

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2564



The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2023-INFO-105
Date: December 21, 2023

Subject:

2023 Durham Environment & Climate Forum and Durham Environmental Achievement Awards, File: A01-37

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an overview of the inaugural Durham Environment and Climate Forum held on November 14th, 2023, at Ontario Tech University. The event included the 2023 Durham Environmental Achievement Awards, hosted by the Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee (DECAC), as well as a presentation of the annual Region of Durham Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Progress Toward Net-Zero Climate Targets report prepared by Ontario Tech University on behalf of the Durham Climate Roundtable.

2. Background

2.1 In December 2022, Regional Council endorsed staff recommendations to transition the Durham Climate Roundtable from an advisory committee of Regional Council to an independent multi-stakeholder organization hosted by Ontario Tech University charged with supporting multi-stakeholder collaboration to drive the implementation of climate action strategies across the Region. A key element of the Durham Climate Roundtable mandate is to build awareness and accountability for climate action through an annual report tracking progress towards GHG reduction targets,

and an annual community climate forum to share results and exchange ideas and best practices to accelerate progress and celebrate success.

- 2.2 The inaugural Durham Environment and Climate Forum took place on November 14th, 2023, and featured a presentation of the 2022 GHG Inventory and Progress Towards Net-Zero Climate Targets report, as well as presentation of the Durham Environmental Achievement Awards program hosted by DECAC which recognizes environmental achievements of individuals and organizations in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors within Durham Region. The Awards program recognizes efforts to promote, preserve, and enhance the Region's environment, including climate adaptation and mitigation efforts.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

- 3.1 In December 2022, Council endorsed staff recommendations in Report [#2022-COW-28](#) to transition the Durham Region Roundtable on Climate Change from its role as an advisory committee to Regional Council to an independent multi-stakeholder entity based within Ontario Tech University, and for changes to the name and mandate of the Durham Environmental Advisory Committee to include climate change matters.
- 3.2 In January 2023, Council considered the 2022 Annual Reports of the Durham Active Transportation Committee, Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee and Durham Environment and Climate Advisory Committee through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-3](#).
- 3.3 In April 2023, Council considered DECAC Membership Appointments through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-12](#).
- 3.4 In June 2023, Council considered DECAC's 2023 Workplan and Terms of Reference through Commissioner's Report [#2023-P-17](#).
- 3.5 In September 2023, Council considered the summary of the 2023 Pollinator Distribution Project through Information Report [#2023-INFO-75](#).

4. Presentation of the Region of Durham 2022 GHG Inventory and Progress Towards Net-Zero Climate Targets report

- 4.1 The forum featured a keynote presentation from Dr. Daniel Hoornweg on the recently released 2022 GHG inventory report for Durham Region, available [here](#). While the report finds that efforts are considerable and the pace of climate action is

increasing, it also finds that locally and globally, our collective progress is not on track to meet the goal of limiting global temperature increases to 1.5°C above pre-industrial values, nor even the minimum 'safe' target of limiting temperature increases to below 2°C (prerequisites for a net-zero economy). The UN finds that climate policies currently in place point to a 2.8°C temperature rise by the end of this century.

4.2 Finally, the report identifies priorities for action to support GHG mitigation in Durham Region, including:

- a. A shift to low-carbon integrated mobility (i.e. far fewer single occupant vehicle trips, especially in internal combustion engine vehicles);
- b. Redesign neighbourhoods to be far less reliant on car access;
- c. Phase out natural gas for space heating (consider adopting, or urging provincial adoption of, bans on natural gas furnaces in new neighbourhoods, similar to Nanaimo and Montreal); and
- d. Shift personal purchasing practices, e.g., more local/regional tourism in favour of destinations requiring long-haul flights, eating more vegetarian meals, and emphasize waste minimization and reuse (especially food waste).

5. The 2023 Durham Environmental Achievement Awards

5.1 The forum also featured the 2023 Durham Environmental Achievement Awards hosted by DECAC. Eight nominations were received from a variety of sources across the Region this year, of which six were deemed complete and eligible. The nominees were of a high calibre and recognize the extraordinary efforts of citizen and organizations to preserve and enhance the Region's environment.

5.2 All nominations were reviewed by the DECAC Awards Subcommittee, which confirmed eligibility and completeness of each nomination package, confirmed nominees for the category as nominated, or recommended nominees for another category. The process ensures that the nominees fall within the most appropriate category. DECAC considered and endorsed the recommended nominations of the Awards Subcommittee at its October 19th meeting.

5.3 The Awards program has a total of eight categories, each named in honour of one of Durham's past environmental leaders. This year, awards were presented in four of the eight categories. The following nominees were selected to receive this year's awards:

- **Dr. J. Murray Speirs Restoration Award** for helping restore the natural environment and support climate adaptation, presented to Friends of Second Marsh for their work on their "[Let's De-Phrag the Marsh](#)" project, restoring one acre of natural habitat in the Oshawa Second Marsh and McLaughlin Bay Wildlife Preserve and raising community awareness of natural features.
- **Irene Kock Environmental Awareness Award** for fostering effective communication, sharing knowledge, and exhibiting leadership in helping others learn about the environment and climate change, presented to [Kyla Paonessa](#) for demonstrating community leadership in transforming a grass cul-de-sac island in her neighbourhood into a pollinator garden with more than 350 native plant species and for demonstrating commitment to its ongoing maintenance.
- **Jessica Markland Partnership Award** for co-operative efforts to enhance the environment and promote sustainability by building partnerships with public and community interests, and businesses, presented to [Durham TREES](#) for their collaboration between five local conservation authorities and the World Wildlife Fund to support landowners in planting more than 95,000 trees in Durham through their subsidized tree planting program.
- **John G. Goodwin Sustainable Group Award** for a group that has gone above and beyond to make a positive impact on the environment through education and/or stewardship, presented to the students and staff of Monsignor Leo Cleary Catholic Elementary School for their long-lasting positive impacts to student learning and the environment through various student and staff-led initiatives, including a recycling and compost program, a new greenhouse, a pollinator garden, chicken coop, and a planted windbreak and privacy hedge.

5.4 The selected award recipients each received an engraved glass award, along with a potted tree, donated by the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA).

5.5 DECAC looks forward to awarding all eight awards categories in future years. The other four categories include:

- **George A. Scott Stewardship Award:** for helping maintain, protect, and preserve Durham's environment.
- **Eric Krause Innovation Award:** for forward-thinking and innovative efforts to encourage positive change through plans, policies, or initiatives related to enhancing the environment and building climate resilience.

- **Evylin Stroud Lifetime Achievement Award:** For individuals who continually dedicate themselves to protecting the environment and mitigating the impacts of climate change.
- **Lois James Leadership Award:** for an elementary or secondary school student who has made a contribution to protecting Durham's environment.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 1: Environmental Sustainability's objective: To protect the environment for the future by demonstrating leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The Durham Environment and Climate Forum was presented in partnership with DECAC, the Durham Climate Roundtable hosted by Ontario Tech University, and Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority (CLOCA). DECAC thanks all partners for their various contributions, including venue space, event planning support, and tree giveaways, and looks forward to future collaboration opportunities.

7.2 The DECAC Awards Subcommittee members, including Keiko Lui, Kimberly Murray, and Bryan Widner, are be commended for their efforts towards the successful planning and execution of the 2023 Durham Environmental Achievement Awards program.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development