i.   Engage partners, including Vancouver Airport Authority (YVR), BC Non-Profit Housing Association and others if appropriate, in developing a trial voluntary carbon offset project that would offer YVR air travellers, possibly in the period of time around the FIFA 2026 games the opportunity to offset the carbon emissions associated with their air travel, with the funds raised being used for projects that would include the energy retrofits of non-profit housing in our area; and

ii.   Report back to Council periodically on the progress of the project and, on the completion of the trial project, with an analysis of outcomes and set of recommendations regarding potential follow-up.

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