

# Grey Highlands Climate Action Report

By the Grey Highlands Climate Action Committee Task Force (CACT)

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## Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality, and culture of the Anishinaabek, Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat-Wyandot-Wyandotte peoples on whose traditional territories we gather and whose ancestors signed Treaties with our ancestors. We recognize also, the Metis and Inuit whose ancestors shared this land and these waters. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its diverse peoples.

## Acknowledgements

The Climate Action Committee Task Force (CACT) would like to begin by thanking staff for presenting their department's climate action initiatives. Thanks to Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Karen Govan; and department representatives: Director of Council and Legislative Services/Clerk, Raylene Martell, Director of Community and Economic Development, Michele Harris; Director of Building and Planning Services, Michael Benner; Deputy Clerk, Manager of Communication & IT, Jerri-Lynn Levitt; Facilities Manager, Nathan Stewart; Treasurer, Anna McCarthy, Human Resources Manager, Debbie Yip; Director of Public Utilities, Shawn Moyer; Director of Transportation and Environment, Herb Lemon for presenting to the committee.

The committee would also like to thank Mayor Paul McQueen, Deputy Mayor Aakesh Desai, as well as Councillor Paul Allen, Councillor Tom Allwood, Councillor Cathy Little, as well as Councillor Dane Nielsen for creating this committee and being forward thinking in their declaration of a climate crisis.

The committee would like to thank the following past committee members: Deputy Mayor Aakesh Desai, former Chair, (Cindy) Tess Winget; Janine McGowan and Ingrid Remkins. Thank you for your contributions to this report and being part of the committee.

On Wednesday, July 3, 2019 Grey Highlands Council declared a climate crisis and created this committee, The Climate Action Committee Task Force (CACT). The Terms of Reference for the committee requires the committee to consist of two members of Grey Highlands Council, and at least five community representatives. Under the cloud of the COVID-pandemic, as well as the weight associated with the emotionally draining task of facing the climate crisis, the committee struggled to retain minimum membership requirements; however, the committee persevered and completed a report for which we are proud.

CACT acknowledges this report is one step in a long journey for Grey Highlands, and—despite some obstacles—we think the final product was worth the effort. Saying this, we acknowledge there is much work to do. Grey Highlands is headed in the right direction, and participating in FCM's PCP program means we are not *reinventing the wheel*, and have access to proven tools and best practices.

Sincerely,

Chair Reid Dennison

Councillor Danielle Valiquette

# Introduction

On [Wednesday, June 19, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council declared a climate crisis and created the Grey Highlands Climate Action Committee Task Force (CACT) through resolution 2019-392.

## **2019-392 Danielle Valiquette—Cathy Little**

Whereas the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that the world has less than 12 years to avert the worst impacts of the climate crisis; and

Whereas municipalities will bear the burden of much of the financial damage associated with climate change because of a dramatic increase in costs associated with road maintenance, inland flooding, water quality, winter recreation, and bridges; and

Whereas municipalities across Canada and Ontario are acting on climate change, and since January 2019 40 municipalities across Canada have declared a climate emergency;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Municipality of Grey Highlands officially declare a climate crisis to name and deepen our commitment to protecting our economy, our community, and our eco systems, from the climate crisis. Climate crisis solutions not only reduce carbon output, but they also offer multiple benefits including improved health and air quality, greater community resilience, economic development and reduced costs; and

Be it further resolved that the Municipality of Grey Highlands direct staff to create a Climate Crisis Committee that includes 2 Councillors, and at least 5 community representatives that must include at least one representative from the local business community to work with stakeholders through consultation to develop a fact-based Action Plan for fighting the climate crisis in Grey Highlands; and

That a copy of the resolution be forwarded to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, the Association of Municipalities Ontario, the local MPP Bill Walker, MP Larry Miller and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

The Terms of Reference for the Climate Action Committee Task Force (CACT) can be found at <https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/208429>

## Council Climate Initiatives

In addition to declaring a climate crisis, Grey Highlands Council supports climate initiative through:

- Resolutions—A carried motion of council's opinion and or will.
- Policies, by-laws and programs
- Budgets
- Plans
  - [Strategic Plan](#)
  - [Official Plan](#)

## Resolutions

Grey Highlands Council passed the following climate-positive resolutions:

On [Wednesday, May 1, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council supported the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority through resolution 2019-3268.

### **2019-268 Cathy Little - Paul Allen**

Whereas Climate Change and flooding are mounting threats in Grey and Bruce Counties, and Conservation Authorities provide services including real-time flood forecasting, emergency planning support and water-related studies; and

Whereas, in 1996, the total provincial Section 39 Transfer Payment to all of Ontario's conservation authorities for Flood and Erosion Control and Natural Hazard Prevention was reduced from \$50-million to \$7.4-million, and Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's share of this payment has remained static at \$71,779 since 1996; and

Whereas the recent Provincial Budget has further reduced Grey Sauble Conservation Authority's Section 39 Transfer Payments from \$71,779 to \$37,055 or about 50%; and

Whereas this will affect emergency management supports and municipal planning, zoning and development input activities provided by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority; and

Whereas there is a provincial role in province-wide flood risks reduction and emergency management, and investments in prevention can potentially avoid or reduce losses to life and property and major expenditures during and after an emergency; and

Whereas the Ontario Government's Proposal on the Environmental Registry of Ontario 013-5018 on Modernizing Conservation Authority (CA) Operations

proposes to define a limited list of the core mandatory programs and services for CAs;

Now therefore be it resolved that this municipality recognizes the value provided by the work of the CA, and supports the current multi-municipality governance model for the selection of programs, and the current municipal levying approach that includes annual input from Municipal Councils; and

That this municipality recommends that the province acknowledge a strong and positive provincial role in flood risk reduction programs and reinstate funding to CAs; and

That Municipal Staff be directed to provide a copy of this resolution to the Environmental Registry of Ontario (Proposal 013-5018) prior to the May 21st deadline, to AMO, and to Minister Bill Walker.

On [Wednesday May 15, 2019](#) at a Special Meeting of Council Grey Highlands Council supported a broadband strategy through resolution SPCouncil2019-02.

**SPCouncil2019-02 Cathy Little - Aakash Desai**

That Council direct staff to provide a staff report on options to move forward on a broadband strategy for Grey Highlands.

On [Wednesday October 02, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council supported the Markdale Town Pond Dam Removal through resolution 2019-601.

**2019-601 Paul Allen - Cathy Little**

That Council receive staff report TES.19.30 for information; and

That Council permit staff to proceed with the contract preparation and tendering process in the fall of 2019 for the Markdale Town Pond Dam Removal project; and

That Council consider and approve the Markdale Town Pond Dam Removal project that will be funded within the 2020 Capital budget.

On [Wednesday October 02, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council supported the Conservation Authorities: Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) through resolution 2019-603.

**2019-603 Cathy Little - Dane Nielsen**

Whereas the Municipality of Grey Highlands is a member of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), the Nottawasaga Valley

Conservation Authority (NVCA) and the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) and has a representative on each board of directors; and

Whereas each board of directors determines the policies, priorities and budget of their respective Conservation Authority (CA); and

Whereas each CA provides the Municipality of Grey Highlands with expert advice on the environmental impact of land use planning proposals and that the Municipality does not have staff with comparable expertise or experience; and

Whereas the CAs provide programs and services to the residents of Grey Highlands and other member municipalities that include recreation, education, water quality monitoring, reduction of vegetation loss and soil erosion, preservation of species at risk as well as protecting life and property through a variety of measures;

Therefore be it resolved that the Municipality of Grey Highlands supports continuation of the programs and services of the three CAs, both mandatory and non-mandatory, and that no programs or services of GSCA, NVCA and SVCA or of other CAs in Ontario be “wound down” at this time; and

That the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks give clear direction as to what programs and services are considered mandatory and non-mandatory and how those programs will be funded in the future; and

That this resolution be forwarded to the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Premier Doug Ford, MPP Bill Walker, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority, Conservation Ontario and all Ontario municipalities.

On [Wednesday November 20, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council supported Digital Signatures and Electronic Submissions through resolution 2019-716

**2019-716 Danielle Valiquette - Dane Nielsen**

That Council receive report CLS.19.40 regarding a Policy Related to Digital Signatures and Electronic Submissions; and



That Council direct staff to bring forward a by-law adopting the policy at a future Council meeting.

On [Wednesday December 4, 2019](#) Grey Highlands Council supported MPP Peter Tabuns' motion that "a Select Committee on Climate Change should be established immediately to develop comprehensive provincial strategies and an action plan to address climate-change related threats to our society, environment and economy." through resolution 2019-766.

**2019-766 Danielle Valiquette - Dane Nielsen**

Whereas the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that the warming of our climate is unequivocal and caused by human activities and the impacts of climate change are causing extreme weather events that threaten our well-being; additionally, costs in Canada alone are estimated to be over \$5 billion per year by 2020 and up to \$43 billion per year by 2050; and

Whereas the 2018 joint audit, conducted by the federal Environment Commissioner with nine provincial auditors general, concluded neither governments in Ottawa nor the provinces have assessed the risks a changing climate poses to Ontario and have no assessment of the potential costs; and

Whereas communities across Ontario struggle with the consequences of climate change with increasing frequency and intensity, and that municipalities are on the front lines of climate change hazards like floods, droughts, landslides, forest fires, heatwaves, water shortages, as well as directly influencing approximately half of Canada's energy use and emissions;

Therefore be it resolved that the Municipality of Grey Highlands supports MPP Peter Tabuns' motion that "a Select Committee on Climate Change should be established immediately to develop comprehensive provincial strategies and an action plan to address climate-change related threats to our society, environment and economy."; and

That a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Minister of Finance, Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines, and Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, to local MPP Bill Walker, MP Alex Ruff, to the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), to the Rural Ontario Municipality Association (ROMA), to the County of Grey, as well as the

municipalities of Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs, Meaford, Southgate, Town of Blue Mountains, West Grey and Clearwater.

On [Wednesday, September 16, 2020](#) Grey Highlands Council created The Internet Infrastructure Task Force through resolution 2020-615.

**2020-615 Aakash Desai - Dane Nielsen**

That Council implement a Council task force made of the Deputy Mayor and 2 other members of Council with a mandate to discuss placement of internet infrastructure by various companies on municipal properties and the overall process of improving internet access for Grey Highlands; and

That Council direct staff to bring forward a Terms of Reference for the task force.

On [Wednesday, November 18, 2020](#) Grey Highlands Council called on the Province of Ontario to work with conservation authorities to address their concerns and to remove Schedule 6 from Bill 229 which affects changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act through resolution 2020-747.

**2020-747 Cathy Little - Dane Nielsen**

Whereas the Province has introduced Bill 229, Protect, Support and Recover from COVID 19 Act - Schedule 6 – Conservation Authorities Act; and

Whereas the Legislation introduces a number of changes and new sections that could remove and/or significantly hinder the conservation authorities' role in regulating development, permit appeal process and engaging in review and appeal of planning applications; and

Whereas we, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, rely on the watershed expertise provided by local conservation authorities to protect residents, property and local natural resources on a watershed basis by regulating development and engaging in reviews of applications submitted under the Planning Act; and Whereas the changes allow the Minister to make decisions without CA watershed data and expertise; and

Whereas the Legislation suggests that the Minister will have the ability to establish standards and requirements for non-mandatory programs which are negotiated between the conservation authorities and municipalities to meet local watershed needs; and

Whereas these proposed changes will impact Ontario's ability to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change by undermining the work of

conservation authorities to keep development out of high risk areas and protect natural infrastructure; and

Whereas municipalities require a longer transition time to put in place agreements with conservation authorities for non-mandatory programs; and

Whereas municipalities believe that the appointment of municipal representatives on conservation authority Boards should be a municipal decision; and the Chair and Vice Chair of the conservation authority Board should be elected as per the discretion of the conservation authority Board; and

Whereas the changes to the 'Duty of Members' contradicts the fiduciary duty of a conservation authority board member to represent the best interests of the conservation authority and its responsibility to the watershed; and

Whereas conservation authorities have already been working with the Province, development sector and municipalities to streamline and speed up permitting and planning approvals through Conservation Ontario's Client Service and Streamlining Initiative; and

Whereas changes to the legislation will create more administrative burden and costs for the conservation authorities, and their municipal partners, and potentially result in delays in the development approval process; and

Whereas the combined contribution of municipal levy and self generated revenues support 93% of the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority budget; and

Whereas the Provincial contribution to this budget is 7%, the majority of which is for Drinking Water Source Protection; and

Whereas municipalities value and rely on the natural habitats and water resources within our jurisdiction for the health and well-being of residents; municipalities value the conservation authorities' work to prevent and manage the impacts of flooding and other natural hazards; and municipalities value the conservation authority's work to ensure safe drinking water; now

Therefore be it resolved that the Province of Ontario work with conservation authorities to address their concerns by removing Schedule

6 from Bill 229 which affects changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and the Planning Act; and

That the Province of Ontario delay enactment of clauses affecting municipal concerns; and

That the Province of Ontario provide a longer transition period up to December 2022 for non-mandatory programs to enable coordination of conservation authority-municipal budget processes; and

That the Province respect the current conservation authority/municipal relationships; and

That the Province embrace their long-standing partnership with the conservation authorities and provide them with the tools and financial resources they need to effectively implement their watershed management role.

On [December 16, 2020](#) the Municipality joined the ICLEI Canada PCP program through resolution 2020-794. By participating in the PCP program, Grey Highlands is part of a network of over 350 municipal governments committed to reducing GHG emissions that are causing climate change.

**2020-794 Cathy Little - Dane Nielsen**

Whereas The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and ICLEI–Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI Canada) have established the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program to provide a forum for municipal governments to share their knowledge and experience with other municipal governments on how to reduce GHG emissions; and

Whereas over 350 municipal governments across Canada representing more than 65 per cent of the population have already committed to reducing corporate and community GHG emissions through the PCP program since its inception in 1994; and

Whereas the PCP program is based on a five-milestone framework that involves completing a GHG inventory and forecast, setting a GHG reduction target, developing a local action plan, implementing the plan, and monitoring progress and reporting results; now therefore

Be it resolved that the municipality of Grey Highlands review the guidelines on PCP Member Benefits and Responsibilities and then communicate to FCM and ICLEI Canada its participation in the PCP program and its commitment to achieving the milestones set out in the PCP five-milestone framework; and

Be it further resolved that the municipality of Grey Highlands appoint the Karen Govan, CAO as the corporate staff member and Danielle Valiquette, Councillor as the elected official member.

## Budget

Council approved the following climate initiative through budget process:

Year	Supported Initiative
2019	Put 100K in reserve for supporting an increase in broadband coverage
2020	Introduced an emerald ash borer tree removal program. Undertook an environmental services review to assist with the implementation of provincially legislated changes for waste diversion programs. Invested in electric/hybrid vehicles.
2021	Invested in community gardens.

## Grey Highlands Strategic Plan

On the environment-front, the [Grey Highlands Strategic Plan](#) is forward-thinking and proactive.

The Grey Highlands Strategic Plan was endorsed by council on [Wednesday, September 18, 2019](#). The following excerpt is taken from the Strategic Plan.

### **Respected Environment**

The underlying theme throughout the Municipality's Strategic Plan is to develop priorities and goals that address Council's declaration of a climate crisis.

### **Direction**

The Municipality of Grey Highlands aspires to be a community that co-exists in harmony with its ecosystems, where natural areas are enhanced, forests and valleys are protected and communities are nurtured so that future generations will enjoy a clean, flourishing lifestyle.

### **Principle**

The Municipality of Grey Highlands is a region that values its shared responsibility to leave a legacy of a clean and nourishing natural environment while respecting our community's heritage.

### **Priorities**

- Develop a Climate Crisis Action Plan in conjunction with Grey County and other community partners.
- Implement waste-diversion practices at all Municipal facilities and events.
- Manage Municipal resources in a responsible and sustainable manner considering future needs for adaptation and community resiliency.
- Prioritize the stewardship of our lakes, rivers, and natural environment when making planning decisions pertaining to Municipal growth and development.
- Adopt an environmentally conscious mindset for all Municipal undertakings including procurement, development, and redevelopment of Municipal facilities.

## The Grey Highlands Official Plan - Land Use and Climate Change

The Grey Highlands Official Plan<sup>1</sup> was reviewed by CACT. There are few references to climate, but a perusal of the plan reveals the following:

From section 2 - Themes Goals and Objectives – 2.1 Planning Themes

This Plan supports energy conservation and efficiency, improved air quality, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and climate change adaptation through land use and development patterns which promote compact form; promotes the use of *Active Transportation*; and promotes design and orientation which maximizes energy efficiency.

In section 4.5 “Settlement Areas”, the plan indicates a commitment to responsible, climate-conscious housing and land development (although without specifically mentioning concern for climate).

Relevant excerpts:

4.5 “The Primary Settlement Area (Markdale) and Secondary Settlement Area (Flesherton) identified in this plan represent Settlement Areas within the Municipality where the majority of growth will be directed.”

and

“The policies of this plan identify settlement areas as the focus of growth and encourage appropriate development that does not negatively impact on natural resources and which is compatible with the surrounding land uses. This plan shall ensure a proper and orderly street pattern facilitating safe motor vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian travel, efficient use of services, and a variety of housing and development opportunities within the settlement areas. “(emphasis added)

4.5.1 (Markdale)

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<sup>1</sup> Last revised /adopted in 2015, and approved by Grey County in September 2017

(c) That an overall average residential development density of 20 units per net hectare will be achieved.

(e) This plan encourages intensification opportunities within Markdale and supports the development of intensification strategies to ensure that residential targets are met and that a variety of housing options are available to residents.

(g) Infilling within Markdale shall be defined as the creation of up to 5 new lots by consent.

#### 4.5.2 (Flesherton)

(b) Development shall only be permitted to allow for the development of vacant and/or underutilized lots, as well as the creation of lots,...

(d) Infilling in Flesherton shall be defined as the creation of less than four new lots, provided the potential lot creation on the property is not more than four new lots.

## The Climate Action Committee Task Force

The first meeting of CACT was December 12, 2019 and the committee met twice per month until March 5, 2020 when the committee paused because of the global pandemic. CACT began meeting electronically on November 5, 2020, and continued to meet with the last meeting on Thursday June 17, 2021.

All CACT agendas can be found at

<https://greyhighlands.civicweb.net/filepro/documents/238650>.

The following was CACT's mandate:

- To review best practices related to Municipal Climate Action Plans (CAP)
- Investigate how other Municipalities are addressing the Climate Crisis
- To develop a fact-based Climate Action Plan for Grey Highlands
- To review the recommendations within the Report prepared for the County of Grey titled "Climate-Conscious Grey" for inclusion in the Municipal plan to reduce duplication of efforts
- To present a Climate Action Plan for Grey Highlands to Council for consideration which includes recommendations for:
  - potential actions by Municipal staff and the public,
  - community engagement mechanisms and public education outreach,
  - policy direction, and
  - strategic priorities
- To present a semi-annual update to Council

## Departmental Presentations

Each Grey Highlands department presented to the committee about its contribution to climate action. The following tables summarize the staff reports on departments' climate initiatives:

Department	Climate Initiatives
Council and Legislatives Services (February 6, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduced travel through teams.</li> <li>● Reduced paper documents and printouts dramatically.</li> <li>● Implemented (in-progress) an electronic Records Management program.</li> <li>● Adopted a policy accepting digital signatures.</li> <li>● Implement online forms.</li> <li>● Implemented online payments for some items.</li> </ul>
Transportation and Environmental Services (February 6, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Optimized snow plow routes to minimize cross overs.</li> <li>● Used operations oil is recycled with GFL.</li> <li>● New asphalt roads contain RAP “Up to 15% of RAP can be used in HL 3, HL 3F, HL 4, and HL 4F surface course”, OPSS 1150.</li> <li>● Optimized recycling programs, curbside blue box and WDS diversion programs.</li> <li>● Implemented GPS fleet tracking to monitor and report on idling</li> <li>● Paperless Invoice coding</li> <li>● Purchased electrotonic sand/salt spreaders to reduce produce used and reduces cleanup.</li> <li>● Utilize advancing technology in products that are used day to day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Shop gloves (switch to biodegradable)</li> <li>○ Re-Use tires by having them “re-treaded”</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Electron tendering and bid submission, reduce paper dependence.</li> </ul>
Human Resources (February 20, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implemented electronic documentation, meetings and online training, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Paperless application process</li> <li>○ Paperless requests for time off &amp; approvals</li> <li>○ Electronic timecards</li> <li>○ Online access to pay statements</li> <li>○ Employee claims online</li> <li>○ Employee handbook online</li> <li>○ Electronic employee files</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Planning Services (February 20, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Implemented paperless electronic building permit application process submission, review and approvals.</li> <li>● New Hybrid vehicle purchase in 2020 for Building Services.</li> <li>● Part of Climate Action plan to upgrade Building Services vehicles to hybrid and/or electric vehicles over the next 4 years.</li> </ul>
Finance Department (February 20, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reduced paper consumption with eServices</li> <li>● Work with departments to provide financial information to help measure the financial benefits of climate initiatives</li> <li>● Create measurable and achievable goals, for example, in 2020 we will reduce pages printed in the Finance Department by 50%</li> </ul>



## Grey's "Climate-Conscious Grey" Report

On [December 12, 2019](#) the committee reviewed the recommendations prepared for the County of Grey titled "[Climate-Conscious Grey: Developing a Climate Change Action Plan in Grey County, Ontario](#)" for inclusion in the Grey Highlands plan in an effort to reduce duplication of efforts.

## Opportunities from Climate-Conscious Grey Report

The following opportunities were noted by the Climate-Conscious Grey Report authors:

- Many municipalities and departments expressed that telecommuting is underused, causing high levels of GHG emissions from staff commuting to government facilities.
- Some areas of the County lack broadband, making it difficult for residents to access municipal services over the internet. This increases the number of people driving long distances to visit government offices.
- There is little inter-community public transit available, necessitating the use of cars for most inter-community travel.
- While other municipalities continue to widely use hard copies, departments within Grey Highlands are widely using an electronic-based system.
- Multiple municipalities and departments operate their own fleets of gas-powered vehicles, including cars and heavy work vehicles.
- Several municipalities and departments mentioned ongoing efforts to retrofit lights to LEDs in government facilities. Efforts to retrofit roadway illumination seem to have been particularly successful. However, many non-LEDs remain in government facilities which should be upgraded.
- Transportation Services uses large amounts of pavement to construct and repair roads. While roads are necessary, there are models available to optimize the selection of pavement types to produce fewer GHG emissions, based on local climate and traffic (White et al., 2010). These models could be used to create a road design climate change impact management plan.
- Despite efforts by some municipalities to upgrade to efficient heating, many government buildings remain which need improvements to windows, and doors.
- Land use policy change is essential to the development of better localized climate change strategies. Land use planning therefore needs to be an area of focus to truly reduce its GHG emissions.
- Grey County will need to be sure it has established a baseline from which it is starting, indicators by which to measure progress, and a suitable goal and timeline.

## Recommendations from Climate-Conscious Grey Report

The following recommendations were noted by the Climate-Conscious Grey Report authors:

### Planning

- Make changes to land use planning policy that will guarantee intensification in settlement areas.
- Implement minimum density thresholds in any new greenfield developments within settlement areas. (Curb sprawl and promote efficient service delivery.)
- Incentivize infilling within settlement areas.
- The creation of new lots and re-zoning for residential use should be strictly limited outside of settlement areas, and demonstrate a need for housing and a lack of suitable alternatives or an association with a resource-based recreational use.
- Create a scoring system to be applied to new development proposals which evaluates walkability, density, natural feature protection, and climate change preparedness.
- Protect plant life, shoreline, and other natural features to help offset local impact on climate change.

### **Operations**

- Track monthly energy consumption of all municipally-owned buildings and provide an annual report to council.
- Create their own facility and equipment retrofit plan.
- All government buildings should be equipped with setback timers to reduce energy wasted for lighting.
- Create a no-idling policy for all municipal vehicles.
- Upgrade all municipal lighting to LEDs.
- Consider telecommuting options.
- Create options for allowing the public to interact with the municipality via the internet wherever possible.
- Work to ensure broadband access.
- Create a policy against unnecessary use of hard copies of documents.
- Ensure that there are digital copies available of all applications and permits.
- Consider creating and implementing a road design climate change impact management plan to ensure that construction and repairs of roads use materials that minimize carbon emissions
- Equip roads with paved shoulders to encourage active transportation.
- Work with the County to implement a standard tree-replacement policy to ensure that all trees removed from government lands are replaced at a 2:1 ratio.
- Create a policy to purchase electric rather than gas-powered vehicles when replacing old vehicles, except in cases where current electric vehicles are not suitable, such as in road construction.
- Form a baseline inventory of all municipal sources of GHG emissions.
- Set targets to evaluate progress towards objectives.
- Update mapping systems and data before planning and developing areas that may have flood risk potential in the future.
- Maintain baseline data to inform key planning decisions and strategic climate mitigation strategies, as this is vital to preparing and repairing vulnerable areas from climate change events.

- Create a point of contact and appoint a sustainability committee with government representatives, experts and members of the local community .
- Form partnerships and procure funding from all levels of stakeholders to fill funding gaps for implementing climate change strategy.
- Continue to foster a relationship with conservation authorities within the jurisdiction, as well as the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC).
- Integrate natural heritage systems strategies across municipal boundaries.
- Implement policy feedback and evaluation tools to maintain and monitor policy direction.

## Municipal Climate Reports

Across Canada, the number of climate plans are increasing, though many of the more fulsome reports are authored by larger cities like [Vancouver](#) (May 20,2021), [Montreal](#) (January 7, 2021), and [Brampton](#) (May 20, 2021).

No matter the municipality's size, common elements of a municipal climate action plan include:

- A GHG inventory
- GHG reduction measures
- GHG reduction targets
- A forecast GHG emissions
- Some statement regarding implementation of the climate action plan

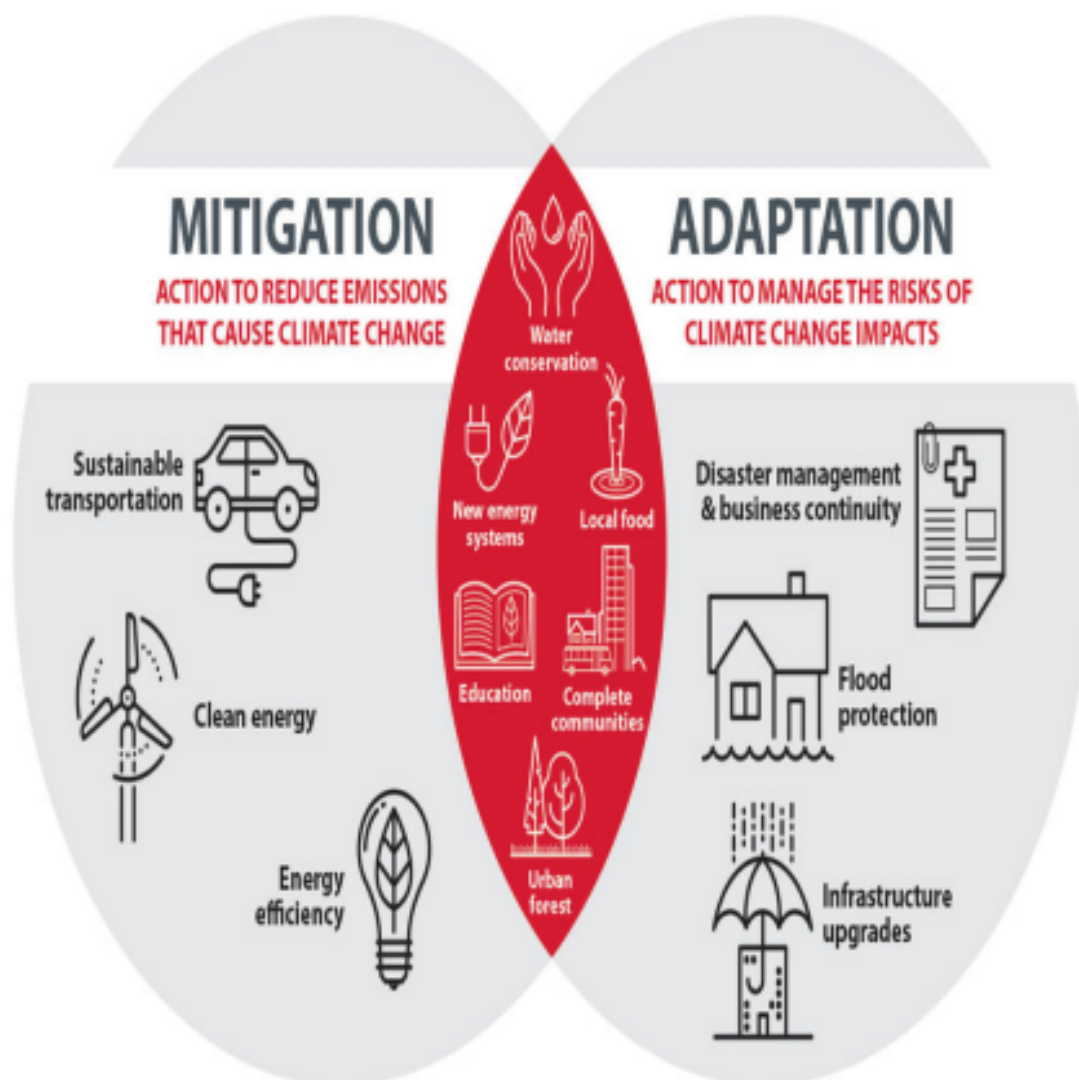
Some municipal climate strategies include a goal of being carbon neutral by a specified year.

As discussed in Climate Conscious Grey, municipalities have two main objectives when creating a localized climate change strategy:

- **Mitigating:** Addresses the causes of GHG emissions and; therefore, reduces the impacts.
- **Adapting:** Reduces the negative effects of climate change

The diagram from the task force's [February 6, 2020](#) agenda helps illustrate the difference between mitigation and adaptation tactics, and where the two overlap.

Though many reports explored both mitigation and adaptation, some only spoke to mitigation strategies.



In addition to the plans from Vancouver, Montreal and Brampton, the following climate action plans (CAP) were received in the Consent Agenda section:

- [Brampton](#) (May 20, 2021)
- [Clarington](#) (April 15, 2021)
- [Huron County](#) (May 6, 2021)
- [Midland](#) (May 6, 2021)
- [The City of New Westminster](#) (May 20, 2021)
- [Owen Sound](#) (May 20, 2021)
- [Peterborough](#) (May 6, 2021)
- [Simcoe](#) (May 20, 2021)
- [Thunder Bay](#) (May 20, 2021)

Not all municipalities take a “stand-alone” approach to climate action strategies; additionally, there are examples of lower-tier municipalities working in cooperation with their upper-level municipality, for example, the [Greater Peterborough Area](#) (GPA) works with the City of Peterborough, Peterborough County and its eight member townships (Asphodel-Norwood, Cavan Monaghan, Douro-Dummer, Havelock-BelmontMethuen, North Kawartha, Otonabee South-Monaghan, Selwyn, and Trent Lakes), as well as Curve Lake First Nation and Hiawatha First Nation.

## Municipal Climate Best Practices

[The Small and Rural Communities Guidebook](#) was reviewed as a consent item on May 20, 2020. The guidebook was prepared by the [Partners for Climate Protection](#) (PCP) program to provide context for climate action under a small and rural communities lens it:

- Discusses principles and strategies that underpin climate action planning, create community buy-in, and set communities up for successful plan development and implementation.
- Lays out the business case for municipal climate action
- Discusses climate actions municipal sectors:
  - Buildings
  - Transportation
  - Land use
  - Waste
  - Development of agriculture, resources and tourism (DART)

According to the report, small and rural communities have a unique advantages allowing for “the incubation of innovative ideas and solutions” because of:

- Closer relationships among municipal departments and with community stakeholders.
- Fewer public and municipal stakeholders may remove some of the administrative and bureaucratic barriers to implementation.
- Local climate champions and community organizations can play a more significant and impactful role.

## Moving Forward with FCM

According to their website, [FCM](#) (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) brings together nearly 2,000 municipalities of all sizes and represents more than 90 percent of Canadians. Grey Highlands is an active member of FCM.

FCM focuses on several issues and hosts several programs including, as reviewed throughout this report, the [PCP](#) (Partners for Climate Protection) program.

## The PCP Program

PCP is managed and delivered by FCM and [ICLEI](#) (Local Governments for Sustainability Canada). The program consists of a framework to help Grey Highlands take action against climate change by reducing emissions.

According to the PCP, local government's have a role in responding to climate change through:

- Land Use and Development Planning
- Licensing and Regulation
- Operations

The first step in the PCP program was to pass a joining resolution through council. This step was satisfied in December of [2020](#) when Council appointed Karen Govan, CAO as the corporate staff member and Danielle Valiquette, Councillor as the elected official member.

Over the next 10 years, Grey Highlands will move through the PCP Milestone Framework, and report on progress annually to Council.

The following is the PCP Milestone Framework:

Milestone 1: Create a Baseline Emissions Inventory and Forecast

Milestone 2: Set Emissions Reduction Targets

Milestone 3: Develop a Local Action Plan

Milestone 4: Implement the Local Action Plan

Milestone 5: Monitor Progress and Report Results

The PCP Milestone Tool is a web-based tool to help Grey Highlands:

- Develop knowledge and skills.
- Estimate the potential GHG reductions from different policies, programs and initiatives.
- Set targets and track GHG reductions.
- Create and maintain a GHG inventory.
- Easily collect and submit PCP milestone documents.
- Share Grey Highlands emissions profile with a public dashboard.

The successful implementation of the PCP depends largely on four factors:

- Continued Council support
- Senior Management support
- Funding<sup>2</sup>
- Partnerships – Partners may include utility companies, conservation authorities, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and community groups. Grey other municipalities, interdepartmental cooperation
- Staff Capacity

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<sup>2</sup> As per standard municipal practice, staff will continue to develop a business case for each action requiring funding, as well as continue to explore available funding opportunities and cost-sharing partnerships where possible.

The PCP program will support the Municipality with implementation tools for:

- Communications
- Education and Training
- Pilots
- Policy

As per the PCP program, the Municipality will monitor and evaluate its climate actions on an ongoing basis.

## Committee Recommendations

The following are the committee recommendations, and suggested next steps for Council. The committee suggests that Council:

- Continue to support Ontario's Conservation Authorities through resolutions, membership and so on.
- Continue to support the Grey Highlands Strategic Plan, and continue to hold an environmental lens to all decisions.
- Continue to support staff initiatives through climate-forward policies, by-laws, resolutions, long-term plans and budgetary decisions.
- Work with the County on opportunities to collaborate.
- Continue with the FCM's PCP program; report annually to Council, instead of bi-annually as suggested by the PCP program.

The following are the committee's short-listed priorities:

- Expand Broadband coverage across Grey Highlands.
- Create an Electric Vehicle Policy and Electric Charging Stations Plan.
- Create a no-idle vehicle education program.
- Explore funding opportunities intended to fund initiatives for retrofitting and providing funds for new construction of energy efficient facilities.
- Create and implement policy feedback and evaluation tools to maintain and monitor policy direction.
- Encourage the "wilding" of municipal properties. Discourage or ban the use of pesticides (nonagricultural).
- Explore a Municipal policy that ensures all gardening and landscapes on municipal lands use a noninvasive species that is natural to Grey Highlands.
- Implement a policy of no single use plastic bags in local stores (e.g grocery stores).
- Complete a Wholesome Energy Audit of all municipally owned facilities.
  - efficient heating, windows and doors
  - tracking energy consumption
  - facility and equipment retrofit plan
  - setback timers to reduced energy wasted

- Encourage new developments are built with the best energy conservation and demand management technologies.
- The Grey Highlands Official Plan should include natural heritage protection to protect plant life, shoreline, and other natural features that offset the local impact on climate change.
- Form municipal partnerships between county and municipality to create a comprehensive plan that can integrate natural heritage systems strategies across municipal boundaries. Collaborate with adjacent municipalities and conservation authorities to create a complete natural heritage systems linkage strategy built upon recommendations from the Green to Grey study.
- Encourage that new developments are built with the best technologies to help mitigate extreme weather events.
- Harness Solar energy on municipal buildings.
- Make settlement areas more walk friendly—encourage walking and active transportation. ex. paving shoulders.
- Support/create community gardens, for example, through the use of municipal lands. The municipality is already working towards community gardens.
- Support relationship with groups willing to work on carbon sequestering on municipal lands.
- Utilize available pavement materials to produce fewer GHG emissions, based on local climate and traffic.
- Develop an organic waste strategy including a composting strategy as part of the Grey Highlands Waste Management plan. A strategy should explore if a solution to collect organics in our mostly rural municipality generates more GHGs from transportation than additional benefits. The municipality might also explore composting at home.
- Look for opportunities for GH to sequester carbon, such as through tree-planting, soil remediation, or increased use of wood in facilities construction. Additionally, look at what policies we could create or amend, to encourage landowners to sequester carbon.

## **Suggested Next Steps**

CACT recommends that Grey Highlands Council:

- Receive this report, and refer it to staff for comments.
- Continue to support the FCM's PCP program, and ask for staff to report annually to Council on progress.
- Once staff comments on the report, defer the commented report for public comment.<sup>3</sup>
- Once any changes are made, Council should endorse the CAP with both a resolution and an CAP implementation statement.
- Strengthen the Strategic Plan, by continuing to act upon its priorities.

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<sup>3</sup> CACT refrains from determining how the public should be consulted, just that it should be.



## Future Opportunities

Though the committee believes this report is a positive step in the right direction, there are several opportunities left unexplored. The committee would have liked more time to examine possible climate opportunities with the municipality and the agriculture community.

Additionally, there was no Indigenous consultation with this draft.

The committee would like to see these addressed in future iterations.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the committee is encouraged by Grey Highlands' Council and staff's climate initiatives. Council's climate initiatives included several resolutions in support of Conservation Authorities; additionally, Council has shown support for environmentally significant programs like the Boer Ash Removal Project and The Markdale Pond Project. High-level plans like the Grey Highlands [Strategic Plan](#) and the Grey Highlands [Official Plan](#) are climate friendly documents that should be strengthened when revisited by this and future Councils.

As Grey Highlands staff have not had the opportunity to comment on this report; therefore, the committee suggests that Grey Highlands Council refer this report to staff for their comments. Additionally, Grey Highlands should continue to support the FCM's PCP program with staff reporting annually to Council.

Once staff comments on the report, the committee would like Council to seek public comment. Once any changes are made, Council should endorse the CAP.

## Glossary

**Carbon Footprint**—The total amount of carbon generated by an individual, event, organization, service or product over a period of time.

**Carbon Neutral**—Achieving net zero carbon dioxide emissions by balancing carbon dioxide emissions with removal (often through carbon offsetting) or by eliminating carbon dioxide emissions altogether.

**Carbon Sequestration**—The process of capturing and storing carbon dioxide naturally through trees and plants or through the capture and storage of CO<sub>2</sub> produced by industry.

**Climate**—The overall weather conditions of a place over an extended period of time. Unlike short-term weather events, climate is relatively stable and predictable over time.

**Climate Adaptation**—An action or initiative taken to help adjust to actual or expected climate impacts, which reduce the effects of climate change on people, society, infrastructure, and/or the environment.

**Climate Change**—Changes in global or regional climate patterns caused by natural phenomena and human activity that alter the chemical composition of the atmosphere through the build-up of greenhouse gases.

**Climate Impact**—The effects of extreme weather and climate change on natural and human systems. Impacts generally refer to effects on health, ecosystems, economies, societies, cultures, services, and infrastructure.

**Fossil Fuels** – Fuels containing carbon that were formed as a result of geologic processes acting on the remains of organic matter produced by photosynthesis. Fossil fuel sources include coal, oil and natural gas.

**Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions**—Natural and industrial gases that stop heat energy from escaping the Earth's atmosphere, resulting in global warming. Water vapour (H<sub>2</sub>O), carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) are the primary GHGs in the Earth's atmosphere.

**Mitigation**—Actions that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere, including policy, regulatory and project-based measures. Examples of mitigation actions include renewable energy and energy efficiency programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Renewable Energy**—Any form of energy from solar, geophysical or biological sources that is replenished by natural processes at a rate that equals or exceeds its rate of use. The five renewable sources that are used most often are wind, solar, biomass, hydropower and geothermal.

**Weather**—The short-term atmospheric conditions of a specific location, including temperature, cloudiness, rainfall, wind and other meteorological conditions.

## Acronyms

**FCM**—Federation of Canadian Municipalities

**GHG**—Greenhouse Gases

**ICCWG**—Interdepartmental Climate Change Working Group

**ICLEI**—International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives

**IPCC**—Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

**KPI**—Key Performance Indicators

**MCIP**—Federation of Canadian Municipalities Municipal Climate Innovation Program

**OCC** – Ontario Climate Consortium

**PCP**—Partners for Climate Protection