

Carbon Busters guru touts climate change book

Change law for less carbon — author

BY KEVIN MA
Staff writer

Planners can help green the world's cities through the power of the law, says a local author.

Godo Stoyke, president of the sustainability consultancy firm Carbon Busters, has penned a new book on how cities can use bylaws to create low-energy, no-greenhouse-gas-emission communities. The book, *The Carbon Charter*, will be unveiled at the Telus World of Science this Tuesday.

It might come as a surprise to some, says Stoyke, a former St. Albert resident, but governments do occasionally come up with good ideas for the environment. "I keep reading about interesting initiatives from different cities," he says, few of which have spread beyond their borders. At the same time, local councillors have clamoured for case studies to convince their staff that these bylaws work. "This is going to give these councillors the ammunition they need."

Green ideas, bad ideas

Solar panels could create emission-free energy for homes, he says as an example, but few people buy them — they cost a lot up front and add to your property taxes when installed.

The Berkeley FIRST program in Berkeley, Calif. got around this problem by refunding the cost of the panels, Stoyke says. "The headline would be, 'Free solar panels.'" The city adds the cost of the panel to the home's property tax and has the owner pay it back over 20 years. If the home is sold before then, the next owner takes over the payments.

Bend, Colo., also supported solar power when it passed a solar access bylaw. "You have to build your house as far south as possible on your property so that the house has good access to sunlight," Stoyke says, and can't build or plant anything that could shade out another home.

As of this year, he continues, all new buildings in Germany must get all of their heat energy from renewable sources — a dramatic change that surprised Stoyke when he heard about it. Such a move



GODO STOYKE
Author

should encourage owners to waste less energy and invest in district heating systems, which are more efficient than individual ones.

On the other hand some Ontario neighbourhoods used to ban the use of clotheslines. This is an example of what not to do, he says, as it discourages a low-emission way to dry clothes. The Ontario government removed the ban last year.

Law leads the way

Green legislation has to start at the provincial level, says Peter Amerongen, designer of Edmonton's two *Net-Zero* homes. Alberta could see many more efficient homes if the province required new homes to reach an EnerGuide rating of 80 as Ontario plans to do, for example, or passed laws encouraging higher density development. "Otherwise, all [cities] can do is provide incentives."

Incentive programs can also encourage people to buy green technologies, says Rob Harlan, executive director of the Solar Energy Society of Canada's northern Alberta chapter and host of the Tuesday talk. B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario and Medicine Hat all offer feed-in tariffs or tax credits for renewable power, he notes.

Some of these laws are tough to implement, Stoyke says — Berkeley spent two years just working out the legalities of its solar program. But now that these pioneering communities have done all the hard work, others can copy their success. "It normalizes a green infrastructure that we should have anyway."

He hoped city planners, engineers and concerned citizens would use the ideas in his book to improve their communities. "If we can spread these [ideas] to different municipalities in our area, I think we can make a big difference."

The free talk is at 7 p.m. at the Telus World of Science on May 12. The book hits store shelves in June.

kma@stalbert.greatwest.ca

