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

TO: Co-Chair and Members of the Partners in Project Green Executive Management Committee
Meeting #3/20, Tuesday, November 17, 2020

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

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

KEY ISSUE

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

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

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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 73 members, including seven municipalities, nine non-profit organizations and 57 businesses.

In order to continue to achieve PPG's strategic priorities and deliver its programming in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, PPG has shifted 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

In addition to the updates provided during PPG EMC Meeting #2/20, further updates related to selected action areas identified above are provided in this section:

- *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 early 2020, and has included the following topics and dates in 2020:
 - The Business Case for Natural Infrastructure (May 27, 2020)
 - Sustainability Reporting: Escaping Acronyms and Rear-View Mirror Reports (June 24, 2020)

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- 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)
- Microplastic Diversion: Sharing Two Pilot Study Successes (September 24, 2020)
- Energy Monitoring Technologies and Resulting Cost Savings (October 29, 2020)
- Additional Green Economy Webinar Series events are currently being planned for early 2021.
- *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, PPG staff coordinated a material exchange of over 600 kg of furniture and other materials between SickKids Hospital in Toronto and four local organizations, preventing a substantial addition to local landfills and the creation of up to 1,200 kg of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions from landfill gas.
- *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 successfully delivered the People Power Challenge (PPC) program (August 1, 2020 – October 31, 2020) including and has revamped the 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 well as a series of dedicated 'sustainability at home' actions that participants can leverage during office closures.
 - The PPC engaged five organizations with a total of 5,792 employees, featuring multiple events such as an interactive virtual workshop with the Ryerson University Leadership Lab, "How to Talk About Climate Change". The event provided helpful language, techniques and communication best practices based on empirical findings in human psychology and climate change understanding. Additional events included an awareness-raising virtual screening of multiple sustainability-related documentaries and a waste auditing workshop with the University of Toronto's Trash Team.
- *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.

Legislator Fireside Chat Event

In addition to the action areas identified above, the PPG EMC also identified a need for outreach and awareness programming related to any forthcoming government programs, as they are released, designed to support a 'green' economic recovery. To meet this need, Partners in Project Green is well positioned to act as a facilitator to provide the business

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community with best practices and resources to support sustainable business growth during the COVID-19 economic recovery, convening policy makers and the business community as programs and opportunities arise. Specifically, PPG can provide useful insights to businesses about how best to take advantage of any available programs that support recovery while advancing sustainability performance and provide implementation support as well, including engaging senior levels of government as necessary. To this end, PPG will be hosting a Legislator Fireside Chat event on November 30, 2020, including an interview and Q&A event with MP Francesco Sorbara, Member of Parliament for Vaughan-Woodbridge and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue. MP Sorbara will answer questions from local businesses and bring remarks on behalf of the Government of Canada as part of the event program.

Water Stewardship Roundtable Event

Following the COVID-19 shutdown of multiple municipal water stewardship audit programs (such as the Region of Peel's WaterSmartPeel Indoor Water Assessment program), PPG staff identified a need to develop targeted programming to assist local businesses in pursuing water efficiency and water stewardship programs. Following consultations with these municipalities, PPG will be hosting an invite-only Water Stewardship Roundtable on November 25. The focus of this discussion is to uncover priorities and challenges shared by multiple local businesses related to on-site stormwater management, process water use and wastewater footprint reduction, and collaboratively identify potential water stewardship projects which are viable despite municipal programming changes.

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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