



Clerks Services Staff Report

Report Number: C05-2025
Report Title: Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group
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Reviewed By: Jeff Smith, Clerk/Director of Corporate Services
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report C05-2025 respecting a Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group:

1. Direct staff to form the Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group as set out in the report to provide advice on the Township's Climate Action Plan from the equity deserving community's perspective, and to provide advice during the first year of implementing the plan;
2. Approve the draft Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group Terms of Reference attached to this report; and
3. Appoint Councillor(s) ___ to sit as Council representative(s) on the Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group (if desired).

Background:

The Township of Woolwich has taken various steps over the last several years to support a more sustainable future, including:

- In 2018, the Township of Woolwich became a member of Sustainable Waterloo Region (SWR) and established the corporate Green Team.
- In 2019, the Township of Woolwich declared a Climate Emergency, acknowledging that Canada has disproportionately contributed to the climate crisis and that urgent action is required. By making this declaration, Woolwich committed

to taking steps to address and mitigate this global crisis. This was also the year the Climate Action/Greening Levy was established.

- In 2021, the Township of Woolwich Council supported requests from GreenWR and TransformWR, which committed the Township to reduce their GHG emissions 50% by 2030 (50 x 30) and 80% by 2050 (80 x 50).
- In 2024, Township of Woolwich Council approved a new Climate Action & Sustainability Coordinator position to facilitate the implementation of the TransformWR Strategy in addition to other sustainability projects, to achieve GHG reductions across the corporation and community of Woolwich.

Most recently, on November 19, 2024, Council received a memo with an update on recent Climate Action projects the Township has implemented as well as current progress in meeting the actions and tasks listed in the TransformWR Strategy.

Comments:

Woolwich Climate Action Plan and the Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group

One of the action items outlined in the 2024 memo is to implement the Woolwich Climate Action Plan (W.C.A.P.), which will provide Woolwich with a personalized guidebook for reducing our carbon footprint. Furthermore, the memo noted that one of the goals of the W.C.A.P. is ensuring inclusive and just transition with the plan.

As the Township currently does not have a staffing position dedicated to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging, and staff understand our perspective can be limited, there is a need and responsibility to seek out other perspectives in our community to inform the W.C.A.P. Therefore, staff recommend creating a Climate Justice ad-hoc working group for the purposes of achieving this goal. As noted in the draft Terms of Reference, staff will recruit representatives of equity deserving communities to ensure different perspectives are consulted in drafting the Climate Action Plan.

Equity deserving groups refer to communities that experience significant barriers in participating in society, and that traditionally have not received equal opportunities. The following groups are considered equity deserving and will be sought out for the purposes of the Climate Justice Ad Hoc Working Group:

- Indigenous Peoples
- Members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community
- Newcomers to Canada
- People of Colour
- People with Disabilities
- Women
- Youth
- Low socioeconomic status

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and applications from other equity deserving groups not listed in this report will be considered for the working group.

Woolwich Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group Timeline

With the approval of this report, staff will begin a recruitment to fill the committee. Staff recommend authorizing the Senior Management Team to make the appointments for expediency and privacy of the applicants, as noted in the Terms of Reference.

Once successful applicants are appointed, staff will schedule a minimum of two ad-hoc working group meetings prior to Council receiving the finalized W.C.A.P. to give the members a chance to review and provide advice on the draft plan.

Staff are expecting to bring the finalized W.C.A.P. to Council for approval in June of 2025. Any advice the ad-hoc working group provides will be included in the plan with Council making the final decision.

Following Council's approval of the W.C.A.P., the working group will continue to provide advice to staff on the implementation of the plan and a final report will be provided to Council after a year of implementation. With that report, staff expect the mandate of the ad-hoc working group to be complete and therefore the ad-hoc working group will no longer be required.

Interdepartmental Impacts:

None, the Climate and Sustainability Division will provide support to the ad-hoc working group through scheduling meetings, developing agendas and taking minutes. However, the result of the ad-hoc working groups' advice will impact all departments through the approval of the Climate Action Plan, if approved by Council.

Financial Impacts:

Financial impacts are expected to be minimal. Members of the Ad-hoc Working Group will serve in a volunteer capacity but will be compensated for any mileage, if requested. The Climate Action and Sustainability Coordinator will be the staff liaison assigned to the Working Group, so no additional staff resources are required.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

This report supports the Community Strategic Plan Impact of Empowering communities to be adaptable and engaged: *Expand tools and avenues for conversation to bolster inclusivity and community engagement*. Implementing a Climate Justice Ad-hoc working group supports this impact because the group will engage with equity deserving communities for their perspectives to inform the Woolwich Climate Action Plan. This will result in strengthening and leveraging volunteer resources and ensure an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging lens is consulted when drafting the Climate Action Plan.

Conclusion:

Staff recommend that Council approve the draft Terms of Reference and the creation of a Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working group for the purposes of informing the Climate Action Plan from an equity deserving perspective and ensuring the plan has inclusive and just transitions for all.

Attachments:

1. Draft Terms of Reference for the Climate Justice Ad-hoc Working Group