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Breaking News

Electrical truck would benefit city workers  
By SCOTT TRUDEAU  
Thursday, June 18, 2009

In times where environment and economy are buzzwords on many people's minds, the benefits of an electrical-charged vehicle are many.

Penticton city councillor Gary Litke got the chance to get behind the wheel of the electric Might-E Truck, a diminutive, yet powerful vehicle during a demonstration at the city's public works yard Wednesday.

Litke, who chairs the city's Go Green Advisory Committee, was impressed with the truck's performance. Litke said he would like to see council look into the possibility of adding electric-powered vehicles to the city's vehicle fleet.

"I've talked to Len Robson and Keith Manders about the practical application of this truck," said Litke. "We could find uses for it in parks, maybe the cemetery and for short trips."

Randy Holmquist, president of Canadian Electric Vehicles Ltd., was heading to the Kootenays to give a demonstration of the Might-E Truck's capabilities and decided to contact the City of Penticton about making a presentation.

The truck weighs about 1,000 kilograms, can travel at speeds of up to 40 kilometres and hour and has a maximum payload of about 910 kg. It runs on standard golf-cart batteries and can travel from 60 to 100 km on a single, eight to 12 hour charge.

Cost to run the vehicle amounts to about a penny a kilometre, said Holmquist.

Upkeep is minimal, as replacement of the batteries is necessary every three to five years. In addition to four-wheel disc brakes, the electric truck has a regenerative braking system.

Holmquist said that in the past couple of years he's seen business rise dramatically. Last year was the company's best on record and 2009 is even better.

Since the economy fell off he's noticed a market shift. Where previously about 70 per cent of the electric conversion kits were sold to the public and 30 per cent were Might-E Trucks. This year, the trend has reversed, said Holmquist noting this might be indicative that cities and municipalities are seeking out the cost-saving and environmental advantages of electric-powered vehicles.

Litke said after signing on with the B.C. Climate Action Charter back in 2007, the city is already at the halfway point of working to meeting the climate's mandate of becoming carbon neutral by 2012. To be successful in reaching that goal, city council will need to address certain issues.

Some initiatives, such as converting city buses to bio-diesel, operates a hybrid car and a couple of Smart cars have had an impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions "but we haven't measured it" he said.

Litke said a recommendation is being made at the next council meeting to ask the city to provide the necessary resources to measure the carbon footprint.

"If we are carbon neutral then we'll be eligible for the carbon rebate which could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars," he said.

The Might-E Truck is a versatile and street legal electric vehicle that is used at B.C. university campuses, parks and resorts in the Whistler, Banff and Jasper areas and in the cities of North Vancouver, Colwood, Seattle and Santa Monica.

The company, which is based out of Errington, B.C. near Parksville on Vancouver Island, was established in 1996. Holmquist began building electric cars as a hobby, converting his own car to an electric motor in the early 1990s.

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