

## Information Session and Roundtable with Minister Phillips

### WHAT WE HEARD

#### Overview

On Wednesday, June 13, 2018 fifteen participants representing nine community associations gathered at Winston Heights Community Association to hear presentations from Energy Efficiency Alberta and Municipal Climate Change Action Centre on programs and incentives available to community associations.

Organized by the Calgary Federation of Calgary Communities, the impetus for this event came from Minister Phillips who wanted to hear about the challenges that community associations face when seeking funding opportunities for energy upgrades and ideas for how to remove these barriers. Minister Phillips is also interested in hearing ideas for energy efficiency program expansion and new programming that could benefit community associations.

Minister Phillips kicked off the information session and roundtable by welcoming the participants and reiterating her passion for building community, and her commitment to exploring funding opportunities that will assist community associations in making their community buildings safe, modern and sustainable.

Below is a report of what was heard during the roundtable discussions.

#### Barriers/challenges in accessing current programs:

##### Awareness

- Community associations are not receiving information regarding funding programs.
- Most of the participants in the round table had not heard of either Energy Efficiency Alberta or Municipal Climate Change Action Centre programs/incentives (with some exceptions where the association has participated in a program).

##### Time

- Community associations have very limited time to focus on energy-related causes as they're focusing on so many other things.
- There are so many funding streams available to community groups all focusing on different requirements, measures, reporting, etc. – its like trying to put together “puzzle pieces” for community groups and this takes time (and resources).
- The application process for funding/grants/incentives is very time-consuming.

##### Resources

- Community associations have very limited resources that make researching and applying for grants difficult and coordinating implementation a struggle.

- Access to funding for upgrades, let alone an energy efficiency upgrade, is extremely difficult to secure. Incentives are great, but finding capital is the real problem. Upgrades are expensive and often require up-front cash which community associations don't have.

### Expertise

- Community associations have limited energy expertise in-house to make decisions, track energy consumption or gather the appropriate information to apply for grants.
- Community associations typically do not have access to expertise in fund development, grant writing, construction, project management, engineering, etc.

### Suggestions for removing barriers:

- Community Service Groups
  - Include City of Calgary representatives at future meetings. These representatives have comprehensive understanding of the funding available to community associations and are a liaison between the City and community associations.
  - Inform/educate Community Services Groups about Energy Efficiency Alberta and Municipal Climate Change Action Centre programs so that they can add it to their toolbox when communicating with community associations.
- Make the funding process less onerous and more easy-to-understand
  - Make the “puzzle pieces” of funding easier to navigate
  - Create a single source of information to provide community associations with funding opportunities.
- Contractors
  - Inform/educate contractors and other trade allies about incentive programs so that they can in turn inform community groups when they are quoting for work.

### Ideas for program enhancements/new programs to support energy efficiency:

- 1. Create Community Association Cohort Groups**
  - a. These could potentially be led by a City representative with the goal being to share energy efficiency ideas and information. These must be volunteer-centric to account for the time and effort of volunteers.
  - b. The groups would share case studies about projects, learnings, challenges, solutions, etc.
  - c. There is potential to link associations with partner experts to help with energy efficiency capacity and knowledge gaps.
  - d. Associations that may have a mutually beneficial energy efficiency or renewable energy project would be connected for shared learning.
- 2. Fund Experts**
  - a. Subsidized Sustainable Energy Grant Coordinators

- i. These individuals could be young energy professionals who have energy training such as a technical sciences/engineering background, or completion of CIET training. All or a portion of their salary could be covered to help community associations (or a specific region containing multiple community associations) access energy grants, implement/monitor energy use, communicate with all stakeholders regarding related energy initiatives and any relevant funding/incentive programs available.
    - ii. Coordinators would research and apply for energy grants on behalf of the community association(s).
  - b. Subsidized Engineers/Engineering Studies
    - i. Create a systematic approach to upgrades, maintenance and energy efficiency. Energy Audits are useful but community associations need help with next steps such as planning life cycle costs, matched with funding cycles. For example, engineers could use the energy audit along with a lifecycle plan and create a multi-year plan with step-by-step guidance – rather than community associations doing everything piecemeal. (Note: this is already somewhat accomplished by NEET which provides a 3-5 year Gantt chart for efficiency implementation, although it does not incorporate funding cycle information)
  - c. Advanced Energy Efficiency
    - i. Provide more guidance and funding for advanced energy efficiency measures and renewable projects.
    - ii. Create funding partnership opportunities.
- 3. Direct-Install Programs**
  - a. After a NEET audit (or even separate from NEET) a program delivery agent could come and implement various measures identified in the NEET audit, up to a certain cost or installation complexity threshold. This would be similar to EEA’s residential direct-install program but with more applicable retrofits for non-profits. This would decrease time, resource and expertise constraints while providing facilities with immediate energy savings.
- 4. Awareness & Outreach**
  - a. Leverage program allies such as Federation of Calgary Communities (FCC) and Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (ECVO) to circulate information through newsletters or organize regular in-person information sessions.
  - b. Enlist local MLAs to circulate information.
  - c. Share program information with municipalities.
  - d. Leverage the City of Calgary’s Climate Resiliency Plan that was recently announced.
- 5. Enhance NEET Program**

- a. Associations who had received NEET audits felt that the scope of the audit was smaller than expected. They want deeper energy efficiency measures/opportunities to ensure the largest cost savings possible.
  - b. Audits should include the incentive amounts eligible for the measures recommended so that associations have a better sense of the total project cost. (Note: Every NEET audit will have applicable incentives incorporated into energy conservation measure analysis, which will clearly show how the incentive positively impacts the economics.
- 6. Enhance Solar Program**
- a. Net metering makes payback period very long.
  - b. Incentive levels are low and make payback period long.

