
DATE: February 23, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, EDUCATION AND VALIDATION OF REGIONAL COUNCIL'S 2011 - 2014 TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

FROM: David Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

RECOMMENDATION

That the Chief Administrative Officer report back to Regional Council on the cost, timing and any other implications of engaging MASS LBP to use its Citizens Assembly approach for public engagement, education and validation of Regional Council's 2011 to 2014 Term of Council Priorities (TOCP).

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Council has identified in its Strategic Plan the need to inform and educate taxpayers on the services provided by the Region, and the implications for the shared municipal tax base.
- Staff are providing Council with an opportunity to consider a citizen engagement process that will promote that education and also provide Council with feedback on its Term of Council Priorities.
- If Council decides to implement this process, staff will report back on cost and timing.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

During the development of the draft Strategic Plan and Term of Council Priorities (TOCP), members of Council raised the issue of citizen engagement, and education about the planning, funding and delivery of Regional services. Council members expressed concern that the public is not aware of the services provided by the Region. This is troublesome for Council as Regional services are funded by approximately 40 per cent of the property taxes raised in Peel. Municipal taxpayers should be offered the opportunity to be better informed about both the services funded by the property tax and the pressures that are driving the annual budgets.

This need for increased awareness and education has been reflected in the goals and actions contained in the Plan and will be reinforced through the execution of the TOCP.

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In addition to the need for increased awareness and education, members of Council also asked about the involvement of citizens in the development of the Plan and TOCP. The draft plan presented to Council did not benefit from direct engagement of citizens or special interest groups during its development. Staff reviewed a number of documents (see Appendix I) in the development of the draft Plan; many of those documents had involved citizens or groups in their development, and staff used that information, as well as input from Council after the election, in the formulation of the draft Plan and TOCP presented to Council.

2. Proposed Direction

Council spent two full days in workshops reviewing and editing the Plan and TOCP. As mentioned, Council's concern about education and awareness has been incorporated into the Plan. That revised Plan has been submitted to Council for final review and approval under a separate report.

A company called MASS LBP has developed a unique approach to engaging citizens in public awareness and consultation that may serve Council well in starting the process of increasing the public's awareness about Regional services, the demands that those services put on the property tax base, and the drivers of those budget demands. In addition, the process used by MASS LBP could also be used to validate the Plan and Priorities, and allow for the incorporation of changes to the Priorities if necessary when they are reviewed prior to the 2012 budget process. The strategic planning process anticipates that the Priorities will be reviewed and adjusted each year to guide the budget development.

Peter MacLeod is the co-founder and principal of MASS LBP. MASS LBP is based in Toronto and works with governments and corporations to deepen and improve public consultation and engagement. Since 2007, MASS has led some of the Canada's most original and ambitious efforts to engage citizens in tackling tough policy options while pioneering the use of Civic Lotteries and Citizen Reference Panels on behalf of a wide array of clients. It has successfully completed this type of work with municipalities, hospitals, LHINs and private companies.

The process that it uses differs from traditional methods of public consultation. It identifies a representative group of the public for four day-long sessions over a period of one or two months. This panel is usually comprised of 36 volunteers who are randomly chosen from a larger group who have responded to a call for interest. The Panel would have three tasks:

1. To learn about the programs and services offered by the Region;
2. To consider the challenges and issues facing Peel in the years ahead;
3. To identify common values and priorities, and make recommendations based on those values and priorities to inform Regional Council's decisions on its Term of Council priorities for the balance of this term of Council.

The process that is followed includes education by senior Regional staff and key community leaders and meeting with a larger group of residents to educate them and hear their perspectives on the issues of importance in Peel. Through these activities, the panellists then come to a common understanding of the key issues and identify priorities on behalf of their communities. They deliberate on the implications of these priorities, and make informed recommendations to Regional Council. In this way, the process gives citizens the insights and tools to translate their opinions and ideas into credible policy advice that decision-

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makers can use to inform their choices. The process allows citizens to speak for the shared interests of their community, and not just from the position of their own personal experience.

Peter MacLeod has been invited to Council to make a brief presentation on the MASS LBP approach for Council's consideration. If there is an interest in engaging in the MASS LBP process then staff can report back to Council on the financial and time implications.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

To be discussed in a subsequent report, if required.

CONCLUSION

Council has identified through the strategic planning process that municipal taxpayers should be offered the opportunity to be better informed about both the Regional services funded by the property tax and the pressures that are driving the annual budgets. Staff is recommending that Council consider a novel approach to providing that education to select groups of residents who in turn will educate other residents while also providing feedback to Council on its Term of Council Priorities.



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact David Szwarc at extension 4312 or via email at david.szwarc@peelregion.ca

c. Legislative Services

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1. Long Range Transportation Plan
2. Transport Demand Plan
3. Long Term Waste Resource Management Plan
4. *Waste Diversion Act* – Council Report
5. Water Efficiency Plan
6. Water and Wastewater Master Plan
7. Housing Strategy
8. Human Services Plan
9. Clean Air Strategy
10. Long Term Care – A Strategy For Moving Forward
11. Paramedics Staffing Model Study and Implementation Plan
12. Public Health 10 Year Strategic Plan
13. LHIN's Health Services Plan – Council Report
14. Accessibility Plan
15. Emergency Management Program
16. Liveable Peel
17. Regional Official Plan
18. Capital Asset Management Strategy
19. Sustainability Strategy
20. Corporate Services Business Plan
21. Energy Management Plan
22. Healthy Workplace
23. Purchasing Strategic Plan
24. 10 Year Capital Asset Plan
25. Diversity Strategy
26. Focus GTA Survey Results
27. Peel Police Strategic Plan
28. Common Purpose Strategy
29. City of Brampton Strategic Plan
30. Town of Caledon Strategic Plan
31. City of Mississauga Strategic Plan