

Report

Date June 19, 2024

File:

Subject Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Project Update

PURPOSE

To present the draft Climate Adaptation Strategy for feedback and seek direction on next steps before presenting to Council for adoption. A presentation by staff and Urban Systems Ltd. will be provided.

BACKGROUND

Council's Strategic Plan (2019-2022) outlines the priority to "develop a comprehensive climate change risk and vulnerability assessment." This assessment is the foundational process for crafting a prioritized adaptation strategy at the municipal service level that focuses on building resilience and reducing vulnerabilities from natural hazards associated with climate change. The Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment project received a \$150,000 grant from the Disaster Risk Reduction-Climate Adaptation Program administered by the Union of BC Municipalities.

Climate adaptation increases our ability to withstand the effects of climate change. This includes building the capacity to respond to unpredictable events by learning from past events to be more prepared for future ones,

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) Board adopted the [Regional Climate Change Adaptation Strategy](#) in 2021, identifying regional impacts and actions to respond to climate change. This strategy includes climate projections and effects analysis, vulnerability and risk assessments, a climate change adaptation and risk management strategy, a greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation strategy, and an implementation plan. North Cowichan's climate adaptation work builds from CVRD's regional work to tailor strategies specific to our community's context and municipal services.

The Official Community Plan integrates a comprehensive climate action framework, with a specific goal to "prioritize climate action by reducing energy consumption and emissions and adapting to climate change." The Climate Action and Energy Plan (CAEP) update in 2022 focused on climate mitigation – initiatives that reduce the amount of GHG emissions released into the atmosphere.

DISCUSSION

The following principles have guided North Cowichan's process for climate adaptation:

- Build on our strengths and use them as a foundation to advance action;
- Focus attention to where effort and impact are balanced;
- Ground in climate science and local lived experience of climate change; and,
- Collaborate with others.

A cross-departmental Steering Committee (including representation of CVRD staff) has contributed background and operational context, local knowledge, information on ongoing initiatives, and input into the phases of work, including developing the adaptation actions. The three phases of work include:

- 1) Phase 1: Understand the local context and primary concerns (summary presented to [Committee of the Whole on October 10, 2023](#));
- 2) Phase 2: Conduct a vulnerability/risk assessment (summary presented to [Committee of the Whole on January 9, 2024](#)); and,
- 3) Phase 3: Develop a climate adaptation strategy.

Previous reports to Council included summaries of the engagement with First Nations, the public, and interested parties. The Phase 1 report to Council included a What We Heard report, and the Phase 2 report included a report on what was heard during First Nations engagement.

The Phase 3 Summary Report “Climate Adaptation Strategy” (Attachment 1) brings together what was heard through engagement and the risk and vulnerability assessment results by outlining the pathways where action needs to occur to address the highest climate risks. The Adaptation Strategy outlines three pathways that are complementary and interrelated, with ten objectives and 72 adaptation actions:

- Pathway 1: Maintaining and enhancing municipal services;
- Pathway 2: Preserving and protecting the environment; and,
- Pathway 3: Amplifying action through collaboration.

The Climate Adaptation Strategy is intended to complement North Cowichan’s other plans of Council. The Climate Adaptation Strategy offers a strategic framework that can be applied across the organization through other separate plans of Council. The Adaptation Strategy illustrates where action on an existing plan or asset improvement offers climate adaptation co-benefits. There are also separate parallel processes ongoing. For example, work on biodiversity and natural assets would look to the climate risk assessment to guide in delivering Council’s Strategic Plan priorities for creating a biodiversity protection policy and integrating natural assets into the overall asset management program.

The Adaptation Strategy is the basis for the steps needed to be more resilient in a changing climate. This direction will give staff the starting point to research and propose works consistent with strategy implementation. The Strategy will be implemented incrementally alongside North Cowichan’s planning and decision-making processes, with departments bringing forward initiatives through the annual business planning cycle. The initiatives would be considered in this manner so that staff and Council can balance approval with existing resources and priorities.

Staff anticipate an annual review of implementation progress.

OPTIONS

1. **(Recommended Option)** THAT Council direct staff to:
 - (1) Forward the draft report to the Environmental Advisory Committee and Agricultural Advisory Committees for feedback, and,
 - (2) Consider revisions based upon feedback received and bring forward the report to a future Council meeting for consideration of adoption.

- Feedback from both Council and Committees will round out the input received on this Project, to reflect Council's policy goals and the community's environmental concerns.
2. THAT Council accept the Climate Adaptation Strategy that Urban Systems Ltd prepared and direct staff to implement the actions recommended in the Strategy.
 - This amounts to accepting the report without further commitment or direction. Staff would seek further direction from Council through business planning.
 3. THAT Council direct staff to work with the consultant, Urban Systems Ltd, to include the following revisions to the draft Climate Action Strategy:
 - a) *[Council to identify areas to be revised]*

IMPLICATIONS

The Adaptation Strategy is intended to make the best use of resources available by proposing an incremental implementation that is responsive to the annual priorities of Council. The Strategy focuses on actions supporting the higher-risk items identified in the risk and vulnerability assessment to provide prioritization to staff in the areas where implementation will result in the best return. The Strategy also enables staff to pursue emerging grant opportunities as an Adaptation Strategy is often a foundational requirement for implementation funds.

Implementation monitoring will occur annually through existing staff resources. The implementation framework proposed in the Adaptation Strategy supplements existing processes for monitoring obligations to the Province's Local Government Climate Action Program and progress reporting to the CVRD on implementing the regional Climate Change Adaptation and Risk Management Strategy.

This project is supported by an engagement page on Connect North Cowichan:

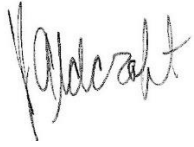
www.connectnorthcowichan.ca/climate-adaptation. The drafted Strategy has been posted to this platform and circulated to the staff contacts of the First Nations and interested parties who provided input in earlier phases of work.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to:

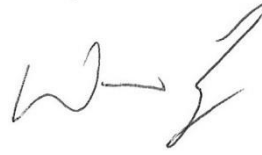
- (1) Forward the draft report to the Environmental Advisory Committee and Agricultural Advisory Committees for feedback, and
- (2) Consider revisions based upon feedback received and bring forward the report to a future Council meeting for consideration of adoption.

Report prepared by:



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Report reviewed by:



David Conway
Director, Subdivision and Environmental Services

Approved to be forwarded to Council:



Ted Swabey
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment:

- (1) Climate Adaptation Strategy