

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, March 26, 2021 Meeting

FROM: Anil Wijesooriya, Director, Restoration and Infrastructure

RE: **UPDATE ON PLANNED SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS WEST INDIVIDUAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

KEY ISSUE

Update on the status of the Scarborough Bluffs West Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) and proposed next steps with the City of Toronto and senior levels of government to confirm funding to proceed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WHEREAS Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), in partnership with the City of Toronto, plans to undertake an Individual Environmental Assessment (IEA) to create a system of greenspaces along the Lake Ontario shoreline between R. C. Harris Water Treatment Plant and Bluffer's Park that will respect and protect the significant natural and cultural features of the Bluffs, enhance the terrestrial and aquatic habitat, and provide a safe and enjoyable waterfront experience so as to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Future of Toronto's Waterfront;

WHEREAS Toronto City Council approved, through the Capital Budget, a \$2 million Toronto Water Capital Reserve contribution towards the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA;

WHEREAS based on estimated costs to conduct the IEA and expenditures to date on monitoring, a gap in funding of \$2,911,375 currently exists to allow for the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA to be initiated and completed within the next three years;

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT staff meet with relevant City of Toronto staff to confirm that baseline monitoring can continue in 2021 using existing funds;

AND THAT staff meet with relevant City of Toronto staff, and representatives of senior levels of government to report back on the status of funding to advance the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA by Q3 of 2021.

BACKGROUND

The 1991 Royal Commission on the Future of Toronto's Waterfront included several recommendations for the Scarborough shoreline. A key recommendation was the development of a waterfront trail in Scarborough as part of the Regional Greenway. TRCA, in partnership with the City of Toronto, initiated an IEA for the first phase of Scarborough Waterfront Project (eastern section) in 2014 under the *Environmental Assessment Act* to advance the vision for a system of public greenspaces along the Lake Ontario shoreline between Bluffer's Park and East Point Park, which respect and protect the significant natural and cultural features of the Bluffs, enhance terrestrial and aquatic habitat, and provide a safe and enjoyable waterfront experience. On November 6, 2019 TRCA received approval for the Scarborough Waterfront IEA from the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks (formerly Ministry of Environment and

Item 8.3

Climate Change). Detailed design for the Brimley Road access to Bluffer's Park and the west shoreline is currently being undertaken by TRCA in partnership with the City of Toronto.

While the Scarborough Waterfront Project (eastern section) was underway, at City Council Meeting #11 on December 9 and 10, 2015, Resolution EX10.23 was passed. This resolution directed City Council, through the Capital Budget, to include a \$2 million contribution from the Toronto Water Capital Reserve towards the initiation of an IEA for the western section of the Scarborough shoreline (R.C. Harris Water Treatment Plant to Bluffer's Park) cash flowed over the life of the project. This project is currently referred to as the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA. To eliminate potential public confusion and recognizing increasing costs due to public concerns with the IEA for the eastern section that was underway at that time, a mutual decision between TRCA and the City of Toronto was made to delay formal initiation of the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA until the planning and consultation process for the eastern IEA was complete.

To best position the launch of the future Scarborough Bluff West IEA, baseline studies and environmental monitoring in support of the project were completed between 2016 and 2020. This includes terrestrial and aquatic ecology surveys, coastal condition studies, and terrestrial and marine archaeology studies. In order to inform the future IEA, TRCA staff would like to confirm that we can continue these baseline studies and environmental monitoring work while we engage in funding discussions with appropriate City of Toronto divisions and senior levels of government.

RATIONALE

When the Scarborough Waterfront Project IEA (eastern section) was approved by the Minister of MECP TRCA re-initiated discussions with the City of Toronto, including with Toronto Water, to confirm funding and other details to advance the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA. The City Council allocation of \$2 million for the IEA was not based on a detailed workplan, and is inadequate to complete the planning process. In addition, funds from the \$2 million allocation were required to address and resolve significant public and private landowners concerns to obtain approval for the eastern IEA. Draft budgets and workplans informed by the eastern IEA process indicate that \$3.5 million will be needed to formally initiate and successfully complete the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA. Confirmation of the planning process under the recently updated *Environmental Assessment Act* and a competitive process for required external expertise will further refine this budget.

COVID-19 has significantly increased budget pressures across all divisions of the City of Toronto. However, COVID-19 has also increased use of Lake Ontario waterfront parks and greenspaces across the City in general. TRCA continues to receive inquiries from stakeholders and members of the public requesting access improvements to the shoreline west of Bluffer's Park. In January 2021, the Toronto Lakefront Community group prepared an access and signage report for Councillors Bradford and Crawford outlining some of the Fallingbrook community's concerns and recommendations. A safer shoreline trail connection in this area has also been a long-standing high priority for the Waterfront Regeneration Trust and their signature Great Lakes Waterfront Trail initiative, that is also a key element of TRCA's Board endorsed Trail Strategy for the Greater Toronto Region. The City of Toronto has, along with 155 communities along the Great Lakes, committed to establishing the Great Lakes Waterfront Trail.

Recently, TRCA has experienced success in partnering with the City of Toronto and with other municipalities in our jurisdiction to secure limited amounts of senior government funds for shoreline projects through the Federal Disaster Mitigation Adaptation Fund, and the National Disaster Mitigation Program. Technical feasibility and consultation with the public, stakeholders,

Item 8.3

and Indigenous communities are all elements that are accomplished or furthered through an Environmental Assessment process. Bringing projects like Scarborough Bluffs West to a 'shovel ready' state via Environmental Assessment Act approvals has been an important success factor in leveraging senior government investments for TRCA and partner municipalities. Therefore, TRCA generally recommends advancing environmental assessments' where funding can be found considering other government pressures and priorities.

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

Strategy 3 – Rethink greenspace to maximize its value

Strategy 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

FINANCIAL DETAILS

City Council previously authorized \$2 million for the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA supported by funding from the City of Toronto through the Toronto Water division. To date \$1,411,375 has been spent from the \$2 million allocation to advance the eastern IEA to successful completion and to conduct necessary baseline conditions and monitoring work for the west section, leaving \$588,625 remaining. It is anticipated that the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA would cost approximately \$3.5 million from launch to completion over a period of three or more years, based on TRCA and the City's experience with the eastern Scarborough Waterfront Project IEA. As a result, a gap of \$2,911,375 in funding to initiate and complete this project currently exists. This project has been included on the unmet needs list for the City of Toronto capital budget since 2016.

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

TRCA staff will continue to engage the City of Toronto staff and senior levels of government in discussions towards securing a multi-year funding commitment of \$3.5 million to formally initiate the Scarborough Bluffs West IEA. TRCA will also seek confirmation that we can continue to utilize the previous allocation for baseline fisheries monitoring in 2021 to best position the project for a future launch. An update on the status of this IEA will be brought to the Board of Directors after further discussions on cost sharing occur involving all levels of government.

Report prepared by: Lisa Turnbull, extension 5645

Emails: lisa.turnbull@trca.ca

For Information contact: Lisa Turnbull, extension 5645

Emails: lisa.turnbull@trca.ca

Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: Scarborough Waterfront Project and Scarborough Bluffs West Study Area