

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBOURHOODS COMMITTEE MEETING ON SEPTEMBER 27, 2011
FROM:	JAY STANFORD, M.A., M.P.A. DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS & SOLID WASTE
SUBJECT:	UPDATE ON RETHINK ENERGY LONDON – ONLINE CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PILOT PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Director, Environmental Programs and Solid Waste, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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Relevant reports that can be found at www.london.ca (City Hall, Meetings) include:

- Report to the October 20, 2010 Board of Control (BOC) Meeting: Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund – Grant Agreement for Energy Modeling and Mapping Project (Agenda Item #11).
- Report to the November 2, 2009 Environment and Transportation Committee (ETC) Meeting: Rethink Energy London – A Community Engagement and Action Plan for Sustainable Energy (Agenda Item #8).

BACKGROUND

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the Community and Neighbourhoods Committee (CNC) with an update on the Rethink Energy London community engagement and action plan, specifically for the pilot implementation of a new citizen engagement process.

CONTEXT

Rethink Energy London was launched in December 2009 in order to review and update the City of London’s strategic direction for managing the converging issues of energy use and conservation, air quality and climate change. Rethink Energy London is a community engagement and action plan to increase public awareness, encourage stakeholder action & commitment, and seek stakeholder input for future programs & initiatives; for action on sustainable energy and reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that create local financial and economic benefits.

Rethink Energy London covers a broad range of topics under four main themes – Our Homes, Our Neighbourhoods, Our Transportation, and Our Economy. Each of these topics involves engaging different sets of stakeholders in addition to citizens-at-large. Rather than trying to run an engagement and action plan that addresses each topic simultaneously, staff have been staging the engagement process over an eighteen month period so that themes are introduced when they are likely to gain the most awareness in London. City staff are approximately three-quarters of the way through our public engagement process.

Under Rethink Energy London, City staff have been meeting stakeholders at their own meetings and events, and at workshops, seminars and conferences. Rethink Energy London has been promoted at numerous public events. To reach other audiences, City staff made use of relationships with local media, including regular appearances on Rogers Daytime’s Green Segment and the former CJBK’s Eco Show.

City staff have tested out web-based tools for engaging the public, such as the use of a web survey, a web discussion forum, and online calculators. As of July 2011, we have had the following results:

- 2,800 visits to the main Rethink Energy London webpage - www.london.ca/rethinkenergy
- 1,000 visits to the Zerofootprint London landing page
- 40 registered members of the Rethink Energy London discussion forum

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However, where staff have been less successful has been in obtaining documented input from citizens on their opinions and ideas for moving forward on sustainable energy and climate change issues. The online web survey obtained initially about 200 responses, however the number of respondents was too small, insufficient and thus invalid from an analysis perspective. The discussion forum managed to obtain 40 registered participants, however this was insufficient to provide the critical mass required for sustaining an ongoing exchange of ideas with citizens. Also, relentless spam postings on the discussion forum rendered it unusable. The use of the City's Facebook and Twitter accounts for Rethink-specific topics also generated limited feedback from followers of social media.

DISCUSSION:

The project identified below, first brought to CNC's attention in February 2011 (now called London's Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy), is the last major community outreach project as part of the Rethink Energy London community action and engagement process. There will be continued involvement with workshops, speakers, public displays and energy conservation projects. As previously reported, all details from the Rethink Energy London project will be pulled together to create a community action plan that outlines recommendations for short-term (2013-2014) actions, and sets the direction for medium-term (2020) and long-term (2030) energy and GHG reductions and looks for opportunities to increase the use of sustainable energy.

Proposed Citizen Participation Project

In discussions with Nordex Research, a London-based market and public opinion research consulting firm, Nordex Research developed and proposed a new and innovative model for citizen engagement regarding energy use and energy conservation (and related environmental matters) that could overcome a number of the weaknesses of traditional models of citizen engagement (community participation) as well as weaknesses in current social media approaches. This unique project harnesses the energies and skills associated with public opinion polling, policy analysis, data synthesis and data interpretation coupled with energy conservation science and community implementation processes.

Most importantly, the focus is on the roundtable participants and encouraging participation and submission of ideas and solutions. One way of looking at this is picture a public square where people can freely express their ideas and get a front-row seat with city staff for thoughtful and meaningful conversation.

The initial focus will be on sustainable energy issues to support the Rethink Energy London engagement process. Should this model prove successful in engaging citizens, City staff envision applying this model or variations of it to other environmental matters, such as waste diversion.

Overview

London's Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy (i.e., "Roundtable") project is an online public participation exercise aimed at attracting up to 1,000 London individual residents to present ideas to the City – through a website and email – on the environment, conservation and the economics. The citizen participation project will be hosted on a website established within the City of London website domain (e.g., www.london.ca/roundtable).

This model of citizen engagement will test out a large-scale, online gathering of recruited, individual Londoners who will be volunteering their time and knowledge to consider a series of environmental, conservation and related financial/economic issues. The individuals will respond to sets of systematically-organized, open-ended questions. The initial focus of activities will be on energy conservation and sustainable energy.

All on-line participants on this project will be given notice of collection of personal information at the point of collection as per the requirements of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA).

The approach for this Demonstration Project has been developed by Kimble Ainslie, President of Nordex Research. It combines analytical and interpretive skills associated with qualitative research and techniques such as focus groups and charettes and open-ended surveys. A key function is its design so individuals can express their thoughts and ideas without being influenced by others.

It is hoped that this model of citizen engagement will overcome some of the known limitations of community meetings, charettes, and social media interactions. The lessons learned from this project will

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be shared with the City's Corporate Communications Division who is leading the Community Engagement Task Force process.

Participant Recruitment Process

In support of the recruitment process, City staff plan to carry out a number of promotional items including:

- Set up a Facebook advertisement to promote participation in the Roundtable.
- Send letters to community associations, etc. announcing the Roundtable and encouraging participation.
- Promote the Roundtable to local media, prior to and during the launch of the Roundtable.
- Mount three billboards around the city to promote participation in the Roundtable.

Timeline and Funding

The project is expected to launch in early October 2011 and last for about nine months. Generally, two questions will be posed at intervals of two weeks (i.e., every two weeks a new set of questions will be emailed out to participants. Summary updates will be provided each month to staff with a final report provided at the end of the project

The total cost of this project is \$35,000. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund (GMF) is funding \$15,000 (43%) of the project costs as part of the overall FCM GMF funding for Rethink Energy London activities. The City's funds are contained in the Environmental Programs 2011 budget for education, awareness and outreach dealing with energy conservation and related environmental matters.

	FCM – GMF	City of London	Totals
Community Engagement - "London's Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy"	\$15,000	\$15,000	\$30,000
Promotion for Project		\$5,000	\$5,000
	\$15,000	\$20,000	\$35,000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Nancy Moore-Hayter, Manager, Purchasing Operations; Joy Jackson, Manager of Risk Management; Jim Purser, Manager of Records & Information Services and the City Solicitors' office have provided input into this report and project.

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