

Greening begins at home

by Summit staff

Municipal operations seek to improve their own energy efficiency

ON THE WEST COAST, the City of Vancouver contracted Ameresco Canada to undertake a retrofit of Vancouver City Hall that will improve the energy efficiency of the city's corporate operations and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). Buildings undergoing renovation include the main City Hall building, the East Wing, and the West 10th Annex. Ameresco has guaranteed a positive financial return through reduced utility costs.

The \$1.82 million retrofit project includes upgrading the lighting, replacing a boiler which has been in use since 1936, improvements to the cooling system, upgrading the automation systems and water conservation measures. Any construction waste generated during the project will also be recycled. When the project is completed in December 2006, these improvements will result in:

- an 18 percent decrease in GHGs from 1990 levels (the same as taking 62 cars off the road),
- based on current rates, an estimated savings of approximately \$121,000 annually in utility costs,
- a 19 percent reduction in electrical energy usage annually,
- a 31 percent reduction in natural gas usage, and
- water savings of 15,080 cubic metres.

Moving east, Saskatchewan's Office of Energy Conservation (OEC, www.oec.ca) launched its Municipal Energy Conservation website – <http://municipalities.oec.ca> – this summer. The new website will provide Saskatchewan municipalities with information on cost-effective, energy-saving opportunities, potential resource options and an energy cost tracking mechanism and other useful tools, such as reports tailored to the operation of individual municipalities visited by the OEC. The new website provides an online tool to help the municipalities track energy expenditures and savings and see the results of their energy retrofits.

And on the east coast, in early July, Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) initiated a pilot project to convert the municipal Metro Transit building from fuel oil to natural gas – the first municipal building to undergo the conversion. HRM signed an energy saving performance contract with Johnson Controls, Inc. (www.johnsoncontrols.com) that will see the company reduce operating costs and GHGs (The estimated reduction is 828 tons of carbon dioxide from phase one; 726 tons from a proposed phase two.) at the Metro Transit building. The contract includes deferred maintenance and, in addition to the conversion, improvements to air quality and lighting systems will be made. If successful, future projects will be put in place at other municipal buildings.

The facility and infrastructure improvements will be funded by the guaranteed energy and operational savings they create, in this case, within eight years, and through contributions from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the federal government. The FCM supports partnerships and leveraging of both public and private sector funding to reach higher standards of air, water and soil quality, and climate protection (www.sustainablecommunities.fcm.ca). ~~~