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APPOINTMENT OF MUNICIPAL ENERGY CONSERVATION OFFICER

The Finance and Administration Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated March 12, 2009, from the Commissioner of Corporate Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council appoint Michael Lithgow, Manager of Corporate Energy Services as the Municipal Energy Conservation Officer for The Regional Municipality of York.

2. PURPOSE

This report describes the rationale for appointing a Municipal Energy Conservation Officer (MECO) as recommended by Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer.

3. BACKGROUND

Ontario creates the Conservation Bureau to promote energy conservation

The Ontario Power Authority (OPA) creates and implements conservation programs, ensures adequate investment in new supply infrastructure, performs long term electricity system planning and facilitates the development of a more sustainable and competitive electricity system.

The Conservation Bureau, led by the Chief Energy Conservation Officer (CECO), is a part of the OPA. It provides leadership in planning and coordinating electricity conservation in Ontario, with these specific tasks:

- Develop province-wide conservation programs that are best delivered on a provincial basis and/or develop fundamental program elements that can be tailored for local delivery
- Lead the educating and informing of consumers on the benefits and techniques for conservation
- Assess the technical, economic and market potential for conservation in Ontario, which can serve as the basis for informing targets, priorities and program design at the provincial, sectoral and local levels

- Develop the methodology for assessing the cost and benefits of conservation measures and maintain a catalogue of conservation measures, their average costs and benefits for use by local distribution companies and others
- Develop the system for monitoring and evaluating conservation impacts
- Report on Ontario's progress in achieving its conservation targets and what further action is required

The Conservation Bureau is being restructured by the Green Energy Act announced on February 23, 2009, but the MECO concept continues to be fully supported by the OPA.

The Chief Energy Conservation Officer calls for each municipality to appoint a Municipal Energy Conservation Officer

In his 2007 annual report, Ontario's Chief Energy Conservation Officer recommended that the province's municipalities appoint Municipal Energy Conservation Officers (MECOs) to engage communities at the local level in creating a culture of conservation.

Having a strong local champion will be pivotal in engaging communities and individuals in Ontario's conservation efforts. Institutionalizing a defined role for energy conservation at the municipal level could play an integral role in achieving the province's conservation goals.

However, the Chief Energy Conservation Officer has emphasized that this is not a mandatory position but a voluntary appointment to be made from and within Ontario's communities.

By having a MECO, municipalities will be better empowered to:

1. Take advantage of program offerings from the Ontario Power Authority (OPA) and other sources
2. Provide input "from the field" that the OPA can use in developing and delivering its programs
3. Learn about the OPA's Conservation Fund and how to seek support from it
4. Network with like-minded individuals across the province in the search for conservation solutions
5. Promote local conservation efforts and activities in the context of the provincial mandate
6. Identify local businesses / organizations deserving of provincial recognition
7. Understand and respond effectively to legislated requirements related to conservation
8. Educate local residents, businesses, associations, etc. about the benefits of conservation
9. Draw on OPA conservation expertise
10. Help the OPA identify barriers to conservation so they can be overcome

The Municipal Energy Conservation Officer would act as a champion for energy conservation

Ideally, the MECO would be an effective champion for energy conservation within the community – this means advocating for conservation within municipal structures and beyond to the broader community. The MECO would work co-operatively with the OPA and with other MECOs and with relevant associations across the province to create a network of local energy conservation problem solvers who can provide mutual support that enhances their impact in their own environs. MECOs would promote participation in programs offered by the OPA and from other provincial/federal sources, so that their benefits accrue fully to their municipalities, local businesses, and residents. In essence, MECOs would help create the “culture of conservation” that Ontario must achieve under its proposed Integrated Power System Plan (IPSP), which is now being reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Municipal Energy Conservation Officer is a voluntary appointment

While the Region is not required to appoint a MECO, the benefits may be substantial and staff is not aware of any negative implications.

Various individuals could be named as Municipal Energy Conservation Officer for the Region

The CECO and the OPA have not specified that the appointment be made from an elected official, a municipal government or municipally-owned LDC. They suggest that in some communities, a well-motivated appointee from a service club might be optimal; in others, there may be a need to have an individual with some level of technical expertise to be effective. But there is a clear advantage to having a local energy conservation champion and providing that champion with the level of authority necessary to be effective.

For York Region, the Manager of Corporate Energy Services has the technical expertise, positioning and connections to be an effective representative. Responsibilities of the position include:

- Championing energy efficiency and sustainability (including LEED®) during planning, design and delivery of new buildings, and retrofit of existing buildings
- Procuring energy supply at a stable, competitive price, including renewable energy
- Monitoring, analyzing and reporting on the Region’s energy usage

- Identifying emerging energy trends, issues and technologies, and developing strategic energy policy
- Providing energy counsel and technical leadership to Regional staff, developing and presenting corporate energy training and awareness programs to staff as required
- Liaising, fostering and maintaining positive relationships with internal staff and external contacts, government and non-government agencies and the public

Michael Lithgow is the current Manager of Corporate Energy Services, since September 2008. He is a professional Engineer with twenty years experience in energy efficiency and sustainability, in both the public and private sectors. He is also a LEED accredited professional.

Relationship to Vision 2026

Appointing a MECO supports Goal 2 of Vision 2026 which includes “using energy more efficiently in operations of the regional government”.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

New costs will be minimal

The Region already has an appropriately-placed energy efficiency expert who can add the MECO responsibilities to his existing workplan. There may be some small incremental costs in terms of increased travel and public relations expenses.

The Region will improve its ability to secure energy efficiency incentives

By appointing a MECO, York Region will be better able to:

1. Take advantage of program offerings from the Ontario Power Authority and other sources.
2. Influence the Ontario Power Authority in the development and delivery of its programs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

York Region through its MECO will have another venue for networking with other municipalities within the Region and across the province in the search for conservation solutions. To date, the following have been named MECOs for local municipalities:

- Aurora - Susan Walmer, community activist and environmental advocate
- Markham - Viive Sawler, Manager, Energy Conservation Office

The role for the Region's MECO is expected to be somewhat different for the Region than for the local municipalities, in line with the differences in delivered services. The Region's MECO will be occupied more effectively in working with the local municipalities, and to a somewhat lesser extent in dealing directly with the public.

7. CONCLUSION

Designating Michael Lithgow, the Manager of Corporate Energy Services as a Municipal Energy Conservation Officer will provide another means for championing energy efficiency in York Region.

For more information on this report, please contact Barry Crowe, Director, Property Services Branch at Ext. 1684.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.