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

TO: Co-Chairs and Members of the Partners in Project Green Executive Management Committee
Meeting #2/20, Tuesday, September 22, 2020

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: **SEPTEMBER UPDATE ON PPG PROGRAMMING DURING COVID-19**

KEY ISSUE

Overview of updates to programming and delivery formats in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS at Meeting #6/08, the TRCA Board of Directors approved the establishment of the Partners in Project Green Executive Management Committee (“PPG EMC”) as a subcommittee of the TRCA Board of Directors;

AND WHEREAS the PPG EMC has been convened to assist businesses in the Pearson Eco-Business Zone and beyond to improve their environmental performance, retain and attract more environmentally friendly investments, and act as a catalyst for innovation with a focus on reducing environmental impacts;

AND WHEREAS the PPG EMC received during Meeting #1/20 an initial update on PPG programming during the COVID-19 pandemic;

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the following information report on the update to PPG’s programming during the COVID-19 pandemic be received.

BACKGROUND

Partners in Project Green: A Pearson Eco-Business Zone was launched in 2008 by 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 to transform the employment lands surrounding Toronto Pearson, and located within TRCA’s Etobicoke-Mimico Creeks Watershed into an internationally recognized community of eco-friendly businesses.

The creation of Partners in Project Green (PPG) stemmed from an eco-business model recommendation identified in a 2006 joint TRCA and GTAA report that provided restoration strategies for the natural and aquatic systems surrounding Toronto Pearson.

PPG’s mandate has expanded since 2006 to include the provision of numerous services to the partnership members. PPG’s 2019-2023 Strategic Refresh identifies the four primary performance areas of the partnership:

- 1) Communications & Engagement;
- 2) Waste Management;
- 3) Energy Performance & Low Carbon Transportation, and
- 4) Water Stewardship.

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Within each of these performance areas, PPG provides the following services to members:

- Providing expert advice and sustainability opportunity identification
- Facilitating collective action initiatives
- Performance tracking
- Sharing best practices and facilitating peer-to-peer learning through consortia
- Providing networking opportunities
- Accelerating innovation through network introductions, events and partnerships
- Providing members with speaking opportunities, profile & recognition through case studies, trade publication articles, the PPG website and social media posts

The size, scale and geographic scope of the partnership has also grown to include additional municipalities (such as the City of Vaughan and Town of Caledon), non-profit organizations and businesses. Currently, the PPG network includes 82 members, including seven municipalities, nine non-profit organizations and 66 businesses.

In order to continue to achieve PPG's strategic priorities and deliver its programming in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, PPG needs to shift programming in two specific ways: 1) altering programming delivery venues and formats in accordance with Public Health Ontario's requirements and recommendations, and 2) updating programming and content to reflect the changes to the workplace that have already occurred for many PPG members and workers throughout Ontario.

To address the needs of PPG's program stakeholders while adhering to Public Health Ontario's directives, TRCA staff identified the following specific actions and programming updates (provided to the PPG EMC during Meeting #1/20 in June 2020):

- Convert PPG programming events (such as webinars, conferences, workshops, and stakeholder meetings) to virtual formats to allow sufficient physical distancing;
- Promote TRCA's at-home focused content (such as TRCA's e-Learning program, "At Home With Nature") throughout the PPG network;
- Launch a monthly webinar series, allowing PPG members to continue professional development activities in remote work arrangements;
- Continue to deliver programming and services which intrinsically allow for appropriate physical distancing, such as PPG's "Material Exchange" program;
- Develop specific programming content to address the new realities of work for many PPG stakeholders, and allow participating organizations to foster employee engagement at a time when in-person interaction is discouraged;
 - Specifically, provide content in the *People Power Challenge* program focused on implementing sustainability in a work-from-home environment;
 - Update the *People Power Challenge* content to reduce administrative requirements, allowing more time for participants to manage workload and family care requirements, and
- Continue to monitor Public Health Ontario's directives and adjust programming, content and format as required.

The above activities are intended to increase the relevance and reach of PPG's programming while ensuring that PPG stakeholders' safety is prioritized.

RATIONALE

Further updates related to each of the facets identified above are provided in this section:

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- *Convert PPG programming events (such as webinars, conferences, workshops, and stakeholder meetings) to virtual formats to allow sufficient physical distancing;*
 - The PPG team has successfully converted all events and programs to virtual formats and continues to explore opportunities for safe and practical in-person engagement, where appropriate..
- *Promote TRCA's at-home focused content (such as TRCA's e-Learning program, "At Home With Nature") throughout the PPG network;*
 - The PPG team has continued to promote TRCA's at-home focused content through our communications channels and event content.
 - The PPG team has also produced at-home focused content as part of the revamp and launch of the People Power Challenge (see dedicated section below).
- *Launch a monthly webinar series, allowing PPG members to continue professional development activities in remote work arrangements;*
 - The Green Economy Webinar Series was successfully launched in 2020, and has included the following topics and dates:
 - The Business Case for Natural Infrastructure (May 27, 2020)
 - Sustainability Reporting: Escaping Acronyms and Rear-View Mirror Reports (June 24, 2020)
 - Innovative Business Solutions to Combat Food Waste and Insecurity (July 29, 2020)
 - Creating a Resilient Sustainability Strategy and Lessons from COVID-19 (August 27, 2020)
 - In addition, the following future webinars are planned:
 - Microplastic Diversion: Sharing Two Pilot Study Successes (September 24, 2020)
 - Energy Monitoring Technologies and Resulting Cost Savings (October 29, 2020)
- *Continue to deliver programming and services which intrinsically allow for appropriate physical distancing, such as PPG's "Material Exchange" program;*
 - The PPG Material Exchange program is designed to allow GTA organizations to identify surplus materials and make use of the PPG network to ensure those materials are not sent to landfill, thereby reducing costs and associated land/air/water pollution.
 - Recently, Connie Choy (PPG's Waste Coordinator) coordinated a 25-tonne circular economy material exchange between a major multinational restaurant business and 16 local schools and non-profit organizations. Diverting over 50 skids of scholastic material from landfill and providing over 25 tonnes of useful materials to York Region and Peel Region children through the receiving organizations.
- *Develop specific programming content to address the new realities of work for many PPG stakeholders, and allow participating organizations to foster employee engagement at a time when in-person interaction is discouraged;*
 - The PPG team has re-vamped the People Power Challenge format, including off-the-shelf webinars which are now available to participants (in lieu of the former in-person training sessions) in the areas of waste management, water stewardship, electric transportation, and Ontario's energy landscape.
 - The People Power Challenge scorecard and activities have been revamped to include alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, as

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well as a series of dedicated 'sustainability at home' actions that participants can leverage during office closures.

- *Continue to monitor Public Health Ontario's directives and adjust programming, content and format as required.*
 - The PPG team has continued to monitor public health directives and adjusted programming and event format, in collaboration with TRCA's Human Resources and Risk teams.

In addition to the above facets identified during PPG EMC Meeting #1/20, the PPG team has also identified a potential need for outreach and awareness programming related to any forthcoming government programs, as they are released, designed to support a 'green' economic recovery. Partners in Project Green can continue to act as a facilitator, convening policy makers and the business community, and can also continue to provide the business community with best practices and resources to support sustainable business growth during the recovery. Specifically, the PPG team can provide useful insights to businesses about how best to take advantage of any available programs and provide implementation support as well. Given this opportunity, the PPG team is currently considering methods of achieving these goals and better engaging with policy makers.

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 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

Strategy 8 – Gather and share the best sustainability knowledge

Strategy 9 – Measure performance

Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation

Strategy 12 – Facilitate a region-wide approach to sustainability

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

At upcoming PPG Executive Management Committee meetings, staff will provide detailed reports and updates related to the evolution of PPG's programming and formats, ensuring delivery of program outcomes while acting in accordance with public health directives related to pandemic spread.

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