

Durham Region Climate Change Emergency Declaration

January 29, 2020

Regional Council approves the following:

WHEREAS in 2009 Durham Regional Council unanimously adopted the position that “Scientific evidence overwhelmingly supports the conclusion that human activities are fundamentally altering the conditions for life on earth. Climate change and associated global warming is recognized as a severe threat to global systems with the potential for catastrophic outcomes”; and

WHEREAS in the more than ten years since adopting that position, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at the national and global level have continued to increase, such that the international community is on the brink of missing the opportunity to limit global warming to levels needed to maintain a climate system that is able to sustain human civilization; and

WHEREAS communities in Durham Region are already experiencing the impacts of climate change, including but not limited to: flooding, emergence of invasive species, increased number of high heat days, and the rise of vector borne diseases. Future climate projections for Durham Region indicate that these impacts will become more intense and severe over the coming decades; and

WHEREAS municipal governments have a crucial role to play in responding to the threat of climate change through policies, programs and capital investments that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build adaptive capacity to extreme weather events; and

WHEREAS Durham Region has developed community climate action plans - in partnership with local area municipalities and other key stakeholders - to guide the transition to a low carbon, climate resilient Region while realizing significant economic benefits including household cost savings and job creation; and

WHEREAS Durham Region can join the Government of Canada and more than 400 Canadian municipalities (including several local area municipalities in Durham, the City of Toronto, and other Ontario upper-tier municipalities such as Peel Region, Halton Region, Waterloo Region, Essex County, and Prince Edward County) that have declared climate emergencies and are implementing programs to drastically reduce their communities’ contributions to global carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS the Durham Community Energy Plan articulated the opportunity for climate action to stimulate economic growth in the Region and create job opportunities in the emerging low-carbon economy;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

THAT the Regional Municipality of Durham declare a climate emergency for the purposes of naming, framing, and deepening our commitment to protecting our economy, our ecosystems and our communities from climate change;

THAT in response to this emergency declaration, the need to reduce overall emissions from Durham Region, as well as to continue to prepare for Durham Region's future climate, are deemed to be high priorities when considering budget direction and in all decisions of Regional Council;

THAT Region staff be directed to review current corporate plans related to climate change, and develop an overarching Corporate Climate Change Master Plan that:

(1) establishes near-term (2025), mid-term (2030) and long-term (2050) Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets for the municipal corporation that position the Region as a leader in the community-wide effort to reduce GHG emissions;

(2) identifies near-term corporate climate action priorities for the next 5 years (2020-2025) and requirements to support implementation; and

(3) identifies how climate change considerations will be embedded across all elements of Region business;

THAT staff be directed to review the low carbon pathway in the recently approved Durham Community Energy Plan and:

(1) establish near-term (2025) and mid-term (2030) community GHG emissions reduction targets; and

(2) report on a near-term (2025) implementation plan, including concrete actions and resource implications (staff and financial), as well as necessary roles for various levels of government, individual residents, and the business community, to achieve stated GHG emissions reduction targets;

THAT staff be directed to report back on a plan for the recently established Climate Change Mitigation and Environment Reserve Fund to meet identified corporate and community-facing implementation priorities;

THAT environmental sustainability and climate change be recognized as a strategic priority in the Regional Strategic Plan, in the updated Regional Official Plan; and

THAT staff be directed to work with senior levels of government to accelerate ambition and action to meet the urgency of climate change and provide resources for municipalities and the public to reduce emissions and build resiliency to climate impacts.