

Report: Re-evaluation of Peterborough County's Participation in the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) Program

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To: Peterborough County Council and Local Township Councils

Introduction

The FCM ICLEI Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program has been promoted as a voluntary initiative to address global climate change, but it imposes significant administrative, financial, and operational demands on participating municipalities. It is essential to clarify that the PCP program is not mandated by the Province of Ontario; municipalities are only required to submit an energy consumption and demand report every five years. This report contrasts the simpler provincial requirement with the PCP's extensive data collection, long-term targets, and continuous monitoring obligations—demands that may not reflect the immediate priorities of Peterborough County communities.

Municipal councils participating in the PCP program can withdraw at any time. The City of Thorold's recent withdrawal from the PCP program underscores the substantial and unforeseen burdens that participation can entail. With this flexibility, Peterborough County can re-evaluate its current sustainability strategy and prioritize local needs.

Steps to Withdraw from the PCP Program

For councils that wish to proceed with withdrawal, here is a streamlined three-step process:

- 1. Download and Adopt the Withdrawal Resolution:**

Access and modify the attached withdrawal resolution template to suit council needs. By passing this resolution, the council formally ends its participation in the PCP program.

- 2. Notify the PCP Program Administrators:**

Communicate the council's decision to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and PCP program administrators to complete the withdrawal.

3. **Receive Confirmation:**

Upon submission of the resolution, an official confirmation of the withdrawal from the PCP program will be issued.

Overview of the PCP Program's Five Milestones

The PCP program is structured around five milestones intended to guide municipalities through a comprehensive approach to climate action. These are:

1. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Municipalities assess energy consumption and waste patterns.
 2. **Setting Reduction Targets:** Goals are established, often aiming for net zero by 2050.
 3. **Action Plan Development and Implementation:** Plans typically include steps like purchasing electric vehicles and adopting green building standards.
 4. **Climate Action Plan Endorsement:** Councils endorse action plans, sometimes declaring climate emergencies to validate these efforts.
 5. **Ongoing Data Collection and Monitoring:** Continuous data collection aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), establishing a cycle of resource-intensive commitments.
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Key Concerns with the PCP Program

The PCP program's implementation introduces several concerns, particularly for rural communities. Here are key issues and their potential impacts:

1. **Privacy and Data Security:**
Extensive data collection requirements threaten resident privacy and data security, especially when managed by external entities like ICLEI.
2. **Local Governance and Liability:**
The PCP program introduces international influences, potentially undermining local autonomy. The FCM, ICLEI, and the Government of Canada have waived liability, leaving municipalities solely responsible for program commitments.
3. **Financial Burden:**
Despite being marketed as "free and voluntary," the program's obligations add

financial strain to municipal budgets. Resources that could support critical community services may be redirected to fund international climate targets.

4. Infrastructure Maintenance:

Resources are diverted from essential local projects, such as road repairs and water system maintenance. This is particularly detrimental to rural areas with long travel distances and unique infrastructure needs.

5. Public Services:

Heavy focus on climate goals may result in the underfunding of local services such as waste management and emergency response.

6. Economic Development and Local Business:

Emphasizing global climate objectives risks sidelining local economic drivers, such as small businesses, agriculture, and tourism.

7. Energy Security and Affordability:

Transitioning to renewable energy sources could reduce energy security and raise costs, especially in regions reliant on traditional energy in cold climates.

8. Healthcare and Social Services:

PCP initiatives do not address local social challenges, such as healthcare, mental health, and addiction.

9. Community Safety:

Crime prevention efforts may suffer as resources are directed towards climate initiatives.

10. Housing Affordability:

Mandates on green building standards can drive up costs and delay developments, compounding the housing crisis in rural areas.

11. Land Use and Urban-Rural Balance:

Densification policies in the PCP program may conflict with rural land use preferences, impacting family farms and driving higher taxes for rural residents.

12. Agriculture:

International climate agendas may impact family farms negatively, prioritizing global investors over local agricultural sustainability.

13. Transparency and Trust:

Lack of disclosure around long-term impacts can erode trust between councils and communities.

14. Environmental Realities:

The program's one-size-fits-all approach does not account for Canada's specific geographic and environmental needs.

Conflicts with Global Frameworks

The PCP program aligns with Global Sustainable Development Goals, which, though non-binding, pressure municipalities to prioritize international objectives that may conflict with local priorities. Concerns include:

- **Urban Densification** does not suit rural housing needs.
 - **Global Investment Focus** can marginalize local businesses.
 - **Smart City Technologies** introduce data privacy risks.
 - **Active Transportation** is impractical in rural areas.
 - **Electric Vehicle Mandates** may be costly and unsustainable in rural settings.
 - **Circular Economy** measures could strain well-functioning local waste systems.
 - **Global Investors in Governance** may prioritize profits over community needs.
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Scientific Challenges to Climate Catastrophe Rationale

The PCP program's rationale, based on IPCC projections and the Paris Accord's CO₂ reduction goals, is questioned by some scientific perspectives:

1. CO₂'s Role in Climate Change:

With Canada contributing about 1.5% of global emissions, the country's impact on climate patterns is minimal, and CO₂ reduction policies may be ineffective in influencing global trends.

2. Agricultural Benefits of CO₂:

Elevated CO₂ levels enhance plant growth, which is critical for agriculture in rural areas.

3. Alternative Climate Risk Assessments:

Moderate climate projections suggest climate risks may be more manageable, particularly in small communities.

4. **Renewable Energy Limitations in Cold Climates:**

Renewables are often unreliable in Canada’s winter months, impacting energy security.

5. **Cost of Net-Zero Targets:**

Net-zero measures may be costly without meaningful climate benefits, particularly for rural municipalities.

Recommended Scope of Work for a Consultant Managing the Transition

To support an effective transition that aligns with local priorities, the consultant should focus on:

1. **Environmental Stewardship through Community-Led Initiatives:**

Encourage resident involvement in projects such as tree planting, community clean-ups, water conservation, and waste management. These projects improve quality of life, engage the community, and avoid invasive data collection.

2. **Surveying Resident Concerns and Priorities:**

Conduct surveys to identify key environmental concerns, prioritize funding areas, and gather feedback for developing a sustainability plan that reflects community values.

3. **Balancing Environmental Goals with Other Priorities:**

Sustainability efforts should align with broader municipal needs, such as economic development, public safety, and infrastructure, to avoid diverting essential resources.

Conclusion

Peterborough County is encouraged to consider withdrawal from the PCP program in favor of practical, community-focused environmental initiatives. This approach offers direct benefits to residents without the administrative burdens associated with global climate programs and preserves local control over municipal development.

For further guidance on implementing these recommendations or defining the consultant’s scope of work, please feel free to reach out.

Best regards,

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