

# **REPORT**

## ***Energy and Climate Action***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** June 9, 2025

**From:** Dave Bains  
Director, Energy and Climate Action  
**File:** 2702654

**Item #:** 2025-164

**Subject:** **Response to Council Motion Referred to the Utility Commission Titled:  
“Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy savings Programs for New  
West Electrical Customers”**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. *THAT staff pursue amending the existing Memorandum of Agreement with BC Hydro, dated March 25, 2010, relating to the availability of Power Smart Programs to electrical service customers in the City of New Westminster.*
  2. *THAT staff continue to develop a partnership approach with BC Hydro to deliver a residential solar-battery program to New Westminster Electric Utility customers.*
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### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to present Council with the response from the Utility Commission to the motion referred by Council, actions taken by staff related to this motion, to seek approval to update the existing Memorandum of Agreement between BC Hydro and the New Westminster Electric Utility and leverage the residential solar-battery program delivered by BC Hydro through a partnership approach.

### **BACKGROUND**

On November 4, 2024, Council debated the following motion and accompanying resolutions:

*Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy Saving Programs for New West Electrical Customers*

1. THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to report back as to how the City could systematically provide better alignment regarding program offerings between BC Hydro and New Westminster Electrical Utility; and
2. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT staff be directed to report back on the cost and feasibility of establishing our own hydro solar panel and battery storage program and/or partner with BC Hydro to offer their program to New Westminster Electrical Utility customers

After discussion, the following motion was approved:

THAT the motion titled “Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy Saving Programs for New West Electrical Customers” be referred to the New Westminster Utility Commission.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

**DISCUSSION**

*Utility Commission Proceedings Regarding Energy Saving Program Partnerships*

Prior to the November 4, 2024 Council motion on energy program equity, on September 3, 2024, staff brought forward a verbal update to the Utility Commission regarding: “Deepening partnerships with BC Hydro on Program Delivery”.

This discussion was centered on the summer 2024 BC Hydro residential solar-battery incentive program and the spring of 2023 BC Hydro free air conditioner program. New Westminster Electric Utility customers were eligible for the AC program, but were not for the solar-battery program. Staff highlighted the following areas of concern:

- General lack of clarity in the community regarding eligibility for an advertised rebate or incentive program;
- Lack of communication regarding program details and eligibility criteria from BC Hydro with City Staff, in advance of program launch; and
- Requiring City Staff to initiate outreach to gather details on program eligibility from BC Hydro.

From this discussion, the Utility Commission noted a need for further discussions with the provincial government, other municipal electric utilities and BC Hydro, to develop a structured partnership with BC Hydro with the aim of providing a higher level of service to New Westminster residents.

On May 6, 2025, Staff submitted a report to the Utility Commission on the referred motion from Council regarding “*Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy Saving Programs for New West Electrical Customers*”. The following recommendations were presented and approved:

THAT the referred Council motion titled: “Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy Saving Programs for New West Electrical Customers” be received for information.

THAT Staff pursue amending the existing Memorandum of Agreement with BC Hydro, dated March 25, 2010, relating to the availability of Power Smart Programs to electrical service customers in the City of New Westminster.

THAT Staff continue to develop a partnership approach with BC Hydro to deliver a residential solar-battery program to New Westminster Electric Utility customers.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Staff recommend that Council endorse the recommendations from the Utility Commission.

*BC Hydro Energy Savings Program Partnerships*

On October 30, 2024, staff met with BC Hydro program delivery teams. During this meeting the following items were discussed:

- 1) Memorandum of Agreement: In February 2007, the City of New Westminster and BC Hydro entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (“Agreement”) which ensures access to “Power Smart Programs” for electrical service customers in the City of New Westminster. This Agreement was last amended in March 2010, and continues to be applied across the new program offers. Staff recommend working with BC Hydro to update the Agreement, as required, to ensure changes at the City, BC Hydro and the current energy and electrification policy context are reflected.
- 2) Two programs were discussed as opportunities for improved partnership:
  - a. The solar-battery program eligibility, at that time, did not include New Westminster Electric Utility Customers. This was exemplified as a program that does not clearly fall within the defined programs from the Agreement. Staff presented an updated policy context consideration that demonstrated the value of inclusion into the Agreement.
  - b. The peak saver and demand response programs were also identified as potential program gaps for New Westminster residents. BC Hydro

confirmed that based on the Agreement, New Westminster Electric Utility customers would be eligible to participate in these programs, but require advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) to be in place. Therefore increased access to this program will be available once the City's AMI hardware deployment, and software integration, is fully complete.

Staff had three additional meetings with separate program teams to clarify local resident eligibility, and to date all programs that were inquired about provided equal access in New Westminster.

On April 7, 2025, BC Hydro confirmed that New Westminster residents will have access to rebates through the BC Hydro Residential Solar-Battery program budget, but the program administration will need to be delivered directly through the New Westminster Electric Utility. At this time, staff are working with BC Hydro to finalize the program administration process and will inform the Utility Commission, and Council, once a local program launch date has been determined.

#### FortisBC and CleanBC Energy Savings Programs

As it relates to FortisBC gas conservation program offerings in New Westminster and CleanBC electrification programs, residents in the city have access to all program offerings.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Pending direction from Council, staff will continue to work with BC Hydro to leverage existing programs funded by BC Hydro and ensure the Agreement in place is reflective of the current energy and electrification policy context and meets the needs of New Westminster Electric Utility customers. Staff will also continue to meet with the BC Hydro program teams, on a regular frequency, to improve coordination on future program initiatives.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Expanding access to electricity conservation programs, for residents of New Westminster, supports both the low-carbon electrification goals of the City as well as energy affordability for the community. These are critical elements of the seven bold steps for climate action, particularly Bold Step #3: Carbon Free Homes and Buildings, and Bold Step #4: Carbon Free Energy.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications related to this report. This report is providing an update on staff actions and meeting outcomes since the September 3, 2024 Utility Commission Meeting and the November 4, 2024 Council motion referral, and the recommended next steps do not require additional funding in their pursuit.

Should additional costs, beyond the approved 2025 Capital and Operating Budgets, need to be incurred to support delivery of any future partner programs (i.e. administrative, shared funding model, or other program related items), staff will seek Utility Commission and Council approval before proceeding.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

This report was developed based on recommendations from the Utility Commission on a referred motion from Council regarding "*Providing Equity in the Delivery of Energy Saving Programs for New West Electrical Customers*".

### **OPTIONS**

Three options are provided for Council's consideration:

1. THAT staff pursue amending the existing Memorandum of Agreement with BC Hydro, dated March 25, 2010, relating to the availability of Power Smart Programs to electrical service customers in the City of New Westminster.
2. THAT staff continue to develop a partnership approach with BC Hydro to deliver a residential solar-battery program to New Westminster Electric Utility customers.
3. THAT staff be provided with alternate direction.

### **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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This report was reviewed by:  
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This report was approved by:  
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Dave Bains, Director, Energy and Climate Action