

Section III – Items for the Information of the Board

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Directors
Friday, April 30, 2021 Meeting

FROM: Darryl Gray, Director, Education and Training

RE: **PARTNERS IN PROJECT GREEN MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE UPDATE**

KEY ISSUE

Partners in Project Green (PPG) has been operating with its current membership structure since 2015. In order to meet the needs of our community and increase financial sustainability, revisions to the membership structure and value proposition are required.

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS Partners in Project Green was launched in 2008 to advance the adoption of sustainability practices within the Pearson Airport economic zone;

AND WHEREAS a Strategic Refresh to the Partners in Project Green program was completed in 2019 that affirmed objectives related to the expansion and advancement of eco-business programming and services to additional economic clusters across TRCA's nine watersheds;

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the following information report on progress updates related to revising the Partners in Project Green Membership Structure and value proposition 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 the Regional Municipalities of Peel and York, the City of Toronto 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.

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

THAT the Partners in Project Green 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.

As part of achieving those goals, PPG is working to re-energize the PPG network through

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revising the membership value proposition and improving fiscal responsibility by continuously diversifying funding sources and looking at new business models.

RATIONALE

Below is a brief history of PPG Membership and overview of opportunities for enhancement.

2008 – 2010: Membership was free. If a company had any type of engagement with PPG, they were considered a member.

2011 – 2015: Membership fees were nominal and referred to as subscription fees. In 2011, subscription fees generated \$1,600. Targets were also low, starting at \$5,000 in 2011 and moving to \$15,000 in 2013.

2015 – 2020: The current Membership program was created, with fees from \$350 - \$2,550. From 2015 – 2020, the average number of members has been 89, though in 2020 there were 67. This was due in part to the impacts of COVID on member businesses, but also highlighted the opportunity to enhance value. Revenue generation has also declined; from a high of \$94,500 in 2016 to a low of \$27,000 in 2020. This was due in part to declining membership rates, as well as an increase in complimentary memberships.

In the past, membership was seen as a program offering of PPG. It is recommended that membership now be viewed as the key access point to PPG and its network, resources, knowledge and expertise, and select programs. Membership then becomes a funnel point to drive program participation and create funding partner relationships.

This Membership Structure update allows us to course correct while also providing an opportunity to enhance collaboration and alignment across TRCA teams. Offerings from Kortright Centre for Conservation, Blackcreek Pioneer Village, Community Learning, Sustainable Technologies Evaluation Program, and others will be added to the suit of membership benefits to provide promotion for these programs while providing value to PPG members. These partnerships can be expanded and built upon as the program grows.

Summary of major changes:

- **Membership will be required to access the majority of PPG content.** In order to allow certain resources to act as promotional offerings, such as White Papers and Green Economy Webinars, those resources will be made public for a limited time and then locked for member only access. Where agreements exist that require public access to resources, every effort will be made to include a member only feature.
- **Member benefits will be substantially expanded.** PPG staff will provide customizable but carefully scoped consultative hours that will act as a funnel into PPG programs. Team building and staff perks from across the TRCA will be offered, such as discounts on team building activities at Kortright and Tommy Thompson, camp discounts, and others. Enhanced leadership benefits will be introduced (opportunities to serve on committees, speak at events, earn awards and the like.)
- **Member levels will be simplified, and a small increase will be applied.** In the past there were five levels of membership – Member, Ambassador, Eco-Solution Provider, Channel Member, and Founding Member (funding organizations). There will now be two: Member and Funding Member. The Ambassador level will be transitioned to an annual Awards program based on PPG contributions and environmental action. The Eco-

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Solution Provider level will be rolled into the Member level. Channel Members (organizations that provided communications benefits to PPG but do not pay fees) will no longer automatically receive Member benefits. They may join as Members or become Media Partners.

- **Four new size categories will be introduced.** Low-cost student and professional levels will be introduced. These categories will act as funnels to organizational membership. These levels will require the establishment of distinct benefits and will need to be communicated clearly. In addition, 2 – 9 and 10 -24 employee count levels have been added to reflect more accurately GTA businesses as well as to limit the impact of the price increases on our smallest members.
- **Complimentary memberships will be reduced.** This applies to Channel Members, promotional memberships, and non-funding municipalities. Region of York, Region of Peel and City of Toronto are municipalities that are Funding Members. Non-funding municipalities will be required to pay for Membership or enter into separate funding agreements, regardless of whether their upper tier municipality funds PPG.
- **Primary focus.** While there will be an increase in revenue generated through membership, the primary focus will be to utilize the membership base as a funnel to program participation and funding relationships.

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 5 – Foster sustainable citizenship

Strategy 7 – Build partnerships and new business models

Strategy 10 – Accelerate innovation

FINANCIAL DETAILS

Staff resources and funds will be drawn from account code 11635 (413-16).

DETAILS OF WORK TO BE DONE

Following finalization of the Membership Structure, the PPG website will be revised to support the new membership framework and content locking. In addition, PPG will work with IT and other TRCA groups to establish processes for managing and tracking payments, discounts, and participation in member offerings. A communications plan will be drafted, with careful attention given to how the membership structure is delivered to PPG contacts at all stages of the membership lifecycle. It is expected that the program will be launched in September 2021.

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Attachments: 1

Attachment 1: 2021 Membership Structure