

From: Ron Voss <rvoss@lightspeed.ca>

Subject: Discussion re Withdrawal from PCP Program

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To: Jeff Genung <Jeff.Genung@cochrane.ca>, Susan Flowers <susan.flowers@cochrane.ca>, Morgan Nagel <morgan.nagel@cochrane.ca>, Alex Reed <alex.reed@cochrane.ca>, Marni Fedeyko <marni.fedeyko@cochrane.ca>, Tara McFadden <tara.mcfadden@cochrane.ca>, Patrick.Wilson@cochrane.ca

Dear Members of Council,

I would like to offer some comments related to the discussion that took place with respect to agenda item 5h, "Withdrawal from ICLEI and PCP", at the Regular Council Meeting on September 8, 2025 and, in particular, point out some of the misconceptions.

One of the arguments that came up to support remaining in the program was "potential future funding opportunities" (Michelle Ambrose, Director, Parks & Active Living), "would hate to see us miss out on some grant funding that's available" (Councillor Flowers), and "avenues for grant funding" (Mayor Genung). Imagine that, saying that belonging to the PCP program is "a big nothing burger" (Mayor Genung), while happily looking forward to grant funding from an external source in order to advance the agenda of that external body.

Several members of Council expressed puzzlement as to what membership in the PCP program means or downplayed the impact of such membership. For example, Councillor Nagel described it as "an old dusty relic that has existed since 2004", and Mayor Genung described the program as a "big nothing burger", but, nonetheless, emphatically argued for the town to remain a member of the program, and Councillor Nagel agreed with keeping that supposed "old relic" in place.

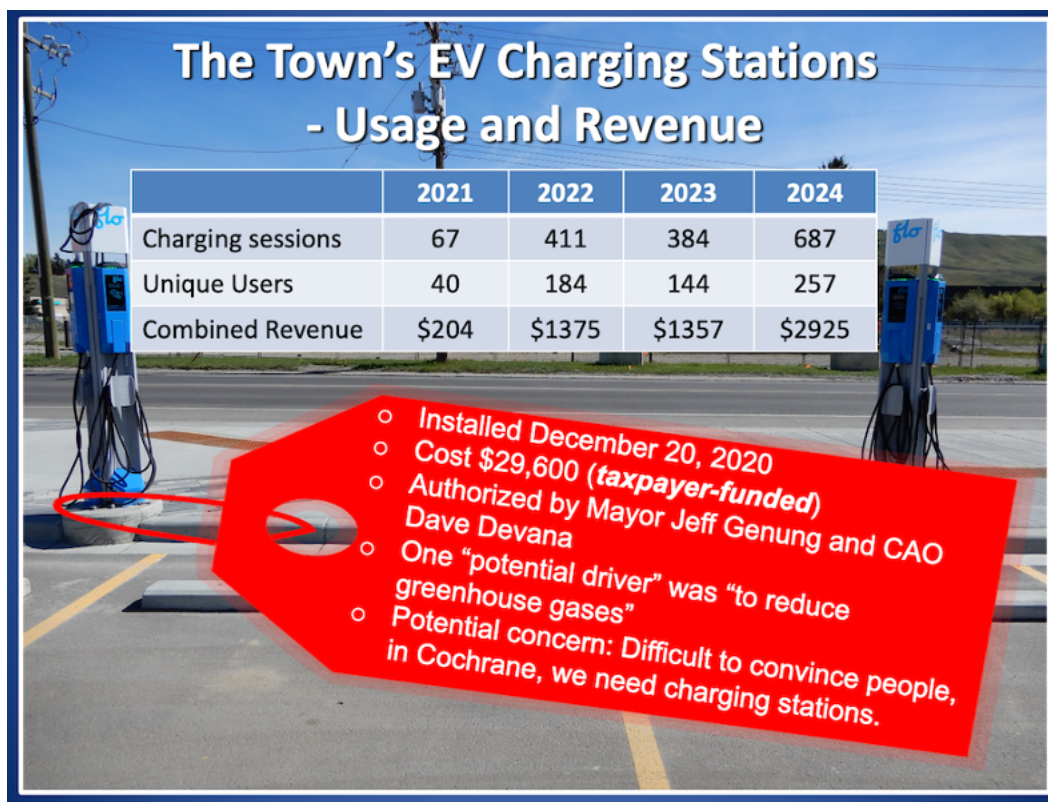
What it means is that this town is sending a message that it aligns itself with the PCP's expressed objective of its program, namely, to "take action against climate change by reducing emissions in your municipality", and going along with the objective of the sponsoring organization, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), to achieve climate neutrality defined as "the targeted reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions...across the community in all sectors to an absolute net-zero emission level at the latest by 2050." By choosing to remain, you are declaring that activities of this town are being guided and influenced by the goals of that program.

Having the town join the PCP program is hardly the same, as Councillor McFadden suggested, for individual staff members belonging to professional organization such as an engineering body.

While the Administration has declared that “Cochrane joined the PCP program in 2004 through a council resolution”, can they confirm that through producing a copy of the resolution that supposedly was passed in 2004?

Ms. Michelle Ambrose (Director, Parks & Active Living) in introducing the agenda item declared that “Currently, there are existing practices in place that provide council with oversight on initiatives of this nature. When potential grant applications, funding agreements, or multi-year commitments arise, they are brought to council for consideration before decisions are made.” That was reinforced by the CAO, Mike Derricott, declaring that by developing a “policy establishing clear and transparent guidelines for evaluating participation in external initiatives”, he thought that “what we would be doing is just reinforcing what is good normal common practice which is on a project basis or on a budgetary basis administration comes forward to council and recommends action or non-action on those items.”

However, “good normal practice” was not the case for the four EV charging stations located across from the Station. Through a Freedom of Information (FOI) request, I found out that the decision to purchase and install the chargers at municipal expense was solely made by Mayor Genung and the CAO at the time, Dave Devana. Note that a driver for that decision was “to reduce greenhouse gases”, an example of adherence to the philosophy as espoused by the Partners for Climate program.



As well, the study to look into electrifying Cochrane's transit fleet was initiated by the Administration without any oversight or approval by Council. The study was spearheaded by Devin LaFleche, the town's Sustainability and Transit Coordinator, whose mandate included a responsibility to "implement greenhouse gas emission-reducing projects". Again, what he did aligned with the objective of the PCP program.

While Ms. Ambrose indicated that the cost of this study was borne by a grant, the \$103,800 study, was, in fact, jointly funded by the Town of Cochrane, carrying \$20,760 of the cost and the Government of Canada carrying the remainder of the cost through its Zero Emission Transit Fund.

Councillor Nagel's recollection of what came out of that study report, which made him think positively about the PCP program, needs a little work. According to Councillor Nagel, "I remember that study said that the electric buses were a terrible idea. They were more expensive and the emissions were higher than the gas buses. That's what they said." Except that is not what was said. I would suggest that Councillor Nagel go back and review the [Committee of the Whole Report](#) for that study and the presentation by the consultant (within 2:02:30 to 2:58:55 minutes of the [video](#) for the Council meeting). It is fanciful to think that a study financed by Trudeau's Zero Emission Transit Fund would conclude that "electric buses were a terrible idea".

The Committee of the Whole Report prepared by the Administration, concluded that "due to potential changes in COLT service models and the lack of necessary infrastructure, **the implementation of electrification is deemed infeasible at present** (*emphasis added*)", as if this impractical technology was feasible at any time. Despite the consultant's claim, as per a press release, that "decarbonizing public transit isn't just a choice, it's a necessity", she began by advising that their preliminary simulations revealed, disappointingly, that "you really just don't have a clear winner in Cochrane". The consultant, not surprisingly being a strong believer in Trudeau's decarbonization program and financially benefiting from it, declared that "**one way to decarbonize is the primary way to get people out of cars.**" Again, Councillor's recollection of what came out of that study needs some work.

The title of my presentation in February to Council with respect to participation in the PCP program ended by asking "Serving Local or Global Priorities?".

Sincerely,

Ron Voss