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Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty and Plant Based Treaty Information Report

Information Report

Report Number: INFO-2025-04

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Distribution Date: February 26, 2025

In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

Executive Summary

This report responds to a Council motion regarding the Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty (FF Treaty) and the Plant-Based Treaty (PB Treaty) presented by concerned citizen groups in Newmarket. It provides an overview of both treaties through the lens of the Town's climate change initiatives.

The FF Treaty aims to halt the expansion of new fossil fuel projects, phase out existing production, in-line with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target, and support a just transition to renewable energy. The citizen group Climate Action Newmarket-Aurora (CANA) advocated for the Town to endorse the FF Treaty as a logical follow-up to its 2020 Climate Emergency Declaration.

The PB Treaty, modeled after the FF Treaty, highlights the significant role that global food systems, particularly animal agriculture, play in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. It encourages a shift to plant-based diets and supports land restoration and reforestation to mitigate climate change. A second citizen group requested Council to consider endorsing this treaty.

Discussion and Alignment with Current Town Initiatives:

Many of the treaty recommendations align with the Town's ongoing efforts to address climate change, including:

1. **Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels (FF Treaty):** Council's Environmental Sustainability priority supports efforts to preserve environmental assets and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. The elimination of natural gas in provincial energy generation, along with a transition to carbon-free transportation and services, aligns with existing climate goals.
2. **Fair Phase-Out of Fossil Fuels (FF Treaty):** The Town is updating its Community Energy Plan (CEP) and is seeking funding to launch the Newmarket Energy Efficiency Retrofit (NEER) program, which focuses on reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Additionally, the Town is exploring a Green Fleet Strategy which would recommend pathways to decarbonize municipal operations over time.
3. **Just Transition (FF Treaty):** Programs like NEER and the forthcoming Green Development Standards support a just transition by ensuring no community is left behind during the energy shift. Additionally, local efforts complement the Federal government's EV infrastructure goals.
4. **Relinquish (PB Treaty):** The Town has no land dedicated to livestock farming but could explore opportunities like vertical farming in employment lands, which may contribute to emissions reductions and food security.
5. **Redirect (PB Treaty):** Increasing the availability of plant-based food options at public events could support inclusive dietary choices, while reducing environmental impacts
6. **Restore (PB Treaty):** Existing efforts in Low Impact Development (LID), urban forestry, and stormwater management align with the PB Treaty's goals of ecosystem restoration and nature-based climate solutions.

The principles of the FF Treaty and the PB Treaty align with many of the Town's existing climate initiatives and priorities. The Town has already taken steps to support fossil fuel reduction, energy efficiency, and nature-based solutions, demonstrating a commitment to climate action. Council may consider whether endorsing these treaties would further reinforce these efforts and align with broader sustainability goals.

Purpose

On June 24, 2024, the Climate Action Newmarket - Aurora (CANA) citizen's group presented a deputation to Council concerning the International Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty, Council referred to Staff the matter regarding the Town Community Energy Plan and the Treaty.

On September 16, 2024, a separate group of citizens deputed to Council concerning the Plant Based Treaty.

This report is in response to the Council motion regarding the Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty and provides additional information on plant-based alternatives through a Town Climate Change lens.

Background

Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty

[Link to CANA deputation slide deck from June 24, 2024](#)

The global crisis has reached unprecedented levels of urgency. Rising average temperatures, increasing frequency of extreme weather events, and accelerating sea-level rise are clear indicators of the profound impact of human activities on the planet. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions must be reduced by 45% before 2030 as compared to 2010 levels and achieve net-zero by 2050. If it feels like every time you hear the IPCC recommendations they get shorter and shorter, it is because they are. As scientists continue to collect and analyze the data, the scientific community agrees a greater magnitude of change is required at a much sooner rate than previously thought.

The intent of the International Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuel Treaty (FF Treaty) is to support strategic initiatives aimed at halting the expansion of new coal, oil, and gas projects. It seeks to manage the transition away from fossil fuels and is designed to complement other international agreements that Canada has signed on to.

There are three pillars that build the foundation for the FF Treaty:

- i. **Non-Proliferation:** Globally ending the expansion of coal, oil, and gas production at the source.
- ii. **Fair Phase-Out:** Establishing an equitable pathway for the rapid reduction of existing fossil fuel production in alignment with the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C target.
- iii. **Just Transition:** Accelerating the global shift to renewable energy an economic diversification away from fossil fuels, ensuring that no communities are left behind in this transition.

Climate Action Newmarket - Aurora (CANA) is a concerned citizen's group calling for the Town to join other municipalities in supporting the FF Treaty. CANA highlighted in their deputation that while declaring a climate emergency is a commendable first step, it lacks actionable follow-up measures, and they propose that endorsing the FF Treaty represents a logical next step.

In terms of non-proliferation, CANA suggests that the Town should support the elimination of natural gas from provincial energy generation and transition to carbon-free transportation, services, and developments. For the fair phase out pillar, CANA envisions incorporating decarbonization strategies into updates of the Conservation Demand Management Plan Update (CDMP) and Community Energy Plan Update (CEP). Lastly, CANA proposed several actions to address the just transition pillar, including:

- Approval of the Newmarket Energy Efficiency Retrofit (NEER) program

- The implementation of a building plan for new low-carbon structures; and
- The exploration of low-carbon or zero carbon solutions

Plant Based Treaty

[Link to Plant Based Treaty deputation slide deck from September 16, 2024](#)

Modelled after the FF Treaty, the Plant Based Treaty (PB Treaty) recognizes that the global food systems contribute about a third of all GHG emissions¹, and of that about 57%² is related to the production of animal-based foods. Inferring from those statistics, animal-based foods account for almost 20% of global emissions. The PB Treaty strives to encourage more people to return to the recommendations of the Canada Dietary Guidelines (better known as the Canada Food Guide) by including, reducing, or eliminating animal-based products and focussing on vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and plant-based protein foods. Not only would a large reduction of animal-based products reduce GHG emissions, but it would also reduce premature mortality, and stress on the healthcare system due to improved resident health. One study estimates “the monetized value of the improvements in health would be comparable with, or exceed, the value of the environmental benefits”³

Similar to the FF Treaty, the PB Treaty has three pillars:

- Relinquish:** Halt land conversion for animal agriculture, including new farms and deforestation.
- Redirect:** Shift to plant-based food systems through policy, subsidies, education, and support for small farmers.
- Restore:** Reforest and restore ecosystems, protecting marine and terrestrial environments, and promote nature-based climate solutions.

Discussion

Many of the recommendations provided by CANA, and pillars of the FF Treaty and the PB Treaty align with work the Town is already undertaking or would require minimal effort to support.

1. Non-Proliferation – FF Treaty

Under the Environmental sustainability Council priority, the intent is to preserve our environmental assets and address climate change for our future generations. It is well understood and documented in the various IPCC reports, that increasing the use of fossil fuels will increase the rate and magnitude of climate change. To further support the Town’s 2020 Climate Emergency Declaration, climate change initiatives, and council priority, Council could adopt CANA’s recommendation to support the elimination of

¹ (Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions, 2021)

² (Global greenhouse gas emissions from animal-based foods are twice those of plant-based foods, 2021)

³ (Analysis and valuation of the health and climate change cobenefits of dietary change, 2016)

natural gas from provincial energy generation and transition to carbon-free transportation, services, and developments because this focus aligns with the Town's Council Priorities and Plans.

2. Fair Phase-Out – FF Treaty

The Town is currently updating the 2016 CEP. As part of this update, Council will have the opportunity to approve an alignment of the Town's Community energy and GHG targets with York Region's Climate Action Plan and the recommendations from the IPCC. To achieve the current CEP targets, and any future target updates, decarbonization will be a necessary strategy. Decarbonization refers to the replacement of fossil fuels in various processes and technologies with clean, lower-carbon, or renewable energy, removing the net carbon emissions. The Town's Newmarket Energy Efficiency Retrofit (NEER) program aims to replace fossil fuel fired furnaces with air-sourced heat pumps that run on electricity from Ontario's mostly clean electricity grid.

Currently, the Town is exploring a Green Fleet Strategy. This strategy will look to identify possible pathways to partially, or fully decarbonize the Town's Fleet by 2050, depending on technological advancements in the 2030s. More information on the Green Fleet Strategy will be provided to Council at a later date.

As of July 1, 2024, the Town completed an update to the Conservation Demand Management Plan (CDMP). The CDMP was developed in accordance with the requirements described in Ontario Regulation 25/23 – Broader Public Sector: Energy Reporting and Conservation Demand Management Plans and addresses energy use (electricity and natural gas) at Town owned facilities. In the CDMP, each facility has a breakdown of the recommended Energy Conservation Measures intended to be completed over the next five years. While the current CDMP does not address a long-term plan to fully decarbonize each facility, this can be considered in future updates of the plan, which are currently legislated to be completed every 5 years. The current CDMP however, does target a 10% reduction in total energy consumption through the Energy Conservation Measures by 2028.

A fair phase-out approach to fossil fuel use is something the Town is already working toward, and continuation would remain aligned with the Council Priority and this pillar of the FF Treaty.

3. Just Transition – FF Treaty

On June 24, 2024, Council endorsed the [NEER program business plan](#), and directed staff to apply to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for funding to implement the program. The details of this program have been discussed in the previous section, but the impact from successful implementation of the program will also support the Just Transition pillar of the FF Treaty. One of CANA's recommendations was for Council to approve the NEER program. Following confirmation of successful funding from FCM, and the negotiation of an Implementation Amendment with the NEER

Implementation Partner, Council will have the opportunity to approve the launch of the NEER program.

With the ever-increasing market share of EVs in Ontario, a significant shift in charging infrastructure availability to support the shift will be needed. Natural Resources Canada recently released a report identifying a combined approach between public and private sector to facilitate the shift by 2040. To achieve this, the report recommends 30% of existing spaces in multifamily buildings are retrofitted with EV charging by 2030, and 60% by 2035⁴. Further to that, the report recommends all new housing to be EV ready starting in 2030.

Newmarket has started with 5 public locations for a total of 10 charging ports. To further accelerate infrastructure installation, it is anticipated the forthcoming Newmarket Green Development Standards (GDS) will include metrics on EV charging readiness and availability related to different types of development.

Green Development Standards are a set of metrics introduced by municipalities that aim to reduce the environmental impact of buildings, subdivisions, and communities, while enhancing their energy efficiency, resiliency, and overall sustainability. More information on the development of The Town's GDS will be coming to Council in the near future, and currently staff are undertaking the development of the metrics in partnership with the Clean Air Partnership.

The Town's current approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation aligns with the FF Treaty pillar of a Just Transition and staff recommend that Council continue to support this pillar and approach.

4. Relinquish – PB Treaty

Due to the characteristics of the Town, there are no lands dedicated to raising livestock within Town jurisdiction. Council could support this pillar as it is something that has already been done. It could be taken a step further by considering the appropriateness of encouraging vertical farming business within the Town's employment lands. Vertical farming is the idea growing crops vertically and horizontally in stacked layers. Generally, it incorporates soilless farming, like hydroponics, within a climate-controlled environment. Benefits of encouraging vertical farming in Newmarket would be:

- reduced GHG emissions through improved cultivating practices, reduced inputs, and reduced shipping distances to end users;
- improved nutrients in food because it would be fresher, especially in winter; and
- improved food security and resiliency.

⁴ (Dunsky Energy + Climate Advisors for Natural Resources Canada, 2024)

5. Redirect – PB Treaty

A trend building momentum is where people find unexpected food products that are “accidentally” plant based. One of the most infamous of these is Oreo cookies, many people are surprised to find there are no animal products used in their making. It supports the idea that plant-based eating doesn’t have to be extravagant with a lot of effort required; many of the everyday foods people eat already are plant-based, and they may not even know it!

One of the benefits of plant-based menus is, barring allergies, anyone can enjoy it, whereas with animal-based foods, different people can be excluded. For example, an event serving only meat lovers pizza with no alternatives would exclude a diverse group of people who follow certain dietary restrictions like:

- religious laws (e.g. Halal or Kosher)
- dietary choices like vegetarian, or plant-based
- ethical choices like vegan
- and people with intolerances and allergies like lactose intolerance or Alpha-gal syndrome (allergic reaction to red meat or other animal products, caused by a bite from some lone-star ticks⁵)

On the other hand, providing plant-based alternatives would generally meet the dietary requirements for those groups, as well as people who choose to eat meat.

Council could support this pillar by encouraging Town catered events and vendors at Town events to increase the plant-based options provided to focus less on animal-based meals and sides using animal by-products, so no one feels excluded.

6. Restore – PB Treaty

While the Town doesn’t contain any areas that previously were used for livestock that can be restored or naturalized, the Town already promotes protecting marine and terrestrial environments and using nature-based climate solutions, consistent with the Restore pillar of the PB Treaty.

Low Impact Development (LID) specifically is a nature-based climate solution. It is a stormwater management technique used to mimic the natural processes of infiltrating stormwater into the ground or filtering the runoff to remove pollutants in lower concentrations at the source, rather than concentrating the runoff into one larger facility at the end of a pipe. LIDs can increase biodiversity and resiliency throughout a neighbourhood by incorporating vegetation and improve stormwater control in areas that were built before treatment was considered.

The Town’s use of LIDs and operation of our extensive stormwater management system helps protect marine environments downstream (e.g. Holland River and Lake Simcoe)

⁵ (Public Health Ontario, 2024)

from pollutants and pressures of urban development, as well as terrestrial environments from erosion and flooding.

Another nature-based climate solution the Town already utilizes is urban forestry management, tree planting programs, and ecological restoration. These strategies provide carbon sequestration, reduce the urban heat island effect, support stormwater management and flood mitigation, provide air quality improvements, increase biodiversity and create habitat, provide energy savings for buildings (shade), and provide social and psychological benefits.

Nature has found efficient ways of providing these benefits over millennia, and learning/mimicking natural processes is an important and cost-effective way the Town supports climate initiatives. The Town's climate initiative approach is consistent with the Restore pillar of the PB Treaty.

Consultation

None.

Conclusion

The principles of the Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuels Treaty (FF Treaty) and the Plant-Based Treaty (PB Treaty) align with many of the Town's existing climate initiatives and priorities. The Town has already taken steps to support fossil fuel reduction, energy efficiency, and nature-based solutions, demonstrating a commitment to climate action. Council may consider whether endorsing these treaties would further reinforce these efforts and align with broader sustainability goals.

Council Priority Association

This report aligns with the following Council Priority: Environmental Sustainability

Human Resource Considerations

None.

Budget Impact

None.

Attachments

None.

Approval for Distribution

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