

Subject: Water North Coalition General Membership Request

APPROVALS:

Kevin Scoble, Executive Director
Marcel Ulliac, Chief Administrative Officer

Administrative Recommendation:

THAT the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo become a voting member of the newly formed Water North Coalition; and

THAT a Council member be appointed to serve as the voting representative on the Water North Coalition.

Summary:

A membership request was sent to the Office of the Mayor on January 15, 2015. Since there is an expectation for Council and/or appointed representative(s) to attend quarterly meetings and participate on committees, a Council resolution is required to approve and support the membership request.

Background:

The Alberta Water and Wastewater Operators Association along with Rural Alberta Development, funded a program called 'Closer-to-Home Initiative' from 2012 to 2014. This initiative created a multi-media toolkit for water & wastewater utilities to support rural communities in the area of drinking water and wastewater policy and programs, operator certification process, and information around the importance of safe drinking water.

The newly formed Water North Coalition wants to continue to build on the momentum and good work already started by the previous initiative. The Coalition is in its infancy and in the process of developing its mission, principles, etc., and seeking membership.

The mission is to find and implement northern solutions to water sourcing and water challenges through advocacy, public education, attraction, retention and training. Its vision is that the group seeks to ensure through collaboration that sustainable water systems are available to every northern community.

Membership is comprised of voting and non-voting members. Voting members include Northern Municipalities, First Nations and Metis Settlements. Non-voting members include Water/Wastewater Commissions and Professionals; Provincial/Federal Governments, Rural Water Co-ops, Owners and Operators.

Based on the minutes of the last meeting held on December 2, 2014, there is representation from 12 voting members and 6 non-voting members, with a total of approximately 35 attendees. Voting members consist of elected officials (Mayor/Reeve, Councillors). Council may decide to appoint a local government representative such as the CAO or equivalent.

Meetings occur quarterly (or as needed) and hosted at rotating locations, for approximately four hours. At times, there may be voting items of importance that may require a Council resolution to approve and support the proposal.

Alternatives:

Reject the membership at this point in time and re-evaluate in future. The Coalition is committed to share any information with local municipalities that are unable to become members.

Budget/Financial Implications:

A membership fee is not required and administrative cost is covered by Northern Alberta Development Council. Members are responsible for travel and accommodation for quarterly meetings, and possibly additional committee meetings. The Municipality may offer to host a meeting and provide meeting place, including planning support. In future, there may be an opportunity to participate via WebEx conference call to reduce travel expenses.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Membership allows the Municipality to collaborate with other northern municipalities that share similar issues around securing sustainable water systems in the north; more specifically, succession planning, attraction and retention of operators, made-in-the-north training solutions (access to training due to remote locations), workforce needs and public education.

Attachment:

1. Water North Coalition General Membership Request