



To: Chair and Members
Community and Planning Service Committee

From: Kevin Boyle
Climate Change Initiatives Coordinator

Christy Doyle
Director of Environmental and Watershed Programs

Date: November 19, 2020

Subject: A New Leaf: Muskoka's Climate Strategy

Report: CPS-12-2020-1

Recommendation

WHEREAS the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2018 Report 'Global Warming of 1.5°C' states the urgency of keeping global heating below the 1.5°C goal and also acknowledges that the world is currently on track for more than 3°C increase in temperature rise based on policies that are now in place;

AND WHEREAS this current track of climate heating will lead to catastrophic social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts in our community and elsewhere and that the IPCC estimates less than 11 years to avoid the worst impacts of climate change;

AND WHEREAS many municipalities across Ontario and Canada understand the major benefits of and the need to be at the forefront of action on climate change, with many having declared a climate emergency already;

AND WHEREAS much of the financial damage associated with climate change will come from impacts to municipal core infrastructure such as roads, bridges, water, wastewater and storm water systems and from destruction of natural infrastructure;

AND WHEREAS it is necessary not only to reduce carbon emissions, but also to increase community resiliency in the face of climate change, and that these approaches can offer multiple benefits including improved health and air quality, increased innovation, economic development and reduced costs in the long run;

AND WHEREAS many people in Muskoka have demonstrated a strong interest and commitment to address climate change and continue to make Muskoka a leader in environmental action and protection;

AND WHEREAS The District Municipality of Muskoka (the District) declared a Climate Emergency on October 19, 2020 to name and deepen the District's commitment to protecting Muskoka's economy, community, and ecosystems from the impacts of our changing climate;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the District **approve** "A New Leaf: Muskoka's Municipal Climate Strategy" to build on the District's leading climate practices to address Muskoka's changing climate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;

AND THAT the District **develop** a Climate Action Plan (CAP) to reduce corporate and community greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), which includes the identification of firm, ambitious targets with a goal of greater than 50% reduction of GHG emissions by 2030 and reaching zero GHG emissions by 2050; commit to becoming a drawdown/regenerative community, taking an active role in the repair and regeneration of our systems, including in the areas of the built environment, natural infrastructure, land use, transportation, energy, waste, health, and food security;

AND THAT the District **support and participate** in the establishment of a Community Working Group, which will provide input to the CAP and will assist in the regular review and updating of the CAP as the science evolves. The Community Working Group should be diverse and representative of the Muskoka community; be balanced according to ethnic background, geography, economic status, gender identity, age; act in partnership with Indigenous leaders; and include scientists and other key stakeholders;

AND THAT the District **collaborate** with other municipal governments, institutions and industry associations to improve standards and protocols that can positively address climate adaptation and mitigation;

AND THAT the District **seek and secure** funding opportunities from both internal and external sources for 2020 and beyond to adequately finance climate actions necessary to meet 2030 and 2050 emission reduction targets;

AND THAT the District **commits** to putting climate action at the forefront of all decision-making, large and small, working to achieve community wellbeing and resiliency, equity, reconciliation, and leaving no one behind and, by April 22, 2020, will require all future reports to council to include a section titled Climate Change Implications that will identify how the recommendations will contribute to meeting the objectives of the CAP;

AND THAT the District **work with** other community stakeholders to educate the public at large about steps that can be taken by individuals and businesses to reduce GHGs;

AND THAT the District **urge** both Provincial and Federal governments and opposition parties to work rapidly to deliver the GHG emission reductions needed to keep global heating below the 1.5C goal to minimize the life-threatening impacts of climate change, including by forwarding the resolution to the Premier of Ontario, the Ontario Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Parry Sound Muskoka representatives Hon. Norm Miller MPP and Hon. Scott Aitchison MP, and the leaders of the other political parties;

AND THAT a joint meeting **be convened** in 2021 of the Community and Planning Services, Engineering and Public Works, and Finance and Corporate Services Committees to discuss the District's detailed implementation of initiatives outlined in its Climate Strategy.

Origin

In 2019 at the direction from District Council, the District became a partner in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) Partners for Climate Protection Program (PCP), which is intended to support the District's development of the Muskoka Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP).

Given the extent of this significant issue and the range of climate-related initiatives that the District is already, or may be, undertaking to address climate action, a comprehensive and collaborative Climate Strategy, including the MCCAP, is proposed.

Over the past several months, District staff has worked closely with members of Climate Action Muskoka (CAM), a community organization concerned with climate change, to develop the proposed resolution. Following CAM's recent delegations to the Community and Planning Services Committee and to District Council, and the District's declaration of a climate emergency on October 19, 2020, District staff met with CAM members on November 13 to review the proposed resolution contained within this report. CAM expressed their support for it and agreed to continue to work in partnership with the District to ensure that meaningful climate action is undertaken across the community.

Background

Over the past several years, the District has recognized the importance of adapting to, and mitigating for, climate change and has undertaken several related initiatives.

In addition to establishing its Climate Change Initiatives Coordinator role in 2018, other key recent and related District initiatives include:

- Updating the Muskoka Official Plan (2019) to include several sets of policies that call for action on climate change (i.e. sections C3 and D20);
- Initiating a Corporate Energy Management Plan (2019) which will help increase energy efficiency and decrease emissions associated with District buildings;
- Developing a 5-Year Transportation Needs Assessment and Growth and Sustainability Plan (2020) which, in part, will look to improve public transit in the east-west corridor in Muskoka, reduce single occupancy vehicle trips and associated emissions, and increase our ridership;
- Establishing Strategic Priorities (2016) that provide direction to enhance the District's knowledge and understanding of our natural environment in order to mitigate the effects of climate change on the resiliency and biodiversity of our watershed and to reduce our environmental footprint;
- Undertaking flood plain mapping for high-risk, vulnerable areas across Muskoka to ensure appropriate emergency responses, planning processes and infrastructure

decisions. The initiative included a sensitivity-to-climate change analysis with predicted increase in flows (10-20%) to account for anticipated increases in precipitation due to climate change as noted in Muskoka Watershed Council's 2016 "Planning for Climate Change in Muskoka" report; and

- Continuing its support for the Muskoka Watershed Council and other community organizations committed to identifying and implementing effective ways to mitigate and adapt to Muskoka's changing climate.

Analysis

The need to address climate change is becoming increasingly urgent. The 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, '2018: Global Warming of 1.5°C' came out with new warnings and a more ambitious target and timeline for effectively managing our changing climate and has heightened public concern. Canada's Federal government has responded by declaring an ambitious target of reducing GHG emissions by 40% by 2025 from 2005 levels.

As a component of its Made-in-Ontario Environmental Plan (2019), the Province has also committed to conducting a risk assessment of climate change impacts. In the summer of 2020, the Province launched Ontario's first climate change impact assessment initiative to assess vulnerabilities to Ontario's natural environment, economies and communities. Once complete, this assessment and any other forthcoming provincial or federal climate-related initiatives are anticipated to be considered, and hopefully incorporated when possible, in forthcoming District climate initiatives.

Municipalities around the world, including the District, are declaring climate emergencies. These various initiatives at all levels of government are indications that the time to act in a very focused, strategic and collaborative way is now. To help the District continue to lead effectively in response to the climate crisis, to strengthen Muskoka's overall climate resiliency, and to achieve any adopted GHG reduction targets, a comprehensive climate strategy is proposed.

A New Leaf: Muskoka's Climate Strategy

A New Leaf: Muskoka's Climate Strategy is a set of integrated directions and practical actions proposed to manage and reduce Muskoka's contribution to climate change, and to prioritize adaptation goals, actions and programs to prevent or minimize the impacts of projected local climatic changes.

The proposed Climate Strategy recognizes that climate resiliency depends on effective leadership and innovative partnership. The proposed Climate Strategy builds on the District's strong history of collaboration with other governments, agencies, communities, associations, schools, organizations and others across Muskoka and beyond with vital roles in managing our changing climate. The proposed Climate Strategy is comprised of the following six components:

1. Adopting and implementing the MCCAP, outlined below and included as Appendix A;
2. Advancing the Community GHG Baseline Inventory and Reduction Plan (2020 - ongoing) as outlined in EPW staff Report [PW-10-2020-1](#) - Muskoka's Greenhouse Gas Initiatives;
3. Developing a Corporate GHG Baseline Inventory and Reduction Plan (2020 – ongoing) as outlined in EPW staff Report [PW-10-2020-1](#) Muskoka's Greenhouse Gas Initiatives;
4. Continuing existing and establishing new effective partnerships;
5. Undertaking education and outreach; and
6. Seeking and securing funding sources.

Through this proposed Climate Strategy, the District will continue to foster partnerships, including its ongoing ones, with all levels of government including the Federal Government, the Province, and the Area Municipalities. Collaboration with agencies (i.e. the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit), organizations including Muskoka Watershed Council and the Muskoka Steamships and Discovery Centre, Climate Action Muskoka, service clubs and community/lake associations, and many others, will also continue to exchange knowledge, ideas, and data and to optimize opportunities intended to strengthen Muskoka's climate resiliency. Other crucial partnerships may include those with local utility and transportation companies, academia and school boards, and others where possible to advance broad-based climate initiatives.

Certainly, the community-at-large and individuals also have critical roles and responsibilities in adapting to and mitigating Muskoka's climate changes. The District may continue to collaborate with partners, stakeholders, community members, and those that are particularly vulnerable to climate change such as children, seniors, and people with pre-existing health conditions, and to ensure that Muskoka is an inclusive, healthy, and climate-resilient community. Through its proposed Climate Strategy, the District may identify opportunities for new partnerships which may expand and enhance the District's climate initiatives. Educational programs, a long-standing foundation of the District's effective environmental outreach, are proposed to be continued and expanded where possible.

Of course, the municipal government world is a rapidly changing environment. Shifts in Federal and/or Provincial politics can drastically alter the priorities and available funding for municipalities. Large-scale crises, such as extreme weather events or the COVID-19 pandemic, can quickly impact how governments of all levels respond and direct resources. Such changes may present challenges for the District to implement all proposed actions, but may also provide opportunities. In addition to its own allocated support for its ongoing climate-related initiatives, the District may continue to seek additional funding sources to advance climate action in Muskoka and may target funds that support the implementation of its proposed Climate Strategy.

Muskoka (Corporate) Climate Change Action Plan

The MCCAP was initiated in 2018 and is intended to be a corporate climate change adaptation and mitigation plan, with its focus being to increase the District's resilience to climatic changes. The draft MCCAP is found in Appendix A.

The MCCAP proposes 84 actions for the short-, mid-, and long-term, and includes actions that are already underway, as well as proposed actions, such as developing green and sustainable development standards, and investigating potential flood mitigation opportunities.

Proposed actions consider preliminary financial and resourcing requirements. All actions, whether underway or proposed, and whether undertaken individually or collectively with other actions, are intended to strengthen the resiliency of the District's systems and programs when confronted with extreme weather events and other anticipated climatic changes.

To achieve successful implementation of the MCCAP, collaborative short-term actions will need to be blended with a continued effort to achieve comprehensive, long-term goals. Several of the actions are already underway (such as the GHG Baseline Inventory and Reduction Plans); certain proposed actions may commence or become fully implemented in the short-term (1-2 years), while others may be considered for medium-term (3-5 years) or long-term (5+ years). Timing details related to the Climate Change Action Plan may be found on pages 35-72 within the MCCAP.

To support the ongoing implementation of the proposed Climate Strategy, staff propose that the existing Steering Committee continue to serve as a Climate Change Initiatives Implementation Committee to assist the District, through its Climate Change Initiatives Coordinator, to advance the recommended climate actions. Each department will be tasked with assessing the specific actions assigned to them, and with guidance and support from the Implementation Committee will develop a plan for delivering on proposed climate actions, individual departments will be able to best determine the resourcing (i.e., budget, time, staff capacity) required to complete each proposed action. The Implementation Committee, with support from senior leadership, will provide assistance where possible on the actions and can ensure that progress is being made on the strategies and actions.

Should Muskoka District Council approve the proposed Climate Strategy and the MCCAP, a new section is proposed in future Council and Committee staff reports that addresses climate change implications, similar to the existing 'Financial Implications' and 'Communications' sections presently found in all staff reports. If approved by District Council, the MCCAP can be shared with Area Municipalities who may use it, if desired, to inform their own climate action plans, should they wish to develop customized climate change action plans or embark on related initiatives within their jurisdictions.

Financial Considerations

Overall MCCAP financial considerations are outlined on pages 35-72 of the MCCAP report found in Appendix A. While it is challenging to determine all of the financial implications within the Climate Strategy, several projects and actions outlined within the Strategy are already underway with associated funding and/or other District resources allocated.

For instance, the corporate and community GHG initiatives are already funded through the existing budget and are expected to be continued through 2021. Additional details can be found in [EPW staff Reports](#). Other actions may be considered for inclusion in future budget years.

The other components of the Climate Strategy (i.e., continuing or establishing effective partnerships; undertaking education and outreach; and seeking and securing funding sources) are currently being delivered through existing allocations and staff resources, and not anticipated to require additional funds at this time. However, should the District approve the strategy, additional budgetary considerations may be required in the near future to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to support its successful implementation.

Notably, the federal and provincial governments, in addition to other many external funding sources including agencies and/or private or community organizations (i.e., the Federation of Canadian Municipalities'), are establishing or supporting grant opportunities that may be applicable for the District to pursue in support of its various climate actions. Grant opportunities may include those making funds available to acquire additional floodplain mapping and/or modernizing existing infrastructure, among other actions.

Communications

Should the District's MCCAP be approved, an outreach program will be undertaken. The outreach will include:

- Educating and informing the public about climate change issues and gathering input as needed;
- Providing meaningful interactive communication throughout the project's process;
- Working with interested and affected parties to ensure their concerns and aspirations are understood and considered in all stages of Strategy implementation; and
- Outreach will be conducted through Engage Muskoka, social media channels, and in-person where possible.

Area Municipalities and interested community organizations will be encouraged to participate in District communications initiatives regarding its Climate Strategy and more particularly, the implementation of the MCCAP. Eventually, Area Municipalities and/or community organizations may wish to pursue the development of their own Climate Change Action Plans and District staff is prepared to assist as needed in this regard.

The GHG inventory and reduction component of the Climate Strategy will be communicated as outlined in staff Report [PW-10-2020-1](#) - Muskoka's Greenhouse Gas Initiatives, and will be featured on Engage Muskoka, with associated public engagement strategies anticipated for Winter 2020/2021 and beyond.

The engagement approach will focus on community involvement. Involvement means that the project team will work with interested and affected parties across the community to develop a strategy that is unique to the District and responds to its local characteristics.

Strategic Priorities

Click on the icons below to view strategies under each priority area.

				
s. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5,1.6	s. 2.2, 2.3, 2.6, 2.9	s. 3.2, 3.3, 3.6,	s. 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7	s. 5.1, 5.2, 5.9

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by:

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