



**SUBJECT: Government relations update**

**TO: Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk & Accountability Cttee.**

**FROM: Corporate Strategy**

Report Number: CS-07-21

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 155-03-01

Date to Committee: June 7, 2021

Date to Council: June 22, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

Receive and file corporate strategy report CS-07-21 providing an update on the funding, advocacy, and monitoring and reporting work of government relations.

**PURPOSE:**

**Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture
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**Background and Discussion:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Corporate Services, Strategy, Risk and Accountability committee members with an update on the City's government relations (GR) efforts.

Government relations at the City of Burlington includes the following key activities:

- Identifying and helping secure funding for identified strategic priorities and projects;
- Advocating to senior levels of government to help advance identified City priorities, strategic goals and issues impacting residents, businesses and City operations;
- Monitoring and reporting on changes to legislation and issues that impact City's strategic goals and operations.

### ***Organizational Structure***

In December of 2020, as part of Designing and Evolving our Organization Phase 2, GR became part of the Corporate Strategy team function. This realignment of GR and corporate strategy further enhances the City's ability to execute and deliver our strategic objectives and establishes the important connection between government relations and corporate strategy.

### **Strategy/Process**

#### **Funding**

GR plays a key role in helping secure funds from senior levels of government for City priorities and initiatives, including COVID-19 supports. GR identifies programs that are accessible to the City and works with department leads to co-ordinate completing and submitting applications.

The financial impact this global pandemic has had on residents, businesses, service providers and municipalities has been significant. Over the last 14 months both the federal and provincial governments have provided essential financial relief to municipalities across the country.

The City of Burlington benefited from several COVID-19 related financial support programs. They include:

- **Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning (MTEC)** funding for the unique cleaning and safety measures required to keep transit staff and customers safe.
- **Safe-Restart Agreement** negotiated between the Provinces and Federal government to provide one-time emergency assistance to municipalities. This funding helps municipalities address increased costs and decreased revenues resulting from COVID-19. To date this funding has been allocated in three phases for two streams - municipal operating pressures and transit support.
- **Investing in Canada Infrastructure (ICIP) Program** – COVID-19 Resilience Stream. In August 2020, the Federal government announced adjustments to the ICIP program to help municipalities deliver more public infrastructure projects during the pandemic. The new, time-limited stream has an increased federal cost-share (80 per cent) and a simplified approval process.
- **Fire Safety Grant.** This provincial funding is to help municipal fire services address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This one-time grant will assist municipal fire departments with costs associated with training, the provision of virtual inspections and small improvements to fire department infrastructure.

Appendix A details the funding received for each of these COVID-19 related programs.

Along with the COVID-19 specific funding, there were several non-COVID-19 programs available to municipalities. These programs help support and fund much needed municipal infrastructure. They also allow us to provide residents with expanded and better services. Our applications were approved for these programs:

- **ICIP – Transit Stream**
  - Vehicle Hoist Replacement and Fuel Pump Expansion
  - Conventional Transit Vehicle Replacement (5 vehicles)
  - Specialized Transit Expansion Vehicles (3 vehicles)
  - Transit Traffic Signal Priority
  - Conventional Transit Vehicle Expansion (12 vehicles)
  - On Demand/Alternative Service Delivery
- **ICIP – Community, Culture and Recreation Stream**
  - Civic Square Revitalization
- **Audit and Accountability Fund Intake 2**
  - By-law Consolidation Review
- **Inclusive Community Grant – Hearing Loop Installation**
- **2021 Celebration & Commemoration Program Funding – Canada Day**

Details on this funding is also available in Appendix A. The senior government funding portion for these programs is \$13,280,138. It is important to note, that while this funding has been approved, it does not mean that the City has received the funds. Regular project reporting is required for these programs and funding does not flow until key project milestones have been achieved.

Looking ahead at funding programs that have already been announced, GR and other staff are reviewing program details for submissions to:

- Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Fund – deep energy retrofit studies
- National Resources Canada – Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program
- Canada’s Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Fund
- Canada Healthy Communities Initiative

Details on these pending funding applications is also available in Appendix A.

## **Advocacy**

Advocacy helps ensure that the City’s voice is heard on issues of importance to our community, as well as issues that impact City priorities and operations. GR coordinates and assists in the preparation of resolutions, letters, pre-budget submissions and any other required background materials.

The City of Burlington uses a variety of tactics to advance our interests with senior government decision makers. These tactics include:

- City and Regional Council resolutions
- Letter writing
- Delegation meetings
- Provincial and Federal pre-budgets submissions
- Comments on proposed legislation and regulations
- Meetings with local MPs and MPPS
- Membership and participation in key municipal and industry associations i.e. Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Ontario Big City Mayor's Caucus (OBCM), Ontario Public Transit Association, Canadian Urban Transit Association, etc.

### **COVID-related**

In 2020-21, all levels of government - federal, provincial and municipal - took unprecedented action to protect the health and safety of Canadians. These actions included financial supports for residents, businesses, organizations and municipalities as well as policy changes that resulted in restrictions and reduced services. During the pandemic, the City of Burlington joined other municipalities in Halton, the Ontario Big City Mayor's Caucus, AMO and the FCM to amplify and advocate for shared issues of concern to senior levels of government. We have seen success when municipalities come together to advocate on issues of common interest. The advocacy with these groups was done through resolutions, letters and meetings with ministers.

During the pandemic, we also saw the formation of several new municipal advocacy groups. These groups came together on issues of community safety and support as well as looking to the future and positioning our communities for economic recovery after the pandemic. The Small Urban Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) Mayors group was formed to share information about COVID-19, rural broadband and the Greenbelt.

The GTHA Recovery and Prosperity Alliance (RPA) is comprised of the City Managers or CAOs of Brampton, Burlington, Hamilton Mississauga, Oakville, Toronto, Durham, Halton, Peel and York. The GTHA-RPA came together to explore opportunities to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery, reduce costs and bring innovation through enhanced collaboration and cooperation in five areas of mutual interest:

- Transit
- Housing
- Digital Infrastructure
- Procurement
- Sustainable Finance

Locally, Burlington Economic Development, the Burlington Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Burlington, the Burlington Downtown Business Association and the Aldershot Village BIA came together as Team Burlington early in the pandemic. To engage with local businesses and ensure they were receiving the support they needed, Team Burlington established the Burlington Economic Recovery Network (BERN). The City and BERN have together advocated on several important business-related issues.

The City has advocated for these COVID-19 related issues included:

- provision of longer, better funded sick pay;
- measures to support the survival of restaurants and the hospitality industry;
- changes to orders regarding construction noise;
- the inequity between restrictions on small businesses and big box retailers;
- allowing lower tier governments to provide emergency support measures for local businesses; and
- additional emergency operating support for municipalities.

While not all our calls to actions were answered, we did see some success. Both the Federal and Provincial governments responded to the call for changes to paid sick days, we saw additional restrictions on big box retailers to help level the playing field, more supports were provided to small business and additional Safe Restart funding was provided to municipalities to name few.

Appendix B contains a list of advocacy issues.

### **Upper Level Government Budget Related**

Pre-budget submissions were prepared for the Provincial and Federal budgets. The submissions included community safety and support requests, pandemic recovery related items, requests to support the delivery of key municipal operations, and support for sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment.

Appendix C includes the complete list of requests included in the City's Federal and Provincial Pre-Budget submissions.

The Federal budget included additional investments for small business supports, broadband funding, as well as permanent infrastructure funding for transit fleet electrification and zero-emission transit vehicles. The Provincial budget included additional financial relief for municipalities, more financial supports for municipal transit systems, additional investments in broadband as well as more funding to support small businesses.

## **Conference Delegations**

Delegation meetings at the AMO conference have been another successful advocacy tool used by the City. GR is responsible for arranging the delegation meetings and coordinating preparation of any presentation, or background materials as well as assisting with the any follow up after the meetings. At the 2020 conference, seven delegation meetings with Ministers, Parliamentary Assistants and Caucuses took place.

These meetings are an excellent opportunity to meet face to face with ministers and their staff on key issues. Appendix D contains the list of 2020 delegation meetings. At the time of writing this report the delegation meetings for the 2021 AMO Conference were being arranged.

## **2021-2022 Advocacy Priorities**

Vision 2040 and Vision to Focus influence and direct our advocacy efforts, as due emerging community issues. This summer's AMO and January Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) conferences will be the last before the 2022 provincial election. With this in mind our delegation meetings will not only be on short- or immediate-term priorities, but also on issues that are of a more long-term nature.

Advocacy Priorities:

- COVID-19 related issues – community safety, vaccines, reopening the economy, small business supports
- Increasing Economic Prosperity and Community Responsive Growth – Adjustment of Downtown Burlington Urban Growth Centre, Housing Strategy
- Improving Integrated City Mobility – Provincial Gas Tax, Active Transportation Infrastructure
- Supporting Sustainable Infrastructure and a Resilient Environment – Community tax incentives/grants to support electric vehicle purchases and deep home energy retrofit programs, Skyway Arena Project funding
- Delivering Customer Centric Services with a Focus on Efficiency and Technology Transformation – Funding for municipal digital service provision
- An Engaging City – Predictable, stable, long-term infrastructure funding, broadband funding to support rural residents and businesses
- Emerging Issues

## **Rural Challenges**

Burlington is a unique community, in that it is not predominantly rural, yet its rural area faces issues that are not likely to be discussed at AMO. Rural areas within urban municipalities are at risk of being overlooked. Not only do these areas face unique challenges as it relates to competing land use priorities spilling over from adjacent

urban areas, the appropriate channels for engagement and advocacy are unclear. GR has been working with community planning staff to identify key advocacy issues and opportunities, including attendance at the 2022 ROMA conference. Rural advocacy priorities will be shared with Council prior to the conference.

### **Monitoring and Reporting**

In 2020-21 GR, like so many other City services, was significantly impacted by COVID-19. A significant amount of time was devoted to monitoring and reporting daily on legislative and policy issues. Daily GR updates on provincial and federal announcements were introduced, as a more efficient way to communicate the decisions and announcements being made by senior levels of government. These updates are meant to help keep Council and members of ECG informed and to assist in decision-making. GR updates include highlights from any daily briefings by the Prime Minister and the Premier, a summary of the day's news releases and announcements along with other relevant news items or reports.

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### **Financial Matters:**

The City's government relations efforts including conference registration fees are all within the Council approved budget for government relations.

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### **Climate Implications**

N/A

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### **Engagement Matters:**

The City's advocacy efforts are meant to influence decision-makers to advance the City's strategic priorities, which are a result of extensive community consultation and to also to advance issues identified by residents, businesses or community organizations.

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### **Conclusion:**

Positive relationships are fundamental to successful government relations. The City of Burlington will continue to maintain and enhance these relationships with senior levels of government. During the pandemic we have seen the tremendous impact that can result when all orders of government together.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen Walihura

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**Appendices:**

- A. CS-07-21 Appendix A - Senior Government Funding
- B. CS-07-21 Appendix B - Advocacy Issues
- C. CS-07-21 Appendix C - Federal and Provincial Pre-Budget Submission Summaries
- D. CS-07-21 Appendix D - 2020 AMO Delegation Meetings

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.