

1

CORPORATE AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

The Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 29, 2008, from the Chief Administrative Officer and the Commissioner of Community and Health Services, with the following amendment to Recommendation No. 5:

- 5. The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer will report annually on the progress of the Corporate Air Quality Committee through the Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee.**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council authorize the dissolution of the Corporate Clean Air Task Force.
2. Council adopt the Corporate Air Quality Strategy (*see Attachment 1*).
3. A Corporate Air Quality Committee be formed, coordinated by the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, with appropriate representation from all regional departments.
4. The Corporate Air Quality Committee monitor the progress of action plans and emission reduction targets, and continue to consult with stakeholders on the implementation of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy.
5. The Office of the Chief Administrative Officer will report annually on the progress of the Corporate Air Quality Committee through the Finance and Administration Committee.
6. The Regional Clerk circulate a copy of this report to local municipalities.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides a summary of the activities of the Corporate Clean Air Task Force, presents the Corporate Air Quality Strategy, and proposes future direction for its implementation.

3. BACKGROUND

The Corporate Clean Air Task Force was formed in 2003

Council approved the establishment of the Corporate Clean Air Task Force on February 20, 2003 through the adoption of Clause No. 3 of Report No. 2 of the Health and Emergency Medical Services Committee. In 2006, the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer became co-lead of the Task Force, joining the Health Services Department in coordinating its activities and developing the Strategy. This action demonstrates the Region's commitment to addressing air quality and climate change.

The Task Force's mission is to minimize potential harm to human health and the environment, in York Region, through the identification, development and recommendation of department-specific corporate clean air actions targeted to reduce emissions of harmful pollutants and greenhouse gases, and to emphasize that improvement in ambient air quality is a priority for the Regional Municipality of York.

Task Force activities have included:

- Drafting the Corporate Air Quality Strategy.
- Compiling an inventory of ongoing and proposed initiatives to improve air quality.
- Establishing a corporate emissions baseline.
- Reviewing best practices from other jurisdictions.
- Meeting with external stakeholders to solicit feedback and explore partnership opportunities.

External stakeholders were consulted on key aspects of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy

The Corporate Clean Air Task Force hosted two External Stakeholder meetings on May 20, 2005 and June 16, 2006 for agency, municipal and community stakeholders (for a list of stakeholders, see *Attachment 2*). The purpose of these meetings was to introduce the process for developing the Corporate Air Quality Strategy and to seek feedback on the key aspects of the Strategy, including the strategy framework, proposed initiatives, selection criteria for new initiatives and partnership opportunities.

Overall, participants were supportive of the proposed strategy framework and clean air initiatives, and provided recommendations for additional initiatives, evaluation criteria and partnership opportunities.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The Corporate Air Quality Strategy completes the mandate of the Corporate Clean Air Task Force

The Strategy has been prepared to address the mandate of the Task Force: “To identify, develop and recommend department-specific Corporate Clean Air Actions and to incorporate these recommended actions/action plans into a comprehensive Regional Air Quality Strategy.” This mandate also addresses the Region’s commitment as a member of Partners for Climate Protection, a partnership of more than 120 Canadian municipalities, coordinated by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, working towards reducing greenhouse gases and acting on climate change. Actions to reduce greenhouse gases are called climate change mitigation measures.

With the adoption of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy, the mandate for the Corporate Clean Air Taskforce will be fulfilled and no longer required. The next phase of this project will be to act on the Strategy recommendations, further develop corporate clean air initiatives, and set targets for emission reductions.

The Corporate Air Quality Strategy provides a framework to measure, implement and monitor corporate clean air actions

The Corporate Air Quality Strategy includes:

- Strategy Principles: Key goals to guide the development of clean air initiatives.
- Climate Change, Air Quality and Health: The science that supports action.
- Sources of Emissions and a Regional Emissions Inventory.
- Actions on Emissions: Existing and Proposed Clean Air Initiatives.
- Tools to Measure and Evaluate Clean Air Actions.
- Selecting Indicators of Success: Goals and Targets.
- Recommendations for Future Clean Air Activities.

A combination of indicators allows for the tracking of all measures, including those that are less quantifiable in terms of tonnes of emission reductions (e.g. land use planning decisions) and those that offset emissions in the community (e.g. transit ridership increase). As identified in the Strategy, Clean Air Action Plans will be developed for each initiative, or set of initiatives, and will include targets to track and measure success of each initiative, such as:

- Percent reductions compared to a baseline of emissions.
- Estimated tonnes of emissions avoided.
- Energy savings.
- Reduced fuel consumption.
- Behaviour change through adopting anti-idling practices.

The Corporate Air Quality Strategy will be consistent with corporate long-range plans such as Vision 2026, the Regional Official Plan and the Sustainability Strategy

York Region has a history of environmental responsibility as demonstrated through long-range plans such as Vision 2026, the Regional Official Plan, and the evolving Sustainability Strategy. In identifying actions to improve air quality, the Task Force recognized that the Region was currently undertaking, or had completed, several initiatives to improve air quality in the areas of building energy use, traffic lighting, transportation and land use planning.

To be consistent with the Sustainability Strategy, the evaluation criteria for the Corporate Air Quality Strategy are based on triple bottom line principles that examine the consequences of the measures on the environment, economy and society.

Proposed initiatives will be reviewed and evaluated by the appropriate department(s) to determine their feasibility and priority for implementation. This process involves an ongoing review of existing research, models, best practices, and other tools as outlined in the Strategy.

The main recommendations of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy are to act on the strategy principles and implement a Corporate Clean Air Committee

The main recommendations of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy are to:

Act on the Strategy Principles

- Ensure that air quality and climate change are corporate priorities.
- Build on and support on-going Regional initiatives.
- Identify new clear air initiatives.
- Collaborate with Regional stakeholders.
- Measure and report successes.

Implement a Corporate Clean Air Committee through the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

- Develop an implementation plan including the identification of gaps, targets, responsibilities and timeframes.
- Ensure departmental progress in emission reduction measures.
- Present an annual clean air report including an emissions inventory and indicators of progress.
- Recommend greenhouse gas and criteria air contaminant targets.
- Ensure adequate human resources and technology to track and quantify emissions.
- Explore opportunities to offset costs of clean air initiatives.
- Develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies.

- Ensure links between departments are used to increase awareness of air quality, climate change and human health impacts of land use planning and the built environment.
- Use tools to monitor, measure and finance clean air initiatives.

Corporate Air Quality Strategy will be implemented by all regional departments through the Office of the CAO

The Corporate Air Quality Strategy will be implemented by all Regional Departments, coordinated by and accountable to the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. Through development of specific Clean Air action plans, including a mechanism to verify and report results, the Region can better evaluate and strengthen its progress in reaching emission reduction targets and goals. The Corporate Air Quality Committee will report back to the Finance and Administration Committee.

Relationship to Vision 2026

The Task Force identified various co-benefits to a Corporate Air Quality Strategy. These included emission reductions, cost savings (e.g. building energy use), transportation improvements (e.g. reduced gridlock), addressing legislative requirements (e.g. *Energy Conservation Responsibility Act*) and social benefits (e.g. greening strategies). These benefits are consistent with the goals of Vision 2026 and the Sustainability Strategy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Task Force activities to date have been accommodated within department specific budgets. On a go-forward basis, future proposed clean air initiatives recommended by the newly formed Corporate Air Quality Committee will be proposed through department-specific business plan and budget processes.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The contribution of municipal operations to emissions of air pollutants reinforces the need for a Corporate Air Quality Strategy. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has identified that municipal governments directly control or influence up to half of all of Canada's green house gas emissions. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, local measures such as improving public transit, reducing methane-producing waste and changing land use rules can have a major impact on emissions.

Local municipal input through the external stakeholder process has been integral to the activities of the Task Force. Several ongoing and proposed clean air initiatives involve participation from local municipalities, and it is anticipated that the Corporate Air Quality Strategy will provide support for municipalities in their efforts to reduce emissions.

7. CONCLUSION

The Corporate Clean Air Task Force activities have included compiling an inventory of ongoing and proposed initiatives to improve air quality, establishing a corporate emissions baseline, reviewing best practices from other jurisdictions, meeting with external stakeholders, and drafting the Corporate Air Quality Strategy. The Task Force has completed its mandate and it is recommended that Council authorize its dissolution.

Adoption and implementation of the Corporate Air Quality Strategy's recommendations will improve air quality, reduce criteria air contaminants and greenhouse gases, and continue to show leadership in environmental initiatives related to emissions. It is recommended that a Corporate Air Quality Committee be formed, coordinated by the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer, to implement the Strategy.

For more information on this report, please contact Neil Garbe, Executive Director Strategic Initiatives and Administration at Ext. 1202.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause were included in the agenda for the June 5, 2008 Committee meeting.)