

Section II – Items for Executive Action

TO: Chair and Members of the Executive Committee
Meeting #7/18, Friday, September 07, 2018

FROM: Chandra Sharma, Director, Watershed Strategies

RE: **YORK REGION CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

KEY ISSUE

TRCA staff that support The Ontario Climate Consortium (OCC) Secretariat, a consortium hosted at the TRCA, has been requested by York Region staff to develop York Region's Climate Change Action and Implementation Plans in support of their climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives into 2019.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Ontario Climate Consortium (OCC), a partnership program founded by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) and York University, and supported by several academic institutions, has been involved in leading collaborative action on climate change since 2011, working closely with conservation authorities, government agencies, municipal partners, academic institutions, private sector and non-government organizations;

AND WHEREAS OCC and TRCA has been supporting the Regional Municipality of York since 2014 with their climate change initiatives and have recently been requested by York Region staff to support the development of their Climate Change Action Plan;

THEREFORE IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT TRCA staff, performing work in support of OCC, be authorized to enter into an agreement between York Region and TRCA to support the Region with the development of a climate change action plan, which will encompass mitigation and adaptation initiatives from both a municipal corporate and community-wide perspective;

AND FURTHER THAT authorized TRCA officials be directed to take such action as is necessary to implement this work including the signing and execution of a contract, documents, and or service agreements between TRCA and York Region related to the above.

BACKGROUND

Overview of the Ontario Climate Consortium (OCC)

The OCC is a coordinated network of academia, public and private sectors in Ontario founded by TRCA and York University in 2011. Collectively, the OCC responds to the challenges of a changing climate through collaboration that brings flexibility, scalable capacity, academic expertise, and an end-user driven approach. Anchoring the network is the OCC Secretariat made up of TRCA staff with deep networks in communities of research, policy and practice as well as subject matter expertise across the mitigation/adaptation spectrum. The Secretariat's primary roles are to:

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1. Facilitate interdisciplinary and multi-sector partnerships that develop knowledge; and
2. Translate and mobilize that knowledge to OCC's local and regional partners to support climate action.
3. Provide unique project management services in an academic/policy/practice collaborative context to ensure effective implementation and dissemination of outputs from partnerships.

OCC's mission and mandate is to support the transition to low carbon, climate resilient communities in Ontario through the generation and mobilization of knowledge that enables effective climate change action. OCC actively collaborates with municipal partners, academics and Conservation Ontario (a current member of OCC's Governing Council) to facilitate collaboration with other Conservation Authorities as needed. In all activities, OCC strives to support the development and implementation of evidence-informed climate change policy and innovative practices while aiming to improve the degree of consistent application of best practices and knowledge.

Overview of Climate Change Activities with TRCA's Municipal Partners

In the TRCA Jurisdiction, OCC has led and/or supported numerous partnership projects in support of municipal partners, including but not limited to:

- Completion of climate change vulnerability assessments on natural systems, agriculture, community services and assets, and the stormwater system in the Region of Peel and City of Vaughan;
- Provision of climate projections and information to municipal partners, including York Region, the Region of Peel, Town of Caledon and City of Mississauga;
- Engagement of municipal partner staff to raise awareness, build capacity and to discuss climate change risk to municipal services (City of Mississauga, Region of Peel, York Region, Town of Richmond Hill);
- Support to Durham Region in the evaluation of natural heritage policies and plans in light of climate change, and in scoping vulnerability analyses and mapping for road segments.
- Developing GIS-based assessments of renewable energy generation potential at the Regional scale in York and Peel regions
- Providing guidance on the incorporation of climate change issues into Official Plans, and related land use planning policies.

Summary of Previous Climate Change Activities in Support of York Region

Since 2014, OCC and TRCA have been supporting York Region on initiatives related to climate change from both a mitigation and adaptation perspective. This partnership between staff began when OCC leveraged funding and expertise from their network - namely the Great Lakes Integrated Sciences and Assessment (GLISA) organization based out of Michigan. This funding was used to develop high quality, comprehensive climate trends (historically) and future projections specific to York Region.

In 2015 and 2016, a vulnerability assessment framework for York Region was developed. More specifically, climate data and projections that were developed were illustrated and used in an updated, more refined Risk Assessment Tool licensed from the City of Toronto. This tool spurred the completion of a vulnerability and risk assessment case study in the City of Vaughan within York Region, which has produced excellent lessons learned and findings now being shared across our jurisdiction and beyond.

TRCA's partnership with York Region on climate change has also involved staff training and capacity building efforts. More recently, staff have been involved in discussions and initiatives

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related to climate change planning in York Region. In 2017, a “scoping workshop” was hosted to convene senior staff from the internal climate change working group at the Region to brainstorm, refine (1) vulnerability assessment systems/sectors of interest to the Region, (2) the level of detail that may be needed to assess vulnerability, and (3) to produce a “road map” that illustrate key components of climate action planning based on lessons learned from other municipalities. In early 2018, staff collaborated to undertake a “rapid corporate climate change risk assessment”. This has involved engaging staff across all departments in the Region to discuss how climate change may pose risks to their services, to prioritize these risks, and to confirm areas or systems that may require vulnerability assessments to be undertaken. Staff also collaborated with York Region municipalities on funding applications, most recently securing FCM Municipal Climate Innovation Program (MCIP) funding to enable a feasibility study of Local Improvement Charges (LICs) to enable existing building retrofits in the City of Vaughan and York Region. LICs are a financial mechanism that can be used by municipalities and/or property owners that are paid in addition to municipal taxes for a specific purpose - typically to implement improvement projects such as renewable energy improvements. This project will undertake research and seek to develop the policy and business case for the use of LICs in the context of Vaughan and York Region.

RATIONALE

A number of climate change related policies, plans and strategies are in development or are being scoped among TRCA’s partner municipalities. Peel Region, for example, has been leading climate change initiatives for many years and has established the Peel Climate Change Strategy (2011), the Peel Climate Change Community Partnership which includes representatives from the Region, lower tier municipalities and CAs. e. Similarly, Durham Region released a community climate adaptation plan (2016) through the work of numerous working groups over the past few years, in which TRCA participated in scoping and developing content. Durham Region is also developing a Regional Community Energy Plan. The City of Toronto is in the process of developing a Resilience Framework through funding received from the Rockefeller Foundation, and has numerous other climate-related policies and plans (e.g., TransformTO). TRCA staff from OCC Secretariat, Sustainability Technologies Evaluation Program (STEP), Research and Knowledge Management, Watersheds, and Engineering Services, continue to actively participate in these initiatives, providing project management and subject matter expertise as needed. Lower tier municipalities are similarly moving towards developing plans and policies to address climate change mitigation and/or adaptation corporately and for their communities. Notable municipalities in this space at present include the City of Mississauga, City of Brampton, Town of Caledon, City of Vaughan, Town of Richmond Hill, Town of Ajax, among others. While specific methods and approaches are not necessarily consistent, opportunities exist for TRCA staff to support partner municipalities in these initiatives to bring alignment at a regional scale and apply tried and tested evidence- based information and approaches. Furthermore, there is opportunity for TRCA to support Regional climate change initiatives emerging from these policies and plans once they have been completed or when they require updating (e.g., implementing actions within York Region’s plan, or supporting Regional municipalities in the update of their Official Plans as appropriate, which are required to be reviewed and updated every five years as per the *Planning Act*).

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Funding associated with the completion of this scope of work would be provided by York Region to TRCA (approximately \$145,000 before taxes) in a fee-for-service contract to support staff time spent on this project. Staff in Corporate Services at TRCA will review and approve the service level agreement drafted for this scope of work subject to Board Authority approval of this item.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Information that would be developed as part of the climate change action plan would allow York Region to establish short term, medium term and longer term climate change priorities, with a lens specifically on feasibility and implementation in collaboration with lower tier municipalities and CA partners. The scope of work to develop a climate change action plan is estimated to take approximately one year to complete. Opportunities also exist to leverage other TRCA staff expertise to deliver on key project milestones. Major deliverables and milestones associated with the scope are meant to dovetail among a series of other York Region-led initiatives (e.g., a community energy plan, Regional Official Plan Amendment, York Public Health vulnerability assessment, etc.):

Current State Analysis

- Assess and analyze current climate change practices, including benchmarking across York region lower-tier municipalities and other peer jurisdictions;
- Identify gaps in policy or areas for future research, data or information needs;
- Conduct a Gap Analysis of national, provincial, regional and local policy and programs related to climate mitigation and adaptation;
- Develop a Red-Amber-Green (RAG) analysis to assess the progress by the Region and its lower tier municipalities;
- Targeted interviews with other peer and international municipal jurisdictions to assess best practices; and
- Prepare a current state report/discussion paper for the Region.

Community Climate Change Risks and Opportunity Scan

- Engaging community leaders to conduct a “community climate change risk and opportunity scan” to inform high level content within the action plan; and
- Facilitation of workshop sessions among community stakeholders for input.

Plan Development

- Hosting workshops among York Region staff to prioritize and refine draft content; and
- Developing a climate change action plan and an implementation plan for the Region.

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