

REPORT

REPORT TO: Chair and Members of the Community Affairs Committee
REPORT FROM: Planning and Infrastructure
DATE: February 4, 2016
REPORT NO.: PI-2016-0005
RE: Blue Dot Movement: The right to a healthy environment

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report PI-2016-0005, dated February 4, 2016, regarding the endorsement of the Blue Dot Movement be received;

AND FURTHER THAT the Community Affairs Committee endorse, and recommend that Council endorse the Blue Dot Movement by approving and signing the “made-in-Halton Hills” Blue Dot Movement Motion attached as Appendix 2 to this report;

AND FURTHER THAT the Motion be forwarded to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario; Michael Chong Member of Parliament for Wellington-Halton Hills; and Ted Arnott Member of Provincial Government;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report be forwarded to the Town’s Sustainability Implementation Committee, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Acton High School, Blue Dot Movement, Halton Region, City of Burlington, the Towns of Oakville and Milton, and the David Suzuki Foundation for their information.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Blue Dot Movement and to present a “made-in Halton Hills” Motion in support of the Movement.

In late October and November of 2014, David Suzuki and the David Suzuki Foundation along with Ecojustice (formerly the Sierra Legal Defense Fund) embarked on a cross-country multi-year campaign of Canada to begin the Blue Dot Movement. This

Movement is to inspire people to take action to recognize fundamental rights of Canadians. The Movement encourages municipalities to sign declarations including requesting that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms be amended to include the right for Canadians to live in a healthy environment. This Movement is also a national effort to raise awareness that Canadians have the right to live in a healthy environment. According to the Blue Dot website the 'Blue Dot' refers to the view of earth from space. Additional information on the Blue Dot Movement is available on their website: <http://bluedot.ca/>.

The Blue Dot Movement is a grassroots movement whereby individuals, groups and municipalities are recognizing the right to a healthy environment. This healthy environment includes the right to:

- Breathe clean air;
- Drink and access clean water;
- Eat safe and healthy food;
- Access nature;
- Know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment; and
- Participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

The Blue Dot Movement requests municipalities to take action by signing a declaration that is then forwarded to the provincial and federal governments. Attached to this report as Appendix 1 is a copy of the Blue Dot Declaration template that was recently updated by the Blue Dot organization. It is included as supporting information to the Blue Dot Movement.

Appendix 2 contains a modified "made-in-Halton Hills" Blue Dot Movement Motion for the Community Affairs Committee to endorse and bring forward to the Town of Halton Hills Council to sign.

To-date, within Canada, over 100 municipalities have passed various forms of declarations to support the Blue Dot Movement. Examples of nearby municipalities that have joined the Blue Dot Movement include: Town of Oakville, City of Burlington, City of Hamilton, City of Guelph and the Town of Erin.

Recently, at its November 2015 meeting, the Town Sustainability Implementation Committee discussed the Blue Dot Movement initiative and the right of Canadians to a healthy environment. The Committee unanimously endorsed the Blue Dot Movement.

In addition, students from Acton High School presented on the importance of supporting the Blue Dot Movement at an educational Council meeting held at Acton High School on January 14, 2016. The students created a video with over 40 students represented

to show the importance of the Town of Halton Hills supporting the Blue Dot Movement. The students collected about 350 signatures on a petition showing their support for the Blue Dot Movement.

COMMENTS:

1. Made-in Halton Hills Motion

Town staff have modified the template of the Blue Dot Movement Model Declaration to better fit Town Council's Motion format as well as to reflect and acknowledge Halton Hills' long-standing commitment to the environmental health and sustainability of the community. The modified "made-in-Halton Hills" Motion (see Appendix 2) strongly supports the objectives of the Blue Dot Movement Declaration template. The recommended Motion also addresses some areas which are outside of the Town's jurisdiction, may duplicate existing efforts, and/or which may apply certain additional expectations.

Should the Community Affairs Committee choose to endorse the Blue Dot Movement, this report recommends that Town Council sign the "made-in-Halton Hills" Motion (Appendix 2).

2.0 Halton Hills Leadership

The focus of the subsequent sections is to highlight the close alignment between the Town's existing policies and practices and the Blue Dot Movement. These highlights are organized around the key themes of the template Blue Dot Movement resolution. Many of the policies and strategies that are cited include specific objectives, actions, targets and timelines, and are reviewed on a regular basis.

2.1 Breathe Clean Air

The Town has a long-standing commitment to environmental health. Environmental sustainability is a key theme in key Town policies, including its Official Plan, Strategic Plan, Community Sustainability Strategy, Mayor's Community Energy Plan and Green Development Standards. Examples of the Town's policies and initiatives that contribute to clean air and a healthier environment include:

- **Strategic Plan:** Sustainability is a key theme of Council's Strategic Plan. It is also a key strategic priority focus area for the current Council term. More specifically, the implementation of the Mayor's Community Energy Plan and the preparation of a Climate Change Adaptation Plan are key actions for completion.

- **Official Plan:** The Town's Official Plan includes comprehensive 'environment first' policies to protect the health of our environment.
- **GTA Clean Air Council:** The Town is a member of the Greater Toronto Area Clean Air Council. Along with nearly 30 other GTA municipalities, Halton Hills is committed to taking meaningful action to improve air quality and address climate change.
- **Community Sustainability Strategy:** As a key document to guide Town decisions on sustainability, the Strategy states the long-term community vision and goals that need to be implemented to achieve environmental health. The Strategy's vision for the Environmental Health pillar is: "A community where integrated, thriving natural systems are valued, actively protected, and enhanced for long-term health and enjoyment."
- **Green Development Standards:** Building on its award-winning Green Development Evaluation Checklist, in April 2014, Town Council approved a new set of Green Development Standards. These Standards put in place a highly flexible set of criteria that are anticipated to materialize in more sustainable, high-performance and efficient development – benefiting the development/building industry as well as building owners/occupants. The Town's Green Development Standards are designed to maximize development's positive attributes, while minimizing potentially negative impacts. By elevating the performance of new development, the Standards contribute to cleaner air.
- **Mayor's Community Energy Plan:** The Energy Plan is focused on energy conservation, greenhouse gas emission reduction and addressing climate change. It is expected that this Plan will assist the Town in responding to the challenges posed by climate change such as more frequent and more severe extreme weather conditions. The Plan consists of targets to the year 2031 with an expectation of a 35% reduction in per capita greenhouse gas emissions and a 14% reduction in total greenhouse gas emissions. Implementation of this Plan is well underway.
- **Corporate Energy Plan:** This Plan's objective is to ensure that Town facilities are built and operated as efficiently and sustainable as possible. The expected results include: 13% to 17% reduction in energy intensity and a reduction of greenhouse gases between 16% and 20% by 2019. Implementation of this Plan is underway.
- **Climate Change Adaptation Plan:** This Plan will address Halton Hills' responsiveness and resiliency to the impacts of climate change; assess the

Provincial direction around climate change; identify and prioritize climate change risks specific to Halton Hills; and recommend actions to ensure that Halton Hills is ready for a changing climate.

- **Corporate Sustainable Building Policy:** This Policy was created in 2013 to minimize energy and water use, reduce operating costs, demonstrate leadership, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and create healthier and more productive indoor environments in Town facilities
- **Corporate Sustainability Audit and Action Plan:** This Plan is under development. It will continue to embed sustainability and efficiency throughout the corporation. Several theme areas are being addresses including: Town assets/infrastructure, operations, corporate culture, purchasing and finances.
- **Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Protection Program:** In completing the Mayor’s Community Energy Plan, Halton Hills achieved Milestones 1, 2, and 3 of the FCM Partners for Climate Protection Program. In doing so, Halton Hills joined leading Canadian municipalities in taking action against climate change by creating a greenhouse gas inventory and forecast, setting a greenhouse gas emissions reductions target, and developing an action plan to achieve the target.
- **Cycling Master Plan:** This Plan was created in 2010 to guide the Town in implementing a Town-wide cycling network and cycling supportive programs over the next 10+ years. The vision of this plan is: “to promote the enjoyment of Halton Hills for its citizens, in a manner consistent with the Town’s Green Plan and the principles of environmental sustainability and stewardship”.

2.2 Access Clean Water

Halton Region ensures a clean and reliable drinking water supply. To assist with the protection of water supplies, however, the Town has in place a variety of protective measures to improve the quality of stormwater before it enters rivers and creeks, including:

- **Stormwater Quality Control:** The Town has installed structures to reduce sediment and oils that are washed off road surface during a rain event, and to prevent them from entering the stormwater collection system.
- **End of Pipe Treatment:** These technologies retain oil and grit from stormwater before it enters watercourses. Examples include stormwater ponds, oil grit separators, low impact development, constructed wetlands.

- **Salt Management Plan:** This Plan reduces environmental impacts by reducing road salt use while ensuring roadway safety and user mobility.
- **Low Impact Development:** Projects such as the permeable Edith Street and the new Operations Centre parking lots assist with stormwater management by increasing rainfall infiltration and hence reducing runoff.
- **Green Development Standards:** The Standards employ a variety of criteria to address water quality and quantity issues.
- **Source Water Protection:** The Town of Halton Hills participated in this provincial initiative to safeguard municipal drinking water quality. The Source Water Protection regulates existing and future activities and land uses within the mapped wellhead protection areas. The goals of the Source Water Protection Plan are to protect and manage municipal drinking water in accordance with the applicable Source Protection Plans. The Town is required to implement Source Protection Policies in the Official Plan, through the Development Approval process and as a landowner. Examples include: manage salt application on municipal parking lots and implement a septic inspections program.
- **Official Plan:** The Plan's policies support water resource management.

2.3 Safe and Healthy Food

Although food safety typically falls within the jurisdiction of Halton Region (public health), and the Provincial and the Federal governments, the Town has taken various steps related to promoting the availability of safe, healthy and local food, including:

- **Official Plan:** It is an important objective of the Town's Official Plan to preserve high quality agricultural lands for agricultural production. The objectives of both the *Agricultural Area* and *Protected Countryside Area* designations in the Official Plan are to recognize agriculture as the primary activity and protect the land base from fragmentation and land uses unrelated to agriculture.
- **Community Sustainability Strategy:** One of the Strategy's pillars is Social Wellbeing. Within that pillar, goals support affordable access to local, healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods, as well as reducing the need of relying on food banks.
- **Farmers' Markets:** The Town of Halton Hills supports two local farmers' markets. One market in Acton and the other in Georgetown. Both markets provide access to more locally grown food.

- **Halton Fresh Food Box:** Town employees can participate in the Halton Fresh Food Box program that supports local growers while enjoying access to fresh and healthy locally grown food. In 2015, about 1,780 kilograms (3,968 pounds) of produce were purchased. Over the past five years, about 12,500 kilograms (27,468 pounds) of food have been purchased.
- **Community Gardens:** The Town supports local community gardens by working with community groups. Examples include the Acton Community Garden, the Devereaux House Garden and the Dominion Seed House Garden.
- **Town Hall Local Food Garden:** The Staff Sustainability Team maintains the Town Hall garden where local vegetables are grown and then donated to local food banks. In 2015, about 91 kilograms (about 200 pounds) of produce were donated.
- **Food Security Plan:** A Food Security Plan will be completed to support the implementation of the Mayor’s Community Energy Plan. Locally grown food generates significantly fewer greenhouse gas emissions as it does not require long distance transportation. Locally grown food also supports the local agricultural and associated food processing economy. The Food Security Plan will focus on developing specific actions that: (i) contribute to increasing consumption of local food from 5% to 20%; (ii) establish programs to encourage a new generation of farmers; (iii) introduce a local food purchase policy at Town facilities; (iv) explore opportunities to support urban agriculture/community/allotment gardens; and (v) review and update applicable Official Plan policies.

2.4 Access to Nature

The Town of Halton Hills has Council approved strategies and plans in place to ensure that residents have access to nature in Halton Hills. The Town maintains over 23 kilometres of trails and manages over 600 hectares of open spaces. Through the 2007 Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan (updated in 2012), the Town includes specific plans and strategies to improve quality of life in Halton Hills.

Other plans and strategies that address “access to nature” in support of the Recreation and Parks Strategic Action Plan mandate include: Halton Hills Trails and Cycling Master Plan, Hungry Hollow Management Plan and the Halton Hills Pedestrian Charter.

2.5 Know About Pollutants and Contaminants

Although other levels of government are more involved in providing information on “...pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment”, the Town takes steps to reduce/eliminate the release of pollutants. A few examples of actions include:

- **Smart Commute:** The Town is an active and award-winning member of Smart Commute Halton. Smart Commute promotes alternate modes of transportation besides single occupancy vehicle travel. Reductions in vehicle travel contribute to reduced air pollution. Smart commuting options also prioritize walking and cycling.
- **Mayor’s Community Energy Plan:** By focusing on energy efficiency and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, implementation of the Energy Plan will make a contribution to reduced pollution.
- **Hazardous Material Response Team:** This Team responds to chemical spills in Halton Hills. Fire Services continues to monitor service needs and delivery to effectively be pro-active in the delivery of hazardous material response services.
- **Zero Waste:** In 2012, the Staff Sustainability Team introduced a ‘Moving Towards Zero Waste’ program at the Civic Centre. This program assisted with Halton Region’s targets of reducing waste to lengthen the life of the landfill. This initiative also implemented recommendations of the Green Plan. Waste receptacles were phased out from workstations and centralized waste areas were introduced. Before the program started, the Civic Centre would generate about 3 bags of garbage per day. After the program was initiated the waste was reduced to one bag per every 3 days.
- **Battery Recycling Collection:** There are seven locations in Halton Hills to drop off batteries for proper recycling and hence reduce environmental contamination. In 2015, 3,200 kilograms batteries were collected and diverted from the landfill.

2.6 Participation in Decision-Making

The Town of Halton Hills is a leader in consultation with the public when implementing initiatives that protect and minimize the impact on the environment. Examples of plans, projects and processes that involved widespread and effective public engagement include:

- **Community Sustainability Strategy:** Preparation of the Strategy involved widespread and meaningful community engagement. In fact, the project resulted

in a “community-owned” Strategy where the community had extensive input into its content and direction. This involved input from about 11,000 points of contact and the largest number of responses of a Town survey.

- **Town Sustainability Implementation Committee:** This Committee is guiding the implementation of the Community Sustainability Strategy. It consists of residents, stakeholders, Town staff, members of Town Council and the Mayor.
- **Green Plan:** The Green Plan, which provided practical and valuable actions for improving the health of the natural environment, was prepared with the help of a multi-stakeholder committee representative of the community.
- **Vision Georgetown:** The preparation of the Vision Georgetown Secondary Plan is being conducted with the support of a steering and technical committee, and extensive public engagement using a variety of tools.
- **Sustainability Implications Checklist:** The Checklist is an award-winning corporate decision-making tool to assist Town staff when writing reports to determine alignment with the Community Sustainability Strategy. It also allows for the consideration of alternatives to ensure that the Town’s sustainability objectives are advanced.

RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The Town’s Strategic Plan includes many priorities that the Blue Dot Movement recognizes to be important for all Canadians. Participation in the Blue Dot Movement advances the implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the following top priorities outlined in the 2014-2018 Strategic Action Plan:

- Planning for Growth;
- Transportation/Mobility;
- Sustainability; and
- Rural Economic Development pertaining to local food production.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There are no direct financial impacts associated with this report.

COMMUNICATIONS IMPACT:

The Town's support of the Blue Dot Movement will be highlighted via media release, on the Town website, social media and promoted in electronic newsletters. The Town of Halton Hills will also be registered on the Blue Dot Movement website.

This report and the attached Motion in Appendix 2 will be forwarded to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario; Member of Parliament for Wellington-Halton Hills Michael Chong; Member of Provincial Government Ted Arnott; the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

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:

Do the report's recommendations advance the Strategy's implementation? **Yes**

Which pillar(s) of sustainability does this report support? Cultural Vibrancy, Economic Prosperity, Environmental Health and Social Wellbeing.

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

The Blue Dot Movement recognizes the need for a healthy environment for Canadians. This Movement aligns with many of the themes identified in the Integrated Community Sustainability Strategy, especially under the environmental health, economic prosperity, and the social wellbeing pillars.

Overall, the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is: Excellent.

CONSULTATION:

This report took into account the support expressed for the Town joining the Blue Dot Movement by the Town Sustainability Implementation Committee and Acton High School students.

In drafting this report and the recommended Motion, Town staff consulted with the David Suzuki Foundation and specifically Blue Dot Movement Staff. They are supportive of the Town of Halton Hills joining the Blue Dot Movement and favorably

acknowledged the Town's many strategies, plans and policies that support a healthy environment, as well as the general content of the recommended Motion (Appendix 2).

CONCLUSION:

It is recommended that the Community Affairs Committee endorse the Blue Dot Movement, and recommend that Council endorse the Blue Dot Movement by approving and signing the "made-in- Halton Hills" Blue Dot Movement Motion attached as Appendix 2 to this report.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Spence
Sustainability Outreach Officer

Reviewed and Approved by,

John Linhardt, MCIP, RPP
Executive Director of Planning
And Chief Planning Official

Chris Mills, P. Eng.
Commissioner of Planning and
Infrastructure

Brent Marshall,
Chief Administrative Officer & Fire
Chief

Appendix 1
Blue Dot Model (Template) Municipal Declaration, The
Right to a Healthy Environment

(Updated September 2015)

Whereas the [municipality] understands that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our community;

Whereas the [municipality] recognizes the mutual importance and interconnectedness of a healthy environment, a strong economy and a healthy society as we move toward sustainability;

Whereas the [municipality] recognizes that environmental protection is a fundamental value held by its citizens;

Whereas the [municipality] recognizes that our world and all of its inhabitants are faced with the growing and increasingly urgent impacts of climate change, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity;

Whereas the [municipality] recognizes the importance of protecting citizens' health from environmental hazards such as air pollution, contaminated food and water, and toxic chemicals;

Whereas the [municipality] has a structured sphere of influence and a defined jurisdiction;

Whereas in proclaiming this declaration, Council is articulating public policy principles, but not creating or guaranteeing any legal rights or obligations;

Whereas the [municipality] supports the recognition of the right to a healthy environment in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

Whereas the [municipality], through the Official Community Plan and its policies, reflects the values of its citizens and demonstrates a commitment to protecting the environment and moving toward a more sustainable future;

Now therefore the Council of [municipality] declares that:

1. All people have the right to live in a healthy environment, including the right to:
 - breathe clean air;
 - drink and access clean water;
 - eat safe and healthy food;
 - access nature;

- know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment; and
 - participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.
2. Within its jurisdiction, the [municipality] has certain authority to respect, protect, fulfill and promote these rights and commits to encouraging the respect, protection, fulfillment and promotion of these rights.
 3. The [municipality] shall apply the precautionary principle by taking measures to prevent the degradation of the environment and protect the health of its citizens where threats of serious or irreversible damage to human health or the environment exist.
 4. The [municipality] will consider costs to human health and the environment when evaluating reasonably foreseeable costs of proposed actions and alternatives.
 5. By [date], the [municipality] will specify objectives, targets and timelines and actions the [municipality] will take, within its jurisdiction, to address the residents' right to a healthy environment under section 1, including priority actions to:
 - a. distribute environmental benefits and burdens within the municipality, preventing the cumulative health impacts of exposure to environmental contaminants;
 - b. ensure infrastructure and development projects protect the environment, including air quality;
 - c. address climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and implementing adaptation measures;
 - d. responsibly increase density;
 - e. prioritize walking, cycling and public transit as healthy and economical modes of transportation;
 - f. prioritize infrastructure and protected water sources for the provision of safe and accessible drinking water;
 - g. promote the availability of safe, local foods;
 - h. reduce solid waste and promote recycling, re-use and composting;
 - i. establish and maintain accessible green spaces in residential neighbourhoods, and protect and conserve nature in public open spaces;

- j. Attract and invest in green businesses, green energy, clean tech and jobs of tomorrow.

The [municipality] will review the objectives, targets, timelines and actions every five (5) years, and measure progress towards fulfilling this declaration; and the [municipality] will consult with residents as part of this process.

6. The MUNICIPALITY shall send a letter to the provincial government calling for a public review of the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights in order to improve the Act and to include recognition that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment. The MUNICIPALITY will also send a letter to the federal government calling for the development of federal legislation that recognizes that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment.

Appendix 2

Made-in Halton Hills Motion to Endorse the Blue Dot Movement:
the right to a healthy environment.



THE CORPORATION
OF
THE TOWN OF HALTON HILLS

Moved by: _____ Date: _____

Seconded by: _____ Resolution No.: _____

WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills understands that people are part of the environment, and that a healthy environment is inextricably linked to the well-being of our community;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills recognizes the mutual importance and interconnectedness of a healthy environment, a strong economy and a healthy society as we move toward sustainability;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills recognizes that environmental protection is a fundamental value held by its citizens;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills recognizes that our world and all of its inhabitants are faced with the growing and increasingly urgent impacts of climate change, air and water pollution, and loss of biodiversity;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills recognizes the importance of protecting citizens' health from environmental hazards such as air pollution, contaminated food and water, and toxic chemicals;

AND WHEREAS in this Motion, Council is articulating public policy principles, but not creating or guaranteeing any legal rights or obligations;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills supports the recognition of the right to a healthy environment in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

AND WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills, within its jurisdiction, has certain authority to respect, protect, fulfill and promote the right to live in a healthy environment including the right to:

- breathe clean air;
- drink and access clean water;
- eat safe and healthy food;
- access to nature;
- know about pollutants and contaminants released into the local environment;
- and
- participate in decision-making that will affect the environment.

WHEREAS the Town of Halton Hills supports sustainability through its Strategic Plan, Official Plan, Community Sustainability Strategy and numerous other Town strategies, plans and initiatives.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Town of Halton Hills endorse the Blue Dot Movement by signing this made-in Halton Hills Blue Dot Movement Motion.

AND FURTHER THAT the Town of Halton Hills send a letter to the provincial government calling for a public review of the Ontario Environmental Bill of Rights in order to improve the Act and to include recognition that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment;

AND FURTHER THAT the Town of Halton Hills send a letter to the federal government calling for the development of federal legislation that recognizes that all people have the right to live in a healthy environment;

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this signed Motion by the Mayor of Halton Hills be forwarded to the Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada; Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario; Member of Parliament for Wellington-Halton Hills Michael Chong; Member of Provincial Government Ted Arnott; and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities; and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

AND FURTHER THAT a copy of this report (PI-2016-0005) and Motion be forwarded to the Town Sustainability Implementation Committee, Acton High School, Blue Dot Movement, Halton Region, City of Burlington, and the Towns of Oakville and Milton for their information.

Mayor Rick Bonnette