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Report 2025-001

Report Title: Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan

Committee Name: Public Works

Committee Meeting Date: January 6, 2025

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Council Meeting Date: January 22, 2025

Strategic Plan Priorities: Innovate for Service Excellence
 Ignite Economic Opportunity
 Foster a Thriving Community
 Propel Sustainable Growth
 Champion a Vibrant Future

Recommendation

That the Public Works Committee, having considered Report 2025-001 ‘Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan’, recommend that County Council adopt the Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan; and

Further That the Committee recommend that County Council adopt a corporate greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 65% below 2005 levels by 2030, and net zero by 2050.”

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan to County Council for their approval. The report also provides an overview of community engagement activities undertaken in order to obtain input on the draft plan.

Background

In June 2019, Northumberland County Council committed to a goal of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 30% by 2030 and 80% by 2050 as compared to 2005 levels.

In September 2023, Northumberland County adopted a Strategic Plan which set a goal to respond to the climate crisis through:

- Reducing the carbon footprint of County operations through the development of a Climate Action Plan.
- Coordinating public education campaigns and municipal emergency exercises to enhance preparedness for extreme weather events and other community emergencies.

Northumberland County is developing a Climate Action Strategy:

- **Phase one:** Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan
- **Phase two:** Adaptation and Resiliency Plan

The **first phase focuses on climate change mitigation**—reducing GHG emissions from Northumberland County operations.

The **second phase focuses on climate change adaptation**—coping with the impacts that have already occurred and those that will occur due to climate change.

On September 5, 2024, a draft of the Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan was presented to Public Works Committee for information purposes. Staff have since engaged with the community on the draft plan and have incorporated feedback into a final version for Council's consideration.

Consultations

Various County departments were engaged during the development of the plan to discuss our corporate GHG inventory and brainstorm potential actions. Once drafted, the plan was circulated to all departments for review and input.

Following the presentation of the draft plan to the Public Works Committee at their September 5, 2024 meeting, the plan was posted for public input through a survey on Join In Northumberland. Additionally, a call out was placed through an e-newsletter, press release, and Join In Northumberland for interested residents and community groups to request a meeting with County staff to provide input on the draft plan. The survey on Join In Northumberland was open from September 9 to October 18 and received 45 responses. County staff facilitated seven meetings with interested residents and community groups to discuss the draft plan. Feedback was reviewed and incorporated where deemed feasible and within the scope of the plan.

Common themes of feedback received include:

- Polarization on the level of action the County should take on climate change, ranging from the County should not act to the County should increase ambition.

- Desire to see County support for assisting local municipalities in developing corporate and community GHG inventories and sustainability or climate action plans.
- Emphasis on the importance of sharing information, resources and best practices across municipalities.
- Support for specific strategies outlined in the draft plan (landfill gas capture, waste diversion, electric vehicle charging stations, protecting green space, etc.)
- Interest to see community education on climate action from the County.
- Desire for the County to consider lifecycle environmental impacts and indirect emissions.
- Suggestions on measures more closely related to adaptation that are noted for future planning.

Legislative Authority / Risk Considerations

N/A

Discussion / Options

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Targets

Northumberland County's corporate GHG emissions come from waste management (82%), fleet and staff commuting (13%) and buildings and facilities (5%).

Corporate GHG emissions in 2023 were 27,355 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_{2e}). This is a reduction of 25% since 2005 baseline levels, when the County's corporate emissions were 36,700 tCO_{2e}. The substantial reduction in emissions is due to County programs and initiatives including:

- waste diversion programs such as the green bin program and seasonal leaf and yard waste collection;
- implementing a telecommute program for staff;
- purchasing hybrid vehicles for the fleet;
- constructing new County buildings and facilities to energy efficient standards; and
- completing energy efficiency upgrades at existing County buildings and facilities.

The provincial phase out of coal from the electricity grid also helped in reducing the County's corporate emissions.

The County is on track to meet the current GHG emissions reduction target of a 30% reduction by 2030. Emissions in 2030 are projected to be 31% below the 2005 baseline in a business-as-usual scenario. As such, it is recommended that County Council update the GHG emissions reduction target. The draft plan charts a path to reach a 65% reduction in corporate emissions by 2030 and lays the groundwork to reach net zero emissions by 2050. Net zero emissions requires that any GHG emissions produced are offset by GHG emissions removed from the atmosphere. A 65% reduction by 2030 is ambitious yet feasible should landfill gas be captured and flared at the Brighton Landfill. The federal government has proposed regulations '*Regulations Respecting the Reduction in the Release of Methane (Waste Sector)*' that could require landfills such as the Brighton Landfill to control methane emissions.

Plan Development

The plan was designed to build on the work the County has already completed to reduce waste going to landfill and improve energy efficiency, and to reflect best practices from other municipalities across Ontario. The plan was created with engagement across various County departments and refined through engagement with the community. The plan contains 21 actions across six (6) focus areas:

- waste management;
- County fleet and staff commuting;
- County buildings and facilities;
- building a culture of climate action;
- the natural environment; and
- advocacy and influence.

Implementation of the plan will occur following County Council approval. An implementation schedule is included in the plan for the direct areas of focus (focus areas 1-5). Each proposed action corresponds with a particular initiative and identifies the department(s) to implement the action, the associated timeline, and a high-level cost estimate to implement the action. These initiatives will require more detailed assessments as part of the budget planning process, including estimated capital expenditures and the operational cost savings associated with each project. Funding and partnership opportunities will be critical for implementing many of the actions outlined in the plan. Most actions recommended for the short term (next 1-2 years) are focused on building capacity across the organization and are low in cost. It is recommended that annual progress reports are created to monitor progress toward actions and targets and that the plan is updated after five years of implementation.

Financial Impact

Funding requests to complete initiatives identified within the plan will be brought forward for Council's consideration and approval as part of the budget planning process.

Member Municipality Impacts

While the plan primarily focuses on the direct operations of Northumberland County, it recommends that the County could consider assisting member municipalities with developing GHG inventories and climate action or sustainability plans as a shared service, where there is an interest.

Conclusion / Outcomes

The Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan is being presented to County Council for approval. Northumberland County is on track to reach the current corporate target of a 30% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030 from 2005 levels. It is recommended that the target is updated to a 65% reduction in corporate GHG emissions by 2030 from 2005 levels and net-zero GHG emissions by 2050.

Attachments

1. Report 2025-001 ATTACH 1 'Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan Presentation'
2. Report 2025-001 ATTACH 2 'Corporate Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reduction Plan'