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Items for the Action of the Partners in Project Green Executive Management Committee

TO: Chair and Members of the Partners in Project Green Executive Management Committee Tuesday, June 07, 2022 Meeting

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: **WATER AND CLIMATE RESILIENCY CONSORTIUM UPDATE**

KEY ISSUE

To provide an update on the Partners in Project Green (PPG) Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium.

RECOMMENDATION

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the report on Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium Update, be received.

BACKGROUND

Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA), with support from municipalities including Peel, York, the City of Toronto, and lower tier municipalities including Mississauga and Brampton, and from the nearby business community has been working to create a community of leaders advancing environmental action and economic prosperity across the GTA.

At Board of Directors Meeting #4/19, held on April 26, 2019, Resolution #A51/19 was approved in part as follows:

THAT the Partners in Project Green (PPG) Strategic Refresh 2019-2023 and Executive Management Committee Terms of Reference 2019-2023 ... be approved

This strategic refresh was intended to guide the next generation of eco-business activities through PPG focused on increased engagement, improved performance outcomes and enhanced alignment with municipal and business priorities. The delivery model for Partners in Project Green was updated to include four performance areas:

1. Waste Management
2. Water Stewardship
3. Energy Performance & Low Carbon Transport
4. Communications & Engagement

RATIONALE

The Committee will be updated on the Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium and provided with an overview of next steps in program development.

Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium

Communities across the world are experiencing the effects of climate change including increasing temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events. According to the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), human-induced local warming of cities and urbanization lead to heatwaves, increases in heavy precipitation, and stormwater runoff intensity. With much of the PPG community doing

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business in urban contexts, it is critical for businesses to assess upstream and downstream impacts related to their operations to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

PPG's Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium (WCRC) will create and foster an exclusive group of sustainability professionals to collaboratively engage, exchange learnings, share best practices and new technologies related to water and climate resilience and strategize solutions to shared challenges. The consortium will highlight the value of assessing existing natural assets and ecosystem services on IC&I properties and integrating these into business asset management planning. In addition, the consortium will highlight Low-Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure (GI) as sustainable solutions to reduce stormwater runoff, mitigate flood risk, enhance vegetative cover & biodiversity, reduce impacts of extreme heat, and build climate resilience.

LID are decentralized practices that promote increased evapotranspiration, infiltration and groundwater recharge, and lower surface runoff volumes and flow rates. GI uses vegetation, soil, and natural processes like green roofs, porous pavement, bioswales and berms, rain gardens, urban tree canopy etc., to manage water and create healthier urban environments.

Education, demonstration projects and incentives are necessary to encourage climate change adaptation and support resilient stormwater management systems. The WCRC will address awareness building on best practices and provide support to businesses to implement LID/GI solutions on their property. The WCRC will also be responding to the disconnect between climate resiliency as an increasingly important corporate ESG (Environmental Social Governance) and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) criteria and low corporate involvement in stormwater management projects. The WCRC will demonstrate how biodiversity regeneration and LID/GI are intrinsically linked with climate adaptation, therefore promoting the overall benefits of nature-centred solutions in ways that closely align with business goals.

For businesses, LID/GI can improve climate resiliency in different ways including managing flood risk, reducing impacts of extreme heat, and lowering building water and energy demand. These solutions also offer a host of co-benefits such as carbon sequestration, improving wildlife habitat, place-making for employees, and opportunities for new community collaborations (stormwater offsets, stewardship/maintenance programs, co-op opportunities, etc.).

Objectives

- To create and empower an exclusive group of sustainability professionals promoting leadership and collaboration.
- To share knowledge on benefits of natural assets, LID/GI best practices and new technologies for mitigating flood risk and impacts of extreme heat and build climate resilience.
- To provide technical guidance and facilitate actions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- To facilitate collective projects among the members of the consortium.

Target Audience

The Consortium is ideal for businesses that own or lease a property with sizeable outdoor space. This could include:

- Property managers (commercial & multi residential)
- Municipalities
- Industrial manufacturers

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- Institutional facilities
- Business owners

Proposed Outcomes

- Develop, facilitate, and demonstrate a consortium model to advance LID/GI as sustainable solutions to build climate resilience and promote collaboration among the IC&I sector.
- Educate consortium members on prevalent impacts and risks of climate change to IC&I sector in the GTA (flooding and extreme heat) and on inventory of natural assets and ecosystems services on their properties and integrate them into business asset management planning.
- Provide members with the knowledge and technical guidance required to install appropriate LID/GI measures to improve on-site climate resiliency, including access to incentives and funding opportunities and service providers.
- Measure and report the impacts of the LID/GI solutions implemented by the consortium members.
- Identify and facilitate collective projects that collaboratively enhance resilience to flood risk and extreme heat, using LID/GI solutions.
- Increase uptake in municipal stormwater credit programs.
- Facilitate new partnerships between the IC&I sector and community through on-site educational tours of completed projects, maintenance/training programs and sponsoring smaller/flagship projects on adjacent community properties.

Potential Partners

- Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP)/TRCA
- Municipalities - Region of Peel, York Region, City of Toronto
- Restoration & Resource Management/TRCA
- Sustainable Neighbourhoods Action Program (SNAP)/TRCA

In 2022, PPG is working on projects in collaboration with different partners that will strengthen the Water and Climate Resiliency Consortium design and promotion including:

- Greening Corporate Grounds (GCG) pilot project in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation to bring the GCG program to two businesses in the TRCA jurisdiction of the City of Mississauga. GCG provides businesses with a free Sustainable Landscaping Assessment and Action Plan to help them identify opportunities to reduce their stormwater charge, decrease flood risk, lower conventional landscaping costs, and achieve sustainability goals, like creating healthy habitat for pollinators, birds, and other local wildlife. Participating businesses must be members of PPG. Through this pilot, PPG will explore funding opportunities to bring the GCG to more businesses across the TRCA jurisdiction.
- Education and Awareness Initiative for Flood Risk Mitigation on IC&I & Multi-Residential Properties in partnership with Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP), Credit Valley Conservation, and the City of Mississauga (funding dependent), promoting LID/GI solutions for managing flood risk. The project aims to foster broader uptake of LID/GI solutions to mitigate flood risk on IC&I and Multi-Residential properties, that have historically been overlooked. If successful, in Q3 of 2022, PPG will engage with 100+ ICI property owners in various sectors to better understand barriers to/opportunities for LID/GI uptake.

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Relationship to Building the Living City, the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan

This report supports the following strategies set forth in the TRCA 2013-2022 Strategic Plan:

Strategy 1 – Green the Toronto region’s economy

Strategy 2 – Manage our regional water resources for current and future generations

Strategy 4 – Create complete communities that integrate nature and the built environment

Strategy 12 – Facilitate a region-wide approach to sustainability

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

PPG is actively seeking funding to develop and deliver the Consortium, with an aim to launch in the fall of 2022. We are in discussions with Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to evaluate a pilot project application. Sponsorship opportunities will also be pursued.

When funding is secured, the WCRC program will be designed starting with a communication strategy and outreach plan. Partnerships will be developed with key stakeholders for expertise, and guidance on design. At least 5 founding members will be secured at the launch of the Consortium. Staff will keep the Committee apprised of developments.

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