

DATE: May 17, 2021

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Ian Wells, Acting Deputy City Manager

SUBJECT: Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1

ATTACHMENT(S): Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1
Climate Forward Presentation

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Council RECEIVES FOR INFORMATION the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy - Phase 1 and staff report dated May 17, 2021.
2. That Council GIVES FIRST, SECOND and THIRD READINGS to “City of Prince George Climate Action Reserve Fund Establishment Bylaw No. 9206, 2021.”

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to present the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1 (2021-2025) to Council for information. The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1 (2021-2025) sets actionable tasks that realize the objectives identified in the Climate Change Mitigation Plan and Adaptation Report to work towards meeting long-term climate action targets.

POLICY/REGULATORY ANALYSIS:

Section 188 of the *Community Charter* allows Council to establish a reserve fund, by bylaw, for a specified purpose and direct that money be placed to the credit of the reserve fund. Administration is seeking Council approval of the *City of Prince George Climate Action Reserve Fund Establishment Bylaw No. 9206, 2021* with the remaining funds from the Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program and officially form the criteria for eligible expenses in the new reserve.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1 (2021-2025) will help to realize the myPG goal to “reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change.” This 5-Year Implementation Strategy is based on the objectives of the 2020 Climate Change Mitigation Plan, which was approved by Council in May 2020, and the 2020 Climate Change Adaptation Report, which was supported by Council in March 2021.

BACKGROUND:

Council approved the 2020 Climate Change Mitigation Plan in May 2020 which sets short, medium and long-term targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation, buildings and waste. Mitigation refers to reducing activities that contribute to climate change, primarily fossil fuel use, to slow down or reduce the expected impacts of climate change.

The 2020 Climate Change Adaptation Report was supported by Council in March 2021. It contains climate projections to 2080 and identifies priority risks that Prince George expects to face due to a changing climate. Community stakeholders worked together to identify strategies to adapt to these expected climate risks and reduce vulnerabilities faced by local economic, social, physical and environmental systems.

During the development of these two high-level long-term planning documents, which involved public and stakeholder engagement, it was noted that a short-term implementation strategy was necessary to outline what tasks would be completed first, by whom and what capacity was required.

DISCUSSION:

Governments, industry leaders and scientists all agree that this decade must be a decade of climate action. The objective of the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy is to make incremental changes that keep Prince George moving forward on climate action and achieve commitments set by all levels of government and industry. Long-term goals set for 2050 may seem far away, however in order to achieve them we need to take action now. The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1 lays out achievable tasks that can be completed within the next 5 years (2021 to 2025). Additional phases will follow Phase 1 to continue moving Prince George forward on climate action to achieve long-term targets for 2050.

The actionable tasks identified for the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1 were determined through reviewing the objectives from the 2020 Climate Change Mitigation Plan and Climate Change Adaptation Report plus other City planning documents. Workshops were completed with most internal City departments where it was determined how climate actions aligned with each Department's current work plans, staff capacity and budgets and to what extent additional budget (ie. grant funding) may be required for certain projects that are not yet within the budget. The workshops were successful in determining how many climate action objectives already aligned with current and upcoming operational work plans, and that making these incremental changes is achievable.

- Most of the Actionable Tasks identified are not new priorities, and are already underway in Departmental Work Plans. Examples include:
- Implementing recommendations made in the Integrated Stormwater Management Plan;
- Evaluating options for a funding source for stormwater maintenance and upgrades;
- Updating Infrastructure Standards and Guidelines to accommodate climate change;
- Completing a Natural Asset Inventory and Valuation Study;
- Increasing efforts to expand community uptake of household emergency kits;
- Installing electric vehicle charging stations at City facilities; and,
- Developing a Downtown Renewable Energy Strategy.

Taking action on climate change has wide-ranging local benefits such as enhancing recreation and well-being, reducing City capital and operating costs, attracting investment, protecting ecosystems and increasing the longevity of our infrastructure. In addition, many of these local benefits align with what we've seen valued during the pandemic such as improved use of walking and cycling trails, protecting natural assets, reducing energy costs and improving local air quality.

The Actionable Tasks in the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy reflect real tasks that align with several other City focus areas, such as emergency response, integrated stormwater management,

reducing printer paper use and staff health and safety. The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy organizes the actions based on the City's overall four pillar planning framework:

- Social Health and Well-Being;
- Climate Action and Environmental Leadership;
- Economic Growth and Development; and,
- City Government and Infrastructure.

Progress on Phase 1 of the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy will be evaluated annually by calculating corporate greenhouse gas emissions and measuring updates on actionable tasks. These updates will be reported out through the Annual Report. Phase 2 of the Strategy will evaluate the progress of Phase 1 and set actionable tasks for 2026 to 2030.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

Departments that have been identified for each action have approved the action as written, and whether the action would fall under their existing current operational or capital budgets. Actions that do not fit within their current projected budgets and capacity have been identified as requiring grant funding. The actions were thoughtfully selected given the economic challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, plus many actions are expected to see payback and/or revenue to the City.

The Federal and Provincial Government have announced several funding opportunities intended as post-pandemic stimulus for projects related to moving forward on climate action and the City doesn't want to miss out on these opportunities. The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy demonstrates Prince George's commitment to moving forward on climate action, making the City a competitive applicant for these funding streams.

For instance, the Government of Canada's "A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy Plan" has designated funding for sustainable transportation networks, electric vehicle infrastructure, energy efficient building retrofits, tree planting programs and natural environment protection and restoration – all of which provide funding and advancement opportunities for a number of actions identified in the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy.

CLIMATE ACTION RESERVE FUND:

Since 2012, the City of Prince George has received a carbon tax refund annually from the Provincial government under the Climate Action Rebate Incentive Program, known as CARIP. This involves the City reporting on annual corporate greenhouse gas emissions and actions undertaken that demonstrate progress on climate initiatives. These monies have been informally reserved for climate action initiatives with a December 31st, 2020 balance of \$2,064,554 (uncommitted balance of \$1,957,746).

On May 11, 2021 – BC municipalities were advised by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs that 2021 would be the final year for the CARIP rebate program and that funds would be reallocated to grant programs such as UBCM and CleanBC. This means that 2021 will be the final year the City will receive its annual carbon tax rebate.

Due to this recent change and the loss of an annual funding stream, Administration is seeking approval to formally secure the existing funds for climate action through the *City of Prince George Climate Action Reserve Fund Establishment Bylaw No. 9206, 2021*. The Bylaw ensures that the Climate Action Reserve Fund, and interest earned thereon, may only be used for the purposes of climate action, as defined "costs incurred for actions on climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the City."

The existing fund balance will support actionable tasks outlined in the Climate Forward Implementation Strategy – Phase 1. However, it is also expected that actions outlined in Phase 1 and future phases will rely on operational and capital budgets, plus grant funding programs through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and CleanBC.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy streamlines goals and objectives from the 2020 Climate Change Mitigation Plan and Adaptation Report, and sets actionable tasks for the City of Prince George to be completed between 2021 and 2025. Actionable tasks were developed through internal consultation with City departments and align with current departmental work plans, capacity and budgets. Actions that are outside of current budgets would rely on grant funding opportunities to complete.

Government-funded pandemic stimulus packages for municipalities have focused on climate action projects. The Climate Forward Implementation Strategy assists the City in being a competitive applicant for these funding opportunities.

The *City of Prince George Climate Action Reserve Fund Establishment Bylaw No. 9206, 2021* officially forms criteria on the remaining funds from the CARIP rebate to be used for climate action initiatives.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Ian Wells, Acting Deputy City Manager

PREPARED BY: Andrea Byrne, Environmental Coordinator, Development Services

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: 2021-05-31