

Climate Protection Working Group Communication Plan

The primary purpose of the Climate Protection Working Group (Working Group) is to provide advice and recommendations to Council to assist in developing the Town's Climate Action Plan to fulfill the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) Milestones. Through the development of the Town's Climate Action Plan, the Working Group will assist Council and the residents of the Town of Smiths Falls in raising awareness and taking actions to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and to improve the adaptive capacity and resiliency of the community to cope with and adapt to the local impacts of the climate change events.

An effective Communication Plan will allow the Working Group to operate in its advisory capacity to Council in the development of the Town's Climate Action Plan and further fulfill its mandate of encouraging and facilitating environmental initiatives, developing partnerships with stakeholders, residents, and community groups to improve the community's adaptive capacity and resiliency.

Mission Statement

The Smiths Falls Climate Protection Working Group is committed to:

- leading the Town and Community to take positive and nimble actions for long-lasting impacts;
- minimizing the harmful impacts of climate change at a local level;
- fostering the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions;
- implementing methods to sequester carbon, including but not limited to enhancing our tree canopy; and,
- building generational resilience to adapt to a changing climate, especially for the most vulnerable members of the community.

The Working Group stands as a catalyst for system change and recognizes that even the smallest impacts contribute to community-wide benefits.

Objectives

The Climate Protection Working Group's mandate reflects three fundamental and distinct roles:

Advisory Role

- To provide advice and recommendations to Council to assist in the development of the Town's Climate Action Plan; and,
- To recommend through stakeholder and public consultation, GHG reduction targets for the Town of Smiths Falls; and,
- To provide advice and recommendations to Council and staff regarding projects and policies promoting resilience and impacts of climate change, severe weather events, etc.

Outreach Role

- To identify and develop partnerships with stakeholders, residents, and community groups to support and implement the purpose of the Working Group's mandate; and,
- Encourage and facilitate green economy initiatives, green energy conservation initiatives, green energy programs, sustainable garden initiatives, and other projects and initiatives that are geared towards residents of Smiths Falls and are consistent with its mission

Exploratory/ Research Role

- Monitor, support and guide the implementation of the Town's Tree Canopy, Preservation, and Vegetation Enhancement Policy;
- Identify funding and grant opportunities, including the preparation of grant applications, that may be available to the Town to implement greenhouse gas reduction initiatives

Target Audience

External Stakeholders

- Town of Smiths Falls residents;
- Non-profit Organizations and/or Community Groups;
- Government Agencies; and,
- Business owners

Internal Stakeholders

- Town of Smiths Falls Staff
- Town of Smiths Falls Council Members
- CPWG, Smiths Falls 4 All, Downtown Business Association (DBA),

Key messages

Below is a series of key messages the Working Group would like to communicate, at minimum.

- The Climate Protection Working Group is a committee that is dedicated to developing the Town's Climate Action Plan;
- Developing climate change resiliency involves the participation and support of the entire community;
- Promote environmental literacy and evidence-based decision making

Channels of Communication

- Town of Smiths Falls Social media accounts/ pages, e.g., Facebook and Twitter
- Town of Smiths Falls Website > CPWG page > Project Page for Climate Action Plan

- Community notice boards
- Printed media, e.g., flyers
- Local radio broadcasting
- In-person activities/events
- Media releases
- Tax & Water billing inserts
- Town Website Pop-up banner
- Town page in the Smiths Fall Record Journal

Communication Strategy

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Method/ Implementation</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Develop Communication Network / Partnerships	Collaborate with local community organizations, businesses, schools, local leaders/ influencers, or religious institutions to build strong partnerships for external communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an email address for external stakeholders for external communication. 	This will allow the Working Group to amplify their message and reach a wider audience. Developing these partnerships will allow the Working Group to build momentum for climate action and encourage community participation in the Climate Action Plan. Additionally, engagement with local community groups before creating the Climate Action Plan can help identify existing resources within the community that can be leveraged or bolstered to better achieve our climate targets and identify options for renewable energy. This approach may also help reach traditionally underrepresented groups who have limited interaction with Town initiatives or governance.
	Develop an internal communication network within the Town Corporation to ensure consistent environmental messaging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish an email chain for staff-related news/updates for internal communication. 	Establishing an internal communication network within the Town Corporation will ensure consistent environmental messaging. This will allow the Working Group to educate the Town's workforce on relevant environmental issues and/or provide information on green initiatives that the Town is promoting.
Facilitate local events/ workshops	Organize community events, workshops, or seminars to address specific issues or provide information. Events provide an opportunity for the public to be heard and dialogue with us on a specific theme related to the event or workshop.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Events such as public open houses or community events on specific issues, such as implementing solar panels or promoting electric heat pumps 	Establishes the Working Group as a trusted resource and creates opportunities for face-to-face interaction with community members to discuss environment-related issues.
Utilize Local media	Engage with local newspapers, radio stations and community newsletters to share updates and information about upcoming events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to local newspaper publications to share updates and promote upcoming events such as Earth Day. 	This will widen the Working Group's audience and presence in the community.
Social media and Online presence	Develop a strong online presence through social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formally Twitter), and the Town's website.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create posts on the Town's social media pages, such as Facebook or Instagram. 	This will allow the Working Group to share information, engage with the community, promote the Working Group's purpose/ mission in a near-instantaneous fashion, and allow for two-way engagement.
Direct mail and print materials	Traditional forms of communication, such as brochures, newsletters, surveys, and direct mail, are still effective methods of keeping the community informed, especially in areas with low online engagement or presence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and make available printed materials such as newsletters, surveys, and brochures that would be available for pick-up or distribution. 	This internet-friendly approach could be used to reach certain demographics who prefer printed materials/ direct mail over online materials.

Community Engagement Strategy

Goal:

- 1) Develop and implement Town of Smiths Falls Climate Action Plan
- 2) Encourage and facilitate green energy initiatives
- 3) Raise awareness about environmental issues

Objectives

PCP Milestone	Objectives	Audience	Who	Communication Strategy	Outcome	Timeline	Notes
Milestone 1	Introduce CPWG to the Public	Internal Stakeholders	Planning Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email blast to Staff OR Town's Management Team on the CPWG 	Town-wide email notification OR Town's management team	Jan– April 2024	Internal communication on the CPWG will be first addressed with the Town's Management Team. External stakeholders would be considered the residents of Smiths Falls.
		External Stakeholders	Planning Staff / Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create CPWG page on the Town Website Social media post about new CPWG 			
	Publicize intent to develop a Climate Action Plan	External Stakeholders	Planning Staff/ Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a Climate Action Plan project page on the Town website Social media post about intent to develop a Climate Action Plan and promote environmental literacy and green initiatives. Establish quarterly updates to the Public. 	Publicly available information on the CPWG project page		External stakeholders would be considered the residents of Smiths Falls, Non-profit Organizations and/or Community Groups; Government Agencies; and, Business owners. A stakeholders list is currently being drafted for review and consideration.
Milestone 2	Establish Corporate Emission Reduction Targets (CorERT)	Internal Stakeholders	Planning Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email blast to Staff or Town's Management Team about Corporate Emissions Target Reduction numbers 	Town-wide email notification OR Town's management team	May– August 2024	The intent is to keep the public informed and the Town accountable for any Corporate Emission Reduction targets being proposed and endorsed.
		External Stakeholders	Planning Staff/ Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an update on the Climate Action Plan project page Social Media update on set CorERT Publicize the set CorERT for comment in a report to Council Reach out to communication networks, e.g., radio station/ newspaper, about the CorERT 	Publicly available information on the new CorERT		
	Establish Community Emission Reduction Targets (ComERT)	External Stakeholders	Planning Staff/ Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an update to the Climate Action Plan project page Social Media update on set ComERT Circulate Climate Action Plan ComERT Public Survey Publicize intent to adopt Community Emissions Reduction Targets in report to Council 	Publicly available information on new ComERT and the new survey. Open for feedback on the CPWG project page.		

Milestone 3	Develop a Corporate Climate Action Plan	Internal Stakeholders	Planning Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email blast with a survey about the Corporate Emission Reduction Targets chosen for the Town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town-wide email notification about developing a Corporate Climate Action Plan Survey Email circulation on the CorERTs to Staff 	September-December 2024	The survey will be open for review and comment by town staff.	
		External Stakeholders	Planning Staff/Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an update to the Climate Action Plan project page Circulate the draft Corporate Climate Action Plan, which outlines the emission reduction targets, for review and comment. It will be available on the project page and in printed media. A link should be provided via the Town's social media page. Publicize intent to adopt the Corporate Climate Action Plan in a report to Council that will be available on the Town's project page 	Publicly available information on the new Corporate Climate Action Plan		Once finalized, the draft Corporate Climate Action Plan will be made available to the community for review. A workshop to address comments and review the Action Plan is possible. This workshop can be solely for the Corporate side of the Action Plan or both the Corporate and Community sides of the Action Plan.	
	Develop Community Climate Action Plan	Internal Stakeholders	Planning Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email blast about the draft Community Climate Action Plan 	Town-wide email notification about developing a Community Climate Action Plan		September-December 2024	The review period for the draft Action Plan is recommended to be several months. There is an option to have the Action Plan for the Corporate and Community be open for review at the same time or held separately. It should be noted that an open house is required to address the adoption of the finalized Climate Action Plan. This would be held after the two (optional) workshops were held to review and address comments on the Action Plan
		External Stakeholders	Planning Staff/Communication Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circulate the draft Community Climate Action Plan, which outlines the emission reduction targets, for review and comment. It will also be available in printed form. Host a workshop to review and address comments on the Climate Action Plan Publicize the intent to adopt the Community Action Plan after the review and comment period. Produce a condensed version of the Action Plan in a brochure or newsletter, etc. 	Publicly available information on the new Community Climate Action Plan			