

REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

- INFORMATION -

DATE: September 20, 1999
William R. Pearce
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REPORT TO: Chairman and Members
Environmental Services Committee

FROM: Lee Ann Coveyduck
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SUBJECT: **Upwind Downwind: A Practical Conference on Improving Air Quality (PDR99118)**

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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY IMPLICATIONS:

(Vision 2020, adopted by Regional Council as its vision for the future of Hamilton-Wentworth, embodies the concept of a sustainable community which is an equal balance of the economy, the environment and social/health factors in all regional decision-making.)

The Upwind Downwind Conference is part of the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth program to improve air quality. The conference supports the strategies of the Vision 2020 goal to ensure the Region has the best air quality of any major urban area in Ontario.

BACKGROUND:

In October 1997, Council received the Hamilton-Wentworth Air Quality Initiative (HAQI) Summary Report (ENV97109). The report identified the main sources of pollutants in Hamilton-Wentworth to be long range transport, industry and motor vehicles. It reported that up to 70% of inhalable particulate that affects our health and the environment come in from outside the region.

In response to the findings and recommendations in the HAQI report, Council approved the establishment of the Hamilton-Wentworth Air Quality Improvement Committee (HAQIC) to involve all the parties with jurisdiction over or an interest in reducing emissions from the main sources (ENV97109(A)). The Committee was established in October 1998 with the mandate to improve overall ambient air quality, reduce emissions and fill in research gaps.

One of the recommendations of the HAQI report was a conference of air researchers regarding up- and down-wind air quality issues.

Conference Planning

In January 1998, a planning committee of ten members was formed to organize the first Upwind Downwind Conference. The committee represented:

- HAQIC,
- Environment Canada,
- Ontario Ministry of the Environment,
- Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth/City of Hamilton
- McMaster University,
- Air and Waste Management Association; and,
- Hamilton-Wentworth Green Venture.

The main goal of the conference was to meet with researchers to discuss up- and down-wind air quality issues. The conference was organized with three main objectives:

1. Present HAQI as a template for other communities to use to begin improving local air quality,
2. Compare local, regional, provincial, and federal air quality improvement initiatives; and,
3. Explore the possibility of establishing a Clean Air Coalition of communities to

address trans-boundary air pollution.

The conference was promoted to municipal planners, local politicians, interested citizens, and members of academic organizations, environmental groups, industry and all levels of government from the mid-western United States through to Eastern Canada.

Promotion materials included the HAQI website, conference flyers and a registration brochure. Mailing lists were compiled from the HAQI database, Pollution Probe, Federation of Canadian Municipalities, an Environmental Directory and the Air and Waste Management Association. Media releases were also sent prior to the conference, which generated coverage from the Hamilton Spectator and 102.9 K Lite FM.

Funding for the Conference was provided from Environment Canada, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, McMaster University, the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and incoming registration fees.

Conference Outcomes

Upwind Downwind: A Practical Conference on Improving Air Quality was held on September 30 and October 1, 1999, at the Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel in downtown Hamilton. The conference brought together 22 speakers from Canada and the US, and approximately 150 registrants primarily from government and academic institutions. Over half of the registrants arrived from outside Hamilton and within Ontario.

Overall the conference was successful in meeting its goals and objectives. The following was achieved:

1. HAQI Template

HAQI was presented on September 30 with emphasis on its process, key findings and subsequent programs. Approximately 15 participants from outside communities requested copies of the HAQI presentation and a HAQI template was included in the conference resource kit. Workshops on October 1 gave participants an opportunity to discuss how HAQI could be applied in their own communities. With these resources available, it is anticipated that other communities will refer to the HAQI process when establishing their own air quality initiative.

2. Comparison of Air Quality Initiatives

A comparison of municipal air programs introduced approaches to improving local air

quality by cities such as Toronto, Waterloo and Windsor. The conference agenda offered various perspectives on addressing air quality at the state, federal, provincial and community levels through topics such as:

- long range transport of air contaminants
- municipal and provincial smog plans
- urban air toxic strategies
- air shed modeling
- industrial emissions controls
- clean transportation technologies
- home energy audits
- green wet cleaning
- responsible wood heat.

The Upwind Downwind conference was particularly successful in attracting researchers from the United States, particularly from Ohio. Local air quality initiatives were presented by representatives from Hamilton County, Ohio, and the American Association of Local Air Pollution Control Officers (ALAPCO). Speakers from the US have agreed to maintain contact with conference organizers and participants.

To thank all the speakers for participating, native trees are being planted on their behalf in Hamilton to help improve air quality. Approximately 10 trees will be planted in October between Father O'Sullivan Park and Gage Park in co-operation with the City of Hamilton Parks Division. Funds for tree planting was included in the 1998 current budget.

In addition to the presentations, the conference provided a poster board room with air quality displays from organizations such as the Hamilton-Wentworth Industrial Environmental Association, Ontario Clean Air Alliance, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, RWDI Ltd., McMaster University, York University, and the Air and Waste Management Association.

3. Clean Air Coalition

The conference closed with four concurrent workshops on creating a clean air coalition. The purpose of the workshops was maintaining contact and exchanging information between communities. Each workshop addressed two questions about coalitions:

- What would it take to apply the HAQI template in another community?
- What is a coalition of communities?

There was a positive response by the registrants to participate in a coalition for the purpose of sharing ideas and information. Approximately 30 people signed up for information exchange and an invitation to a first meeting of a coalition, which will be hosted by the Region/City.

Evaluation

Conference participants were invited to submit an evaluation of the conference. Of the 33 people that submitted an evaluation form, 27 assigned a high ranking to their overall satisfaction with the conference. Many indicated that the conference was informative and well organized. The majority was most satisfied with the cross section of speakers and topics from a scientific and citizen background.

In the event that the Conference Planning Committee decides to organize an annual conference, the participants suggested that the next meeting include discussion of land use impacts or land use tools for complementing change in environmental quality, continued US involvement, and perspectives by politicians.

Future Actions

Few municipal planners and politicians attended the conference. To encourage future participation from these groups, members of the HAQIC Co-ordination Group have agreed to offer a HAQI presentation on relations between land use and air quality to the Ontario Provincial Planners Institute (OPPI) Conference in Fall, 2000.

Staff of the Regional Community Planning and Development Division have agreed to plan and chair the first meeting of a potential Clean Air Coalition, which will draw interested parties together and discuss the purpose and formal establishment of this partnership.

There are no current plans to hold an annual conference in 2000, however HAQIC will consider holding a bi-annual conference.

Conclusions

The Upwind Downwind Conference was successful in meeting with US counterparts and communities upwind and downwind of Hamilton-Wentworth to share ideas and strategies for improving air quality locally as well as across borders. HAQI was promoted as an example of initiating air quality programs, and the conference generated a contact base upon which to build a Clean Air Coalition.

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