



Subject: *Low Carbon Communities Grant Program*
To: Corporate and Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: June 3, 2024
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Approved by: Adam Clarkson, Director Corporate Services

Summary

The Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables is offering the Low Carbon Communities (LCC) grant program for community projects in Nova Scotia that support low carbon solutions in the buildings, electricity, and transportation sectors.

The application process for the LCC opened on May 22nd, 2024. An Expression of Interest is due on June 24, 2024 and requires Council's endorsement. Staff recommend submitting an application for a solar feasibility assessment on select municipal facilities and properties.

Financial Impact Statement

A maximum of \$25,000 in the 2024/25 budget, funded by Sustainability Program Reserve, contingent on successful grant funding.

Recommendation

Staff recommend that Committee support a funding application, through resolution of Council, for 75% grant funding to conduct solar feasibility assessment on select municipal facilities and properties.

Recommended Motion

Move that the Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommend that Council support a submission to the Low Carbon Communities grant program for solar feasibility assessment on select municipal facilities, with a total project budget of up to a maximum of \$100,000 to be funded by a municipal contribution of up to a maximum of \$25,000 in the 2024/25 budget, funded by Sustainability Program Reserve, contingent on successful grant funding.

Background

The Municipality of East Hants is eligible to apply for funding through the LCC program which is offered through the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. The application process for the LCC opened on May 22nd, 2024. The Expression of Interest (EOI) is due June 24th, 2024 with the application due on July 22nd, 2024. Project activities are to start no earlier than November 1st, 2024 and project completion and final report are due October 31st, 2025.

Projects can include: feasibility studies, designs, strategies and/or planning; engagement and clean energy education activities; and initiatives that test or demonstrate positive and innovative low carbon solutions. There are four program categories and applicants can apply for up to 75% of their total eligible project costs across the categories of clean buildings, clean electricity, clean transportation, and clean energy education.

Staff have begun working on a sustainability strategy/roadmap, with the intent of establishing frameworks, targets, projects, etc. that support sustainability initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan and meet the needs of our community now and for future generations. One of the goals of the strategy/roadmap is to identify

'shovel ready' projects that will allow East Hants to be better prepared for funding opportunities like the LCC program.

The Sustainability Coordinator has had preliminary discussions with all departments to understand how sustainability has, does, and can fit into their service areas. The discussion of solar was a common theme across all departments. As such, staff recommend submitting an application to the LCC program under the category of clean electricity, to conduct a solar feasibility assessment on select municipal buildings and properties. Staff see an opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce municipal energy costs, and serve as an education opportunity about the benefits and functioning of solar technology.

The Municipality has previously been involved in solar projects in different capacities. Examples include solar hot water at the former Milford Pool, the installation of a ventilation air heating solar wall at the Waste Management Centre, and the installation of an air heating solar wall at the Enfield Regional Water Treatment Plant.

Discussion

Staff, in collaboration with our program partners under Clean's Community Climate Capacity Program (CCCP), have conducted a jurisdictional scan to learn about similar solar projects taking place within other municipalities across Nova Scotia. The Clean CCCP team used their Province-wide network and technical expertise to review the scope of these projects, and facilitate preliminary discussions on the applicability to East Hants. The comparable project information was shared with East Hants confidentially but staff can confirm there are several similar projects across the Province; there are municipal entities that have/or are in the process of conducting solar projects such as feasibility assessments, community solar gardens, and solar installations.

There are two previous municipal recipients of the LCC program of similar project scope to what staff are proposing for East Hants. West Hants Regional Municipality and the Town of Bridgewater both received \$75,000 under the program to conduct solar feasibility assessments at municipal locations.

Staff have proactively conducted a desktop review of the East Hants portfolio, and, with support from the Clean CCCP team, have since identified the following facilities/properties as potential locations for further investigation (for roof mounted and/or ground mounted solar). They are as follows (anticipated to be reduced to approximately six (6) properties within this project scope):

- East Hants Water Utility/Enfield Water Treatment Plant
- Mount Uniacke Library & RCMP Office
- East Hants Sportsplex
- East Hants Aquatic Centre
- Lloyd E Matheson Centre
- Dawson Dowell Park
- Milford Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Rawdon RCMP Office
- Waste Management Centre
- Shubenacadie Water Treatment Plant
- Lift Stations

Pending Committee's recommendation, staff would conduct additional preliminary feasibility review, including identifying locations that would require further structural analysis (for roof mounted solar) and electrical system analysis, with the intention of streamlining the scope ahead of submitting the EOI.

Preliminarily, staff anticipate the application would be to conduct feasibility for solar, including necessary engineering assessments, at approximately six (6) municipal facilities/properties. Based on review of comparable projects, the project is estimated to cost \$100,000. At 75% project funding, East Hants would be responsible for a maximum of \$25,000.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Plan ties into our key strategy of Sustainable Infrastructure, in particular the objective to invest in energy initiatives that support the sustainability of our organization and the community we serve.

FINANCIAL COMMENTS

Any recommended solar installations arising from the feasibility reports would be brought forward for consideration in future budgets, alongside information regarding proposed energy cost savings.

Under the LCC program, work cannot start until November 1, 2024 and must be completed by October 31, 2025; as such, staff recommend allocating funds in the 2024/2025 budget.

Alternatives

Council may wish to not proceed with an application under the LCC program.
