

Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy

ISSUE

Current initiatives to support the strategic activity of “proactively addressing the effects of climate change” do not fall under one umbrella. Individual initiatives are often the result of an incident or service disruption. The Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy presents an opportunity to create a better planned and more effective approach.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on August 27, 2018, considered a report from the General Manager of Corporate Performance and resolved:

- “1. That information pertaining to the Corporate Adaptation Strategy be received; and
2. That \$32,000 from Capital Project No. 2183, Energy and Greenhouse Gas Management Plan, in addition to \$125,000 of Federation of Canadian Municipalities grant funding, be designated to a new Adaptation Capital Project to support the development of the Corporate Adaptation Strategy.”

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on April 29, 2019, received the information report entitled Climate Change Projections and Possible Impacts for Saskatoon, from the Acting General Manager, Utilities & Environment via the Standing Policy Committee on Environment, Utilities and Corporate Services. Additional details on reporting history can be found in Appendix 1 – Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy Reporting History.

Climate change is a complex issue facing Saskatoon, and responding to climate change involves a two-pronged approach. “Mitigation” involves the reduction of emissions and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The City of Saskatoon’s (City) mitigation strategy is outlined in the Low Emissions Community Plan. “Adaptation” involves addressing the impacts of climate change already in progress. Current research and best practice focuses on both mitigation and adaptation as being necessary to address the causes and effects of climate change.

CURRENT STATUS

Current direction for the City’s climate adaptation approach is set by the Strategic Plan (2018-2021) through the priority area of Environmental Leadership. One of the things that the City is striving for in this area is that the “effects of climate change on civic services are proactively addressed.” The Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy is intended to provide framework for a proactive approach to climate change.

Currently, individual initiatives brought forward to address adaptation issues are reactive, which means that they have been triggered by a particular incident or service disruption resulting in the development of a specific risk management solution. There is

currently, no mechanism to consolidate these reactive initiatives under one adaptation reporting umbrella, or to shift to a more proactive approach.

Research suggests that the rate of climate change and the resulting severity of future impacts is likely to outstrip the ability of municipalities to rely solely on a reactive adaptation approach without creating significant hardship and suffering for the organization, businesses, and residents. Proactive climate adaptation does not always require large capital investment, it can involve process improvement that supports thinking about the future, how changing climate conditions could impact civic operations, and a commitment to preparing flexible risk management options that can be deployed as needed.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Actions and Initiatives

The Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy outlines corporate actions and initiatives in four resiliency focus areas:

- Decisions: thinking strategically about tomorrow, today;
- Staff: safe, healthy, and productive;
- Services: prepared for change and ready to serve; and
- Assets: designing and building with the future in mind.

The Strategy is organized by broader actions which describe what the City is striving for under each focus area. Initiatives detail specific activities under the actions, and clarify the desired outcomes of the strategy. Initiatives are further prioritized based on whether they can be accomplished in the near-term (1-2 years), mid-term (3-6 years), or long-term (7-10 years).

The full Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy can be found in Appendix 2. Appendix 3 is a prioritized list of the initiatives identified by the strategy.

Creating the Strategy

The Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy was created using the Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), Canada's Five Milestone Approach to Municipal Climate Adaptation. Research for the strategy included a literature review and comparative analysis of other municipal and provincial/state level adaptation documents.

The actions and initiatives which make up the Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy are the product of discussions and engagement with more than one hundred internal staff. Select external experts in climate change and adaptation as well as key stakeholder groups were engaged to review and enhance the strategy. Much of the feedback from external stakeholders focused on implementation planning and the need for a community adaptation strategy. The Engagement Report for the Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy can be found in Appendix 4.

IMPLICATIONS

Language supporting the importance of climate adaptation has been included in the Strategic Plan (2018-2021), Corporate Risk Annual Report, Triple Bottom Line Policy, proposed Official Community Plan, and the Asset Management Policy. The Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy fills a gap between policy statements and operational activities. It serves to create a coordinated approach to: prioritizing and coordinating new corporate climate adaptation initiatives; informing cross-disciplinary processes and standards; and reporting.

There are no financial, legal, social or environmental implications triggered by this report. City Council will have the opportunity to approve resourcing for implementation of climate adaptation activities on an ongoing basis in accordance with the multi-year business plan and budget cycle.

NEXT STEPS

Some current work which progresses corporate adaptation principles is being carried out across the corporation. This is expected to continue into 2020-2021.

A report including options for implementation, scope, priorities and resourcing, is planned for Q1 2021, in preparation for the 2022 Business Plan and Budget Cycle. Dedicated work defined by the Strategy to create a corporate adaptation program, progress actions and complete initiatives would then be able to commence following this approval.

APPENDICES

1. Appendix 1 – Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy Reporting History
2. Appendix 2 – Corporate Climate Adaptation Strategy
3. Appendix 3 – Prioritized List of Initiatives
4. Appendix 4 – Engagement Report

REPORT APPROVAL

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