

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE – FEBRUARY 3, 2009

PARTICIPATION IN THE ALLIANCE FOR RESILIENT CITIES (ARC)

Recommendation

The Director of Economic Development recommends that:

1. *This report be received for information purposes.*

Economic Impact

There is no additional economic impact resulting from the receipt of this report.

Communications Plan

Not applicable.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an update and background information on the City of Vaughan's involvement in the Alliance for Resilient Cities initiatives for 2009.

Background - Analysis and Options

The Alliance for Resilient Cities (ARC), a project of the Clean Air Partnership, is a collaborative network of decision-makers from various government, research and non-governmental organizations that work directly on climate change impacts, adaptation and resilience. ARC supports the efforts of local governments to identify the impacts of climate change, analyze adaptation options and develop action strategies to protect their communities.

In 2008, ARC hosted a series of eight free webinars, provided through funding from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Infrastructure Canada. City of Vaughan staff from Engineering, Policy Planning and Urban Design, Emergency Management, Corporate Policy and Economic Development participated in several of these webinars. The webinars covered topics such as assessing vulnerability to climate change impacts, developing an urban adaptation strategy, climate change and health, estimating the costs of climate impacts and adaptation, and climate change and municipal water supply.

The City will continue its participation in the 2009 ARC webinar series, which will cover topics such as the status of adaptation planning in Canadian communities, construction and renovation of buildings with climate change in mind, heat impacts and response strategies, and emergency response planning. For more background on ARC and a complete listing of the 2009 webinar program, please see Attachment 1. These dates will be posted on the VIBE.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities previously set by Council and the necessary resources have been allocated and approved.

Regional Implications

N/A

Conclusion

There is a rigorous body of work emerging around the science, impacts and potential adaptation strategies related to climate change. According to the majority of experts, climate change is no longer a possibility, but now a reality as demonstrated by a growing number of extreme weather events.

The City's draft Community Sustainability and Environmental Master Plan (CSEMP) recognizes this reality and commits the City to "developing a climate change planning strategy" and "assessing vulnerability to climate change" as well as "developing "plans for mitigation and remedial responses" under Goal 5, Objective 5.

Participation in collaborative networks, such as ARC allows the City and its staff to benefit from local and international experts on climate change and adaptation and share information and resources with other organizations facing similar challenges.

Attachments

1. ARC Background Information, including 2009 Webinar Program

Report prepared by:

Rebekah McGurran, Economic Developer – Environmental Sector
Roy McQuillin, Manager of Corporate Policy
Michael Nepinak, Director of Economic Development

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Nepinak
Director of Economic Development



ALLIANCE FOR
RESILIENT CITIES

The Alliance for Resilient Cities

The Alliance for Resilient Cities (ARC) is a Canadian network of decision-makers that supports the efforts of local governments to protect their communities from the impacts of climate change.

Launched in September 2007, ARC brings its members together in a series of bimonthly "webinars" – web-based seminar meetings. The webinars facilitate information-sharing among Canadian communities about climate change, its impacts on urban environments and strategies to reduce these impacts. The webinars also link government officials with leading experts in the growing field of climate change adaptation.

The ARC website provides members with access to previous webinar presentations and links to indexed practical resources for towns and cities working to protect their communities.

The network encourages collaborative initiatives among members with common concerns and interests. As ARC expands, it will also host regional face-to-face best practices workshops.

Adapting is Crucial for Urban Areas

The impacts of climate change affect local services and infrastructure including: energy distribution, water supply, stormwater management, roads, public transportation, public health, parks, economic development and emergency services. It is urgent that local governments anticipate and understand the vulnerabilities of urban citizens, environments and economies, in order to adapt to the changing climate.

Across Canada, communities have already felt the impacts of weather extremes that are expected to get worse under climate change. Some examples from the past 5 years:

- Hurricane Juan hit Halifax NS in the fall of 2003, downing 75,000 trees in Point Pleasant Park, cutting power to 70% of the population, and damaging ships and rail lines.
- An intense rainfall in 2004 left much of Peterborough ON under a metre of water, with damages estimated at \$50 - \$100 million.
- In 2007, BC coastal communities suffered through 4 major winter storms that damaged buildings and downed trees and power lines, with costs of almost \$37 million to BC Hydro alone.

In addition to stronger storms and more intense rainfall, climate scientists predict that Canada's urban areas will experience more hot days, heat waves and smog episodes; more summer droughts and water shortages; more disease-bearing insects; and more pests that damage urban parks and forests. In northern towns, thawing permafrost is already a problem for roads, buildings and utilities. Coastal communities face the combined threat of sea level rise and stronger storm surges.

Towns and cities across Canada are beginning to assess how climate change will affect them and to consider how best to adapt to these changes. For many it is a daunting task, especially combined with an infrastructure deficit which increases their vulnerability.

The ARC Webinar Series

ARC brings its members together in a series of web-based seminars, "*webinars*". The ARC Webinar Series allows members to meet, network and learn. Participants join the audio component of the webinar by conference call and view presentation slides over the internet on their computers. ARC webinars give decision-makers looking for expert knowledge access to research and practical applications, while keeping costs and greenhouse gas emissions to a minimum.

Participants in ARC webinars learn about current research on the impacts of climate change on urban economies, infrastructure and citizens, and options for adaptation or decreasing vulnerability. Participants also discuss:

- Organizational strategies for tackling climate change adaptation at a local level
- Ways to assess the vulnerability of communities to climate change
- Tools to identify and prioritize climate risks
- Economic costs of climate change and of adaptation
- Adaptation options for specific climate impacts
- Risks and adaptation strategies for infrastructure.

ARC webinars include:

- Formal presentations by ARC members, scientists and policy analysts, with dedicated time for questions and answers
- Links to resources mentioned in the presentations, and additional resources identified by webinar participants
- Discussion of the presentations among participants
- Proposals for future agendas and speakers of interest to ARC members.

The 2008 ARC Webinar Program included presentations from:

Alex Nickson, Strategy Manager for Climate Change at the Greater London Authority and author of London's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

Elizabeth Willmot, Global Warming Coordinator in King County, Washington, and co-author of *Preparing for Climate Change: A Guidebook for Local, Regional and State Governments*

Dr. Kristie L. Ebi, a Lead Author for the Human Health chapter of the *IPCC Fourth Assessment Report*

Craig Faris, Lead author of *City of Chicago Analysis of Economic Impacts from Climate Change*

Dr. Stewart Cohen, Researcher with the Adaptation and Impacts Research Division of Environment Canada, and co-ordinating Lead Author of the North America chapter of the *IPCC Third Assessment Report*.

See www.cleanairpartnership.org/arc to view recordings and slide presentations from the 2008 Webinar Program.

2009 Webinar Program

The Status of Adaptation Planning in Canadian Communities
January 20, 2009

Construction and Renovation of Buildings with Climate Change in Mind
February 17, 2009

Heat Impacts and Response Strategies
March 17, 2009

Engagement Strategies to Enhance Climate Change Decision-making and Adaptation Planning
Date TBA

The Cost of Doing Nothing: Who Pays After the Storm
Date TBA

Emergency Response Planning
Date TBA

Adaptation Planning for Small Communities: Examples from BC and Canada's North
Date TBA

By Land or By Sea? Adaptation for Transportation
Date TBA

Alliance for Resilient Cities Membership Provides

- Participation in a growing network of local, regional and provincial government representatives, climate researchers and policy analysts working to understand and reduce the impacts of climate change on Canadian communities
- Mutual learning from worldwide experts through the ARC Webinar Series
- Up to 5 connections (and unlimited participants on your end) for each ARC webinar
- Input on future webinar topics and speakers
- Access to ARC's members-only resources, indexed thematically to reduce your search time and effort
- Updates on the latest climate change adaptation activities and resources from Canadian and international sources

ARC's Convener: The Clean Air Partnership

The Clean Air Partnership (CAP) is a registered charity that works in partnership to promote and coordinate actions to improve local communities.

CAP's research and administrative staff organize the ARC webinars and participant registration, recruit speakers, manage the ARC website and respond to questions and suggestions from ARC members.

CAP brings many years of experience as the convener of the Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council (GTA-CAC), the annual GTA Smog Summit, and related conferences and workshops for local decision-makers on issues related to air pollution, climate change, the urban heat island and related concerns.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For an ARC membership package or to participate in our webinars, please send your name, title, organization, telephone number and email address to:

Clean Air Partnership
75 Elizabeth Street
Toronto, Ontario M5G 1P4
Tel: 416-392-6672 Fax: 416-338-0616
Email: arc@cleanairpartnership.org

