



PORT COLBORNE

Subject: Ontario Marine Strategy
To: Council
From: Chief Administrative Office

Report Number: 2021-246

Meeting Date: September 27, 2021

Recommendation:

That Chief Administrative Office Report 2021-246 be received;

That Council endorse the City of St. Catharines' Council motion regarding an Ontario Marine Strategy; and

That the Economic Development Officer be directed to send letters to the Premier of Ontario and key provincial Ministers expressing support for an Ontario Marine Strategy and including issues important to Port Colborne.

Purpose:

The purpose of this report is to discuss the importance of the province developing an Ontario Marine Strategy and to confirm Council's support for a government relations and advocacy strategy.

Background:

The Province of Ontario does not have a marine strategy or related funding for cities and towns that have ports. The federal government, through Transport Canada, invests in major city ports including Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Transport Canada also provides annual funding to the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation to ensure the safe and efficient movement of marine traffic through various locks between Montreal and Lake Erie.

Staff believe that smaller municipalities need to maintain port and harbour infrastructure for safety and security; to support recreational and commercial boating traffic; attract investment and tourism; promote waterfront revitalization and help facilitate marine industrial growth. However, the capital costs to upgrade port and harbour infrastructure

is significant, and smaller Ontario communities do not have the financial capacity to fund these improvements on their own. Competing for limited federal funds with major port cities is challenging.

Discussion:

Staff are of the opinion that the province of Ontario should create a marine strategy similar to the Quebec government's "Maritime Strategy" created in June 2015, with the goal of "ensuring optimal and responsible use of maritime potential in Quebec". This program, which was established with \$3 billion over five (5) years, provides funding for various initiatives "designed to showcase maritime transportation, tourism, and marine resources".

The City of Port Colborne's Mayor has capitalized on opportunities over the past two years to advocate for an Ontario Marine Strategy. Most recently, the City's delegation to the 2021 AMO Conference advocated for this initiative during four separate meetings with the Minister of Transportation; the Minister of Infrastructure; the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade; and the Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources, Conservation, and Parks.

Economic Development Officers in Niagara have also been discussing this issue at their monthly meetings and Niagara Region has prepared a draft position paper that will form part of the government relations and advocacy strategy.

At their meeting on August 31, 2021, the City of St. Catharines' Council passed a motion calling on the province to create a comprehensive Marine Strategy and establish an Ontario Marine Strategy Secretariat to develop a policy and funding framework. Port Colborne staff support this and recommend that Council adopt this motion and direct staff to send letters to key provincial Ministers expressing the City's support for St. Catharines' motion while outlining key marine issues important to the City including port rehabilitation, flood mitigation and shoreline erosion, the cruise ship initiative, and the economic, tourism, and cultural significance of the City's port as well as the importance of the industrial marine sector.

Internal Consultations:

The City's position on this initiative, along with a government relations and advocacy strategy, has been a collaborative effort of the Office of the Mayor and Chief Administrative Officer and the Economic Development and Tourism Services Division.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications associated with this report and recommendation. One of the goals of this initiative is to have the province create a Marine Strategy and provide funding for municipalities to access.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

The initiative contained within this report supports the following pillar(s) of the strategic plan:

- Attracting Business Investment and Tourists to Port Colborne
 - City-Wide Investments in Infrastructure and Recreational/Cultural Spaces
 - Value: Financial Management to Achieve Financial Sustainability
 - Governance: Communications, Engagement, and Decision-Making
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Conclusion:

City staff recommend that Council support an active government relations and advocacy program to encourage the province to create an Ontario Marine Strategy. This strategy would provide smaller Ontario communities with funds to help maintain and upgrade important port and harbour infrastructure. Staff are recommending Council support St. Catharines' Council motion, that letters be sent to the Premier of Ontario and key Ministers highlighting marine issues important to Port Colborne and that these letters include invitations to visit our City.

Appendices:

- a. City of St. Catharines Council motion dated August 31, 2021 regarding an Ontario Marine Strategy

Respectfully submitted,

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Report Approval:

All reports reviewed and approved by the Department Director and also the City Treasurer when relevant. Final review and approval by the Chief Administrative Officer.