

Report

Report to:	Mayor and Council
Date:	June 21, 2022
Title:	Update on Implementation Strategy for the Climate Change Adaptation Plan

Recommendation(s)

1. That Council receive for information this update on the implementation strategy for the climate change adaptation plan; and further,
2. That Council refer to the 2023 budget process considerations relating to staff complement increases necessary to support ongoing efforts to lead and deliver climate change initiatives; and further,
3. That Council authorize the CAO to exercise delegated authority to enter into partnership(s) with Local Area Municipalities, the Conservation Authority, or the Region for sharing of additional Climate Change related resources including potential staffing resources; and further,
4. That Council approve a 2023 pre-budget request in the amount of \$75,000 for the purposes of engaging a consultant to assist with completion of the implementation strategy including additional public consultation, a risk and vulnerability assessment, vetting of recommendations, cost forecasting, a best-practices review, an organizational review, and report preparation.

Executive Summary

Council is provided this report as an update on the implementation strategy corresponding to the Climate Adaptation Plan that was approved on October 26, 2021.

A total of 73 draft action items have been identified through a workshop attended by key staff members across all City departments. The action item list was subsequently circulated and reviewed by the Park in the City Committee and the Mayors Youth Advisory Committee during the Spring of 2022. Comments and feedback are summarized in this report.

Completion of a proper implementation strategy will require a more fulsome consideration of best practices, leading-edge initiatives, costs, and timeframes. This strategy should also align with the greatest needs, which have yet to be defined through a risk and vulnerability assessment. Unfortunately Staff resources do not presently have the

bandwidth nor the expertise to accomplish this in an expedited time frame. It is therefore recommended to engage external consultants to complete this plan through a 2023 pre-budget allocation of \$75,000.

If Council wishes to sustain an effort on mitigation and adaptation, it is further recommended to consider increasing corresponding staffing levels as part of the 2023 budget process.

Background

On October 26, 2021 Council received a presentation by James Sticca, Manager of Environmental Services and Dr. Jessica Blythe, Assistant Professor at Brock University's Environmental Sustainability Research Centre. This presentation outlined the collaborative approach to develop an Adaptation Plan specific to the changing environment in Niagara Falls. A corresponding Climate Adaptation was also approved by Council following this presentation.

The following five adaptation goals were expressed in the plan:

1. Increase Climate Change Literacy Amongst Staff and Public,
2. Invest in Infrastructure and Assets that are Prepared for the Impacts of Climate Change,
3. Encourage Green Methods of Transportation,
4. Create and Implement Energy Conservation Strategies for City Facilities, and
5. Mitigate Consequences of Extreme Weather, Emergency Events, and Safety Risks to the Community.

Council also directed staff to prepare a follow-up report on the implementation strategy for the plan, including considerations relating, but not limited to: organizational responsibilities, governance, budget, policy implications, and communications; and to incorporate collaboration and input from other stakeholders including the Park in the City Committee and the agriculture industry.

Analysis

In late 2021 key Staff members from all City departments participated in a Climate Change Adaptation workshop. A total of 73 draft action items have been identified, each falling into various categories and themes of the original Adaptation Plan. A copy of this draft action item list is attached to this report.

On February 9, 2022 the Director of Municipal Works/City Engineer presented the Climate Adaptation Plan and draft Implementation Strategy item list virtually at the Park in the City Committee. A similar presentation was conducted in-person on April 6, 2022 at the MacBain Community Centre to the Mayors Youth Advisory Committee.

The following is a summarization of comments received by the public and the aforementioned Committees:

- Consider having Council pass a resolution to call on OMERS to phase out its fossil fuel investments (see Kingston and Toronto examples)

- Do away with Schools in Bloom, and replace with City-led education programs in schools.
- Work with schools and support and implement youth-led campaigns to promote green decision making (recycling, compost, etc.) including improvements in schools themselves.
- Expand public outreach on climate change beyond just Earth Day.
- Improve access to public education resources at the City. One window approach.
- Explore additional tree planting opportunities - including on private property.
- Examine tree size and types to improve sustainability for long-term growth.
- Establish policies and bylaws to preserve green space and trees as part of new development.
- Focus on the larger picture with respect to development green space, and ensure connectivity between natural areas/green space/wetlands within developments.
- Beautification and tree plantings in the area of the GO station area.
- Add bike lanes and cycling lock-up facilities - particularly near transit facilities.
- Broaden the focus of the plan with respect to public transportation. This includes improvements to walkability and active transportation.
- Conduct a walkability audit and set a goal to improve accessibility.
- Implement more electric vehicle chargers - particularly downtown.
- Convert the City's fleet to electric vehicles in order to demonstrate a commitment to emission reduction.
- Consider incentivizing residents and businesses to purchase electric vehicles or install electric vehicle chargers.
- Consider alternative methods of communication beyond social media for notification of emergency heating/cooling centres, particularly geared at reaching vulnerable populations.
- Promote local food, and community gardens in the City.
- Consider geothermal solutions for publicly owned infrastructure, including exploration of district heating/cooling.

Upon review of the lengthy actions list (attached) and the initiatives above, it is clear that the level of effort needed to elevate these initiatives within the organization needs to be addressed. If Council wishes to sustain an effort on mitigation and adaptation, it is recommended to consider increasing corresponding staffing levels by hiring a Climate Change Coordinator as part of the 2023 budget process. Staff suggest as a start, to reach out to neighbouring municipalities and Niagara Parks to investigate a shared-staffing possibility.

The next steps towards completion of the implementation strategy are as follows:

1. Complete a risk and vulnerability assessment that will provide a prioritization of adaptation goals;
2. Refine the implementation plan and action item list based on best practices and municipal references elsewhere in Ontario;
3. Referencing the vulnerability assessment, assign a priority score to the various implementation initiatives;
4. Estimate realistic costs and timelines associated with initiatives;

5. Assign responsibilities to the action items;
6. Obtain public input on the draft Implementation Strategy;
7. Completion of the implementation strategy document;
8. Integration into municipal workplans and budgets;
9. Ongoing improvements, education, measurement, and updates to the strategy.

Completion of a proper implementation strategy will require a more fulsome consideration of the above next steps. Unfortunately Staff resources do not presently have the bandwidth nor the expertise to accomplish this in an expedited time frame. It is therefore recommended to engage external consultants now, to continue momentum and ultimately complete this plan by allocating an upset limit of \$75,000 coming from a 2023 pre-budget allocation.

While completion of the plan will require support and resources, Staff will nonetheless be proceeding on independently with a number of "quick wins". This includes a number of items embedded in the implementation strategy, as well as the following larger initiatives that are either already underway or for which details will be brought forth to Council at a later date:

- Electric Zamboni acquisition
- Phase 2 of Streetlight LED upgrades
- MacBain Centre and other Facility LED upgrades
- Fleet Electric Vehicle Feasibility Study
- Increasing Tree Planting funding
- Permeable Paving Trial

Operational Implications and Risk Analysis

The Climate Change Adaptation Plan that was developed through the partnership with Niagara Adapts and approved by Council in fall 2021 (see attached) has brought to light that our community will be faced with real risks and pressures in the future than ought to be considered.

Council may therefore choose its path with respect to the extent it wishes Staff to engage and initiate programs and policies dealing with both Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. Doing nothing will result in reactionary costs in the future. Acting proactively may mitigate reactionary costs, but will require an investment of both Staff time and Financial Resources.

For the aforementioned reasons, it is recommended that a Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment be included as an important next step in the development of the implementation plan.

Financial Implications/Budget Impact

Adoption of the Implementation Strategy, once completed, will result in a considerable number of action items requiring budgetary allocation. The extent of the impacts is not presently known nor calculable by Staff.

In order to complete the next steps of the Implementation Strategy including the various missing components discussed in this report (e.g. Risk and Vulnerability Assessment, best practice review, municipal and agency scan, public consultation, cost estimates) it is recommended to allocate a budget of \$75,000 for external consulting. Pre-allocation from the 2023 Capital Budget is recommended in order to move this initiative forward in a timely manner.

Strategic/Departmental Alignment

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation planning is an initiative that touches multiple departments in the City. It is therefore recommended to carefully consider proper alignment of the resources and staffing for this initiative within the Corporation.

Addressing the impacts of climate change through adaptation aligns with Council's Strategic Priorities to foster Strong and Resilient Infrastructure, and a Healthy, Safe, and Livable Community.

List of Attachments

[Implementation Plan Worksheet](#)

[MW-2021-75 Appendix 1 CNF-MW-Climate-Adaptation Plan \(October 2021\) reduced](#)

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