

## REPORT

**REPORT TO:** Chair and Members of the Corporate Affairs Committee

**REPORT FROM:** Jennifer Spence, Sustainability Outreach Officer

**DATE:** January 9, 2015

**REPORT NO.:** PDS-2015-0006

**RE:** Green Meeting and Event Policy (Update)  
File No.: D27- GR- Green Meeting and Event Policy

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Report No. PDS-2015-0006 (dated January 9, 2015) regarding the Green Meeting and Event Policy update be received;

AND FURTHER THAT, effective March 1, 2015, the use of the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy be approved for all future meetings and events held at all Town of Halton Hills facilities, as appropriate.

### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

With the pilot phase of the Green Meeting and Event Policy successfully completed, the purpose of this report is to obtain Corporate Affairs Committee's and subsequently Council's approval of the an updated Green Meeting and Event Policy.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Recognizing that office related operations are major drivers of sustainability, including waste management, greenhouse gas emissions, energy and water conservation, and workplace well-being, one of the initial tasks of the Staff Sustainability Team was the development of sustainable meeting practices. In response, in 2010, Council approved a pilot phase for the implementation of a Green Meeting and Event Policy. This Policy outlined practical steps to lessen the Town's impact on the environment and to conduct meetings more efficiently.

## **COMMENTS:**

The Policy's purpose is to raise the efficiency and sustainability of the Town's corporate operations by embedding responsible practices in the course of organizing and hosting meetings and events at Town facilities. This Policy would also apply to meetings and events hosted by the public at Town facilities (ie. facility rentals).

Where appropriate, Town staff may wish to request the application of relevant aspects of the Policy to meetings and events that are sponsored by the Town, but not held on Town property.

The Policy's implementation during the pilot phase has generated meaningful results, including:

- Reduced energy, waste and water consumption;
- Reduced printing costs;
- Corporate leadership;
- Alignment with Town objectives;
- Alignment with employee expectations and Core Values; and
- Delivery of Town services in an efficient manner.

Since the approval of the initial Green Meeting and Event Policy, Town employees who organize meetings and events have received information, support and educational tools to assist them with the Policy's implementation. Examples include:

- Workshops on the Green Meeting and Event Policy;
- Posters with Green Meeting and Event tips in all meeting rooms;
- Staff are informed of the Policy as part of new staff orientation and they receive a Green Meeting and Event brochure;
- A brochure of Green Meeting and Event tips is available to all Town staff and the public;
- Information regarding the Green Meeting and Event Policy is posted on the Town's Intranet (HUB);
- Employees receive an automatic reminder of the Policy when a meeting room is booked;
- Aspects of the Green Meeting and Event are incorporated into the Municipal Assistance Program; and
- The food order form at the Civic Centre has been updated with more sustainable choices.

Since its introduction, the Policy has been implemented in a wide range of initiatives, events and meetings. For example, in 2013, the Staff Sustainability Team began the implementation of a "Moving Towards Zero Waste" initiative at the Civic Centre. This involved centralizing waste collection (regular, recycling and GreenCart) in each department. Individual waste containers were phased out from work stations. The centralized waste system has contributed to reducing the amount of regular waste by 48% at the Civic Centre. The recyclable and GreenCart material has increased accordingly. In addition, the new waste system has significantly reduced the time required for maintenance staff to collect the waste.

In a practical way, implementing the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy at all Town facilities will continue to reduce the environmental impact of meetings and events, and demonstrate corporate leadership.

The “PAREE Principle” established for the Town’s Green Plan has been applied to the updated Policy by ensuring that the Policy is practical, affordable, reasonable, educational and enforceable.

The updated Policy will facilitate corporate-wide implementation and consistency. The Policy is recommended to apply to all meetings and events hosted by the Town as well as the public at all Town facilities, whenever possible. The following would be subject to the updated Policy:

- Council meetings;
- Committee meetings;
- Staff meetings and events;
- Public meetings and events; and
- Facility rentals.

Research, site visits and surveys of Town facilities have provided valuable information for the proposed updates. The recommended updates are underlined in Appendix 1. They relate to the areas of transportation, food, water and energy conservation, and waste management. These updates are practical and flexible, and can be tailored to the various events and meetings held at Town facilities. It is recognized that not all criteria will be applicable to all meetings and events. The Policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Office of Sustainability.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The Green Meeting and Event Policy supports the objectives of the Strategic Plan, including Strategic Direction H: Provide Responsive, Effective Municipal Government, and the associated goal to provide strong leadership in the effective and efficient delivery of municipal services.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The implementation of the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy is not expected to cause the Town to incur any significant additional costs. Although some initial costs may be incurred for such items as the purchase of additional dishware and cutlery, in the long-term, the Town is expected to benefit from savings. These savings may accrue as a result of energy savings, reduced food and beverage costs, the use of reusable dishware and cutlery, and reduced employee mileage costs.

## **COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:**

Widespread and ongoing communication of the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy to Town staff and facility rental groups will be important to ensuring its effectiveness. Town staff will ensure that the Policy is widely communicated.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The relationship between this report and the Strategy is summarized below.

The report's recommendations advance the Strategy's implementation. All four pillars of sustainability are supported by this report: Cultural Vibrancy, Environmental Health, Economic Prosperity and Social Well-being.

In summary, the Sustainability Implications of this report are as follows:

The updated Green Meeting and Event Policy will further embed sustainability within the Town's corporate operations, while providing staff with the flexibility needed to address unique meeting and event requirements. In addition, the implementation of the updated Policy will allow for consistency throughout Town facilities. The updated Policy demonstrates leadership using the PAREE Principle of being practical, affordable, reasonable, educational and enforceable. Lastly, the Policy complements the Town's efforts to design and construct new facilities to a higher efficiency standard, including LEED<sup>®</sup>, as outlined in the Corporate Sustainable Building Policy.

## **CONSULTATION:**

In preparing the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy, staff contacts at all Town facilities and the Staff Sustainability Team were consulted.

## **CONCLUSION:**

This report seeks Corporate Affair Committee's and subsequently Council's approval of the updated Green Meeting and Event Policy.

Respectfully submitted,

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Sustainability Outreach Officer

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John Linhardt  
Director of Planning, Development and  
Sustainability

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Damian Szybalski  
Manager of Sustainability

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David Smith  
Chief Administrative Officer

## **Green Meeting and Event Policy** **(Policy updates are underlined herein)**

### **Purpose:**

- To raise the efficiency and sustainability of the Town's corporate operations by embedding responsible practices in the course of organizing and hosting meetings and events at Town facilities, including meetings and events hosted by the public at rented Town facilities.
- To provide a flexible pool of criteria, recognizing that not all may be appropriate or applicable for all meetings and events.

### **Vision:**

- All meetings and events held at Town facilities are held in an environmentally-responsible manner, by reducing energy and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, waste generation and by making financially responsible purchasing choices that not only benefit the environment but are also financially prudent. The Town's Green Meeting and Event Policy is a natural part of operations and widely duplicated throughout the community by a variety of stakeholders.

### **Goals:**

- To ensure that all meetings and events held at Town facilities contribute to reducing energy and water consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, waste generation, and responsible purchasing choices that not only benefit the environment but are also financially prudent.
- To be recognized as a leader for its environmentally-responsible meeting and event practices.

### **Criteria:**

#### **Organization of the Meeting or Event**

- a) Consider alternatives to in-person meetings such as tele-conferencing, video-conferencing and webinars.
- b) Prior to the meeting or event, especially larger events involving many participants, inform all attendees of the Town's Green Meeting and Event Policy. Encourage attendees to review the Policy and take steps to follow the Policy. A summary of the Policy is available at:  
<http://intranet2003/departments/Pages/Sustainability.aspx>
- c) For an offsite meeting or event, schedule it so that attendees can attend the meeting or event either on their commute to or from their place of employment.

- d) As part of the invitation to attend the meeting/event remind attendees of any available carpool parking spaces, electric vehicle charging stations, covered bicycle lockers, and/or cycling and walking options.
- e) If Wi-Fi access is available at the meeting or event location inform attendees so that they can access documents without printing them by using laptops or tablets. Go paperless.
- f) Ask your speaker or guest to provide material in a digital format. Post these on a shared website prior to the meeting or event in order to avoid printing. Consider using a flash drive for the meeting materials instead of paper.
- g) Reuse poster boards and name tags whenever possible.
- h) For a large meeting or event designate a Green Coordinator to be the point person for coordinating the Policy's implementation.
- i) Create and laminate signs that can be used again for a future meeting or event.
- j) Promote the meeting or event by using online advertisements and social media to eliminate waste of printed materials.
- k) If hosting the meeting or event at a LEED® facility or one which incorporated sustainable building features consider offering a building tour as part of your meeting or event.

### **Location Selection and Transportation**

- a) Choose a central meeting or event location that will require the least amount of travel and offer opportunities for alternative modes of transportation such as walking and biking.
- b) Seek a meeting or event location that employs green building features such as energy efficient and natural lighting, room occupancy sensors, programmable thermostats, water efficient toilets, access to environmentally-responsible food and beverage services, recycling and composting facilities, secure bicycle parking and/or carpool parking.
- c) Select the smallest space available that will comfortably accommodate all attendees to avoid unnecessary heating/cooling and lighting.
- d) If commuting to an off-site meeting, consider carpooling or GO Transit. Use the more efficient vehicle when carpooling such as a hybrid or electric.
- e) To encourage alternate sustainable transportation options and to ease parking near an event offer shuttles and secure bicycle parking areas. Where possible, offer incentives to attendees who use alternate transportation options such as cycling, walking, carpooling or shuttle service.

## Food and Beverage Service

- a) Select caterers who operate in a sustainable manner, provide seasonally grown local food and who are located close to the meeting or event location to minimize resources needed for transport.
- b) Choose reusable dishware and cutlery for all food and drinks. Alternately, use paper dishware, paper napkins or paper table covers so that they can be placed in the GreenCart. Avoid Styrofoam products, plastic cutlery and disposable doilies.
- c) Whenever possible, offer foods that are locally grown and sourced, organic and/or in season. Choose fair-trade coffee and tea.
- d) Offer vegetarian meal options.
- e) Provide drinks in refillable pitchers in lieu of individual bottles.
- f) Bring your own mug, dishware and/or utensils.
- f) Choose reusable spoons or dried linguini (pasta) as stir sticks. Avoid the use of plastic or wooden stir sticks/spoons.
- g) If possible, ensure that all condiments are placed in reusable serving containers. Avoid individual packages as they create unnecessary waste.
- h) Keep food and beverage packaging to a minimum and ensure that packing is recycled.
- i) Place food orders only after confirming the number of attendees. If possible, donate any surplus food to local food banks.

## During the Meeting or Event

- a) As part of the opening remarks briefly inform attendees of the Town's Green Meeting and Event Policy by highlighting some of the actions implemented in your meeting or event.
- b) Avoid printing and photocopying by holding paperless meetings. If printing is necessary, print double-sided and only in black and white. For PowerPoint slides print multiple slides on one page rather than one slide per page. For all other documents, keep text as short as possible by using smaller font, minimum margins and reducing blank space while keeping the document readable and accessible. Print on paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Look for this symbol:



- c) Rather than printing hard copies of the Agenda, display the Agenda using an LCD projector. Circulate the Agenda electronically ahead of the meeting. If printing is necessary, only print a small number of copies so that one copy can be shared amongst several attendees.
- d) Avoid using flip-charts. Instead use water-based, non-toxic markers and reusable white boards, or slides.
- e) Ensure giveaways, speaker gifts and awards are environmentally responsible, made with recycled content and minimum packaging.

### **Energy Conservation**

- a) Reduce lighting or use natural lighting while maintaining comfort, safety and accessibility.
- b) Remind attendees not to idle their vehicle when loading or unloading material for the meeting or event.
- c) Turn off unnecessary lighting, heating and audio visual equipment at the end of the meeting or event.

### **Recycling and Reuse**

- a) Ensure that waste, recycling and GreenCart containers are centrally located and beside each other so that attendees will be more likely to deposit waste in the correct container. Identify the containers with signage to assist with proper disposal of waste.
- b) If appropriate, use Halton Region's Waste Bin Program for large events. Contact the Region of Halton by calling 311 or visit their website at: [www.halton.ca](http://www.halton.ca)
- c) Provide a tray with scrap paper for reuse and fax cover sheets.

### **After the Meeting or Event**

- a) Consider using online surveys to collect information rather than paper copies.
- b) Collect and reuse all name tags and holders.
- c) Distribute any follow-up communication electronically via e-mail, internet and voice mail rather than via hardcopy mailings.
- d) Use non-toxic cleaning supplies.