

# CITY OF VICTORIA

## Committee of the Whole Report

**Date:** March 12, 2008      **From:** Cameron Scott, Planner

**Subject:** Sustainability Framework – Gas Tax Agreement Funding Application

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### **Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to seek a Council resolution in support of a Gas Tax Agreement funding application. The application is in support of the development of a Civic Sustainability Framework.

The development of a Civic Sustainability Framework would provide Victoria with a conceptual structure for organizational decision making based on triple bottom line objectives. The funding available through the Gas Tax Agreement has the potential to ensure that this initiative has a significant scope, a meaningful consultation program, and a detailed implementation strategy. This item is currently included in the 2008 supplementary budget as a corporate initiative with a budget of \$200,000.

The Gas Tax Agreement funding request is for \$200,000. The application for funding is being made under the Innovations Fund, which funds projects that represent an innovative approach to achieving Gas Tax Agreement outcomes.

This funding application represents an opportunity to ensure that the Civic Sustainability Framework is developed in an inclusive, innovative, and comprehensive manner. The provision of Gas Tax funding would provide the opportunity to ensure the research and consultation elements of the project are enhanced, while also providing the opportunity to offset existing budget contributions.

### **Recommendation:**

That Council approve the Gas Tax Agreement funding application.

Respectfully submitted,

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Planner

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Manager, Community Planning

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## **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to satisfy an application requirement for federal Gas Tax Agreement funding to complete a Sustainability Framework, which is a Council resolution approving the funding application.

## **2. Background**

The funding available to municipalities under the Gas Tax Agreement is distributed through three principal funding programs, the Community Works Fund (CWF), the General Strategic Priorities Fund (GSPF), and the Innovations Fund (IF). The 2008 funding is the third year of a five year funding plan. The CWF is distributed automatically to all municipalities on a yearly basis, with funding allocated based on population size. Victoria has used past CWF funding for capital projects.

The GSPF and IF are application based programs, with the deadline for 2008 submissions set at April 30. The GSPF is intended for projects that are larger in scale and regional in impact, while the IF is intended for projects that represent an innovative approach to achieving Gas Tax outcomes. This funding application is being made under the Capacity Building or Integrated Community Sustainability Planning Project portion of the Gas Tax Agreement's IF. The Civic Sustainability Framework meets the IF requirements by providing an innovative approach to achieving sustainability objectives.

The Sustainability Framework will provide an organizing structure and vision for the City that will allow all decisions to be filtered through a sustainability lens. It is intended to create a conceptual structure that integrates social, economic, and environmental considerations into City operations and policy, while also creating a mechanism for tracking sustainability progress. The major steps involved in the creation of a sustainability framework will be:

- Inventory of current City sustainability initiatives and policy
- Identification of frameworks and best practices from other jurisdictions
- Assessment of sustainability gaps in City policies and operations
- Internal and external stakeholder consultation
- Development of framework and recommendations for implementation

A supplementary budget request of \$200,000 was approved for the project. This funding is intended to help secure the services of an expert consultant that could assist in providing a sustainability assessment of the City, building internal and external capacity, and providing implementation recommendations. Any funding that is obtained from grants will help to reduce budget contributions and/or enhance the level of research and consultation.

## **3. Issues**

- Scope of project

## **4. Analysis**

The development of a Civic Sustainability Framework is an organization-wide endeavour that will require a high level of departmental integration and cooperation. It will also require a careful assessment of existing City practices and procedures and a good understanding of the global

implications of City activities. The integration of internal City efforts, the discussion of issues in the community, and a frank analysis of City operations may be best achieved by an external consultant who is an expert on sustainability and is able to view the practices of the City of Victoria objectively.

The degree to which consultant expertise can be utilized is largely predicated on the availability of funding. The funding will also have potential implications for the quality of the sustainability assessment, the depth to which issues are explored, and the detail of implementation plans. Additional funding would enable greater inclusion of innovative sustainability initiatives, such as the use of sustainability audits, the development of sustainability checklists, or the use of creative outreach techniques.

#### **4.a. Options**

1. To approve the funding application.
2. To reject the funding application.

#### **4.b. Resource Impacts**

The development of a Sustainability Framework will require comprehensive research, consultation, and implementation components. The ability to incorporate innovative elements which will allow sustainability to permeate throughout City of Victoria policy and operations will largely be dependent on Gas Tax Agreement Funding. Additional funding could also help address project timelines and implementation activities. Gas Tax funding would allow the specialized consultants to be retained for key pieces of research. This funding would also assist implementation activities by allowing for further detailing of initiatives and the development of carefully considered sustainability performance criteria.

#### **4.c. Conclusions**

The development of the Sustainability Framework represents a complex and broad-based undertaking that would be greatly aided by external expertise. The Gas Tax Agreement funding would help in the retention of a sustainability consultant with expertise in building internal and external sustainability capacity and the delivery of sustainability best practices. Access to additional funding would also represent a critical benefit to the project, allowing for a robust research, consultation, and implementation activities to be undertaken, with a consultant available at key moments.

### **5. Recommendation**

That Council approve the Gas Tax Agreement funding application.

### **6. List of Attachments**

- *Application Form – Capacity Building or Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICS Planning) Project* (Gas Tax Agreement's General Strategic Priorities Fund (GSPF) or Innovations Fund (IF))
- *Civic Sustainability Framework Project Description*