



Staff Report for Council Meeting

Date of Meeting: November 25, 2020

Report Number: SRPI.20.029

Department: Planning and Infrastructure

Division: Policy Planning

Subject: **SRPI.20.029 Proposed Climate Change Framework**

Purpose:

To obtain endorsement from Council for the Proposed Climate Change Framework.

Recommendation(s):

- a) That Staff Report SRPI.20.029 regarding the Proposed Climate Change Framework and Attachments 1 and 2 be received.
- b) That the Proposed Climate Change Framework be endorsed as the central guiding document outlining Richmond Hill's corporate approach to addressing climate change.

Contact Person:

Patrick Lee, Director of Policy Planning, phone number 905-771-2420

Maria Flores, Manager of Sustainability, phone number 905-771-5438

Julius Lindsay, Project Manager of Climate Change and Sustainable Development, phone number 905-771-9996, x3435

Report Approval:

Submitted by: Kelvin Kwan, Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

Approved by: Mary-Anne Dempster, City Manager

All reports are electronically reviewed and/or approved by the Division Director, Treasurer (as required), City Solicitor (as required), Commissioner, and City Manager. Details of the reports approval are attached.

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Background:

In June 2018, Council directed staff to develop a coordinated approach to addressing climate change (Council #C24-18, Item 13.2.4). The 'Resilient Richmond Hill' program was initiated to develop a corporate Climate Change Framework and a Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP). The goal of Resilient Richmond Hill is to mitigate climate change by lowering our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and to adapt to climate change by becoming more resilient to extreme weather conditions. The proposed Climate Change Framework is a corporate guidance document that outlines priority actions to improve the City's resiliency through our existing municipal systems. In February 2020 (Council C#04-20, Item 13.8), Council received an update report on Richmond Hill actions in response to climate emergency and unanimously passed a motion to examine ten specific directions and programs for implementation as part of the Resilient Richmond Hill mandate; some of these actions are also included in the Climate Change Framework.

How Climate Change affects Richmond Hill

The impacts of climate change continue to be felt globally and locally. In 2018, a high-level Corporate Climate Change Risk Scan was undertaken to find out how climate change affects the corporation. Top impacts include flooding from intense rainfalls, heat stress from heat waves, dangerous road conditions, power outages, and damage to trees, pipes, roads and buildings from more frequent ice storms, freeze-thaw cycles and wind storms. The consequences to our municipality include disruptions in business continuity, damage to infrastructure, staffing constraints, risks to health and safety of our workers and community, and increased financial costs. Unfortunately, as we have learned in the past year, the effects of climate change in other geographic areas can also have indirect impacts and subsequent consequences on travel, supply chains, trade, air quality, diseases and health. With this information in mind, how can Richmond Hill future-proof our city against climate change?

How Richmond Hill can Future-proof our City against Climate Change

With the help of over 100 staff from all departments, the risk scan identified how local impacts of climate change pose a risk to our municipal business functions and identified potential opportunities to adapt our programs and practices to become more resilient. Through these discussions, it also became clear that a central and coordinated approach was needed to develop Richmond Hill's climate change actions in order to meet legislative requirements, provide guidance on our municipal obligations, improve our funding eligibility, and identify opportunities to reduce our risks through mitigation and adaptation¹. Hence, the proposed corporate Climate Change Framework was developed.

¹ *Ontario's Planning Act*, Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, and O. Reg #588/17 for Municipal Asset Management Plans require municipalities to have regard to climate change considerations through Official Plan policies, life cycle analysis for assets and risk assessments.

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Summary of the Climate Change Framework:

The proposed Climate Change Framework was developed through a systems model. Workshops to develop the Framework resulted in a prioritization of actions aligned with existing functional systems in the City. This systems approach positions climate action, not as another huge task or function to be layered on top of existing activities, but as a normal part of operations and programs. The Climate Change Framework allows those involved in managing these systems to apply practical, on-the-ground climate actions that can support the City, its businesses and its residents.

The proposed Climate Change Framework will enable the City to be a leader in transitioning Richmond Hill to a low-carbon resilient future. By aligning three streams of action with our functional 'systems', the City can undertake this mission by:

- **Applying a climate change lens** to corporate governance, land use planning and asset management;
- **Creating climate change action programs** for community risk mitigation and green infrastructure; and
- **Fostering collaboration and innovation** by engaging stakeholders within and beyond City government.

As outlined in the proposed Climate Change Framework Booklet (Attachment 1) and summarized in the one-page Information Sheet (Attachment 2), priority climate change actions for each system are identified along with potential actions to address gaps and ensure coordination. A brief explanation of why and how addressing climate change is beneficial for each system is included. At the back of the booklet, relevant legislative and regulatory requirements are noted as well as existing corporate programs, plans and studies that have or will be updated to incorporate climate change considerations.

The proposed Climate Change Framework acts as an umbrella working document to guide staff operating under these systems. For example, applying a climate change lens to corporate decision making and integrated processes will allow the City to coordinate responses more efficiently and effectively as we face more frequent and severe weather events. Considering climate change resiliency in the way we manage our assets and plan our communities can help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and maintain the City's financial sustainability. Programs that enable departments to know about and reduce climate change risks to their operations and maximize the potential of our green infrastructure assets will help the City minimize liability and better adapt to climate change impacts. Last but not least, climate change engagement with the community and stakeholders will help the city leverage and encourage innovation through best practices, citizen led actions and promotion of green industries.

Furthermore, insurance requirements and funding grant eligibility are increasingly tied to a municipality's ability to demonstrate climate action and due diligence.

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Financial/Staffing/Other Implications:

There are no immediate financial or staffing implications associated with this staff report. Many of the actions identified in the Climate Change Framework require little or no cost, since they are dependent on incorporating climate change as a consideration and thinking differently about the work. Other actions that may require investment will be considered through the City's normal budgeting processes through the review and approval of specific business cases. Many of these projects can result in cost savings or avoided costs in the future through better informed practices and technology to mitigate risk.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan:

Richmond Hill's efforts to advance climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the City support the Strategic Plan's goal of *wise management of resources* and *better choices*. By promoting initiatives that reduce GHG emissions, Richmond Hill's climate change mandate encourages the planning of energy efficient buildings, renewable energy, water conservation and low emission vehicles. As a co-benefit, it also supports the creation of improved live-work balance and quality of life through the planning of sustainable, low carbon communities with access to sustainable transportation alternatives, greenspace and a healthy urban canopy. Likewise, proposed initiatives to increase resiliency against the impacts of climate change demonstrate the City's willingness to prepare for necessary infrastructure projects, ensure residents have continued access to City services, and act responsibly as a role model for municipal management.

Conclusion:

This staff report, SRPI.20.029, recommends Council endorsement of the Proposed Climate Change Framework as the central guiding document outlining Richmond Hill's corporate approach to addressing climate change. While Council support to address climate change has been evident throughout the years, a central and coordinated approach to identifying priorities for climate change is needed. The proposed Climate Change Framework clarifies the Town's interests in climate change, our municipal obligations, and our priorities for adaptation and mitigation through key functional areas. By applying a climate change lens and adapting our programs and practices, Richmond Hill's Climate Change Framework will improve the City's resiliency to climate change and help reduce risks and manage costs in the long-run.

Attachments:

The following attached documents may include scanned images of appendixes, maps and photographs. If you require an alternative format please call the contact person listed in this document.

- Attachment 1 – Climate Change Framework 2020 (Booklet)
- Attachment 2 – Climate Change Framework (Information Sheet)

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Report Approval Details

Document Title:	SRPI.20.029 Proposed Climate Change Framework .docx
Attachments:	- SRPI.20.029_Attachment1-ClimateChangeFramework2020Booklet.pdf - SRPI.20.029_Attachment2-ClimateChangeFrameworkInformationSheet.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Nov 3, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Patrick Lee - Nov 3, 2020 - 9:44 AM

Kelvin Kwan - Nov 3, 2020 - 10:58 AM

MaryAnne Dempster - Nov 3, 2020 - 3:30 PM