



**COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Monday, November 15, 2021

**Subject:** Unflood Ontario Network

**Recommendation:**

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2021-0190 - Unflood Ontario Network for information purposes;**

**AND THAT Council approve and direct the Town of Pelham become a member of the Unflood Ontario Network.**

**Background:**

The purpose of this report is to satisfy a directive of Council to provide it with information regarding the Unflood Ontario Network and the analysis of the opportunity and benefits of joining the network as a member.

**Analysis:**

Unflood Ontario is not a formal entity or organization, but instead a network of community stakeholders who are dedicated to raising awareness about the benefits and impacts of natural infrastructure, particularly about its role in reducing the harm done by flooding, hence the name. It was founded and hosted by three community foundations across the Golden Horseshoe (Niagara Community Foundation, Toronto Foundation and Durham Community Foundation) in 2019, and is administered/managed by the Small Change Fund. The founding circle has since expanded with the addition of numerous community foundations across Ontario and received support from entities such as: Great Lakes Protection Fund, Insurance Bureau of Canada, TD Bank Group and Walker Industries.

Organizations across Ontario can join the initiative as a network member with the mission to educate and engage the public about the impact of floods and the multiple benefits of natural infrastructure. Some notable network members include: Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, City of St. Catharines, Town of Fort Erie, Niagara College, Town of Ajax, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, City of Burlington, Conservation Ontario, Credit Valley Conservation, Durham Region, Walker Industries, etc. At this time, there is no membership fee for being a network member, however, donations are welcomed to support the network.

The network currently distributes informative videos and a direct call to action video to the community and hosts learning webinars/online events to further educate the public about the role of natural infrastructure and its accessibility to residents. Network members would agree to share the online materials within their networks and would receive regular email updates about what is happening within the network. Online engagement opportunities are proposed to be hosted in the future.

The host community foundations are currently reviewing the future of the network and how to proceed with this initiative in the future; an update to the role of the network is anticipated for next year.

If the Town decides to join Unflood Ontario as a network member, some actions that it can start with would be to share the Network's current materials and resources which are available on the Unflood Ontario website and social media platforms. The Town can forward the materials to the communications department to distribute through various channels, whether it be through local newspaper, town website news updates or social media presence. The Town can also opt to be listed as a member of the network on the website.

#### **Financial Considerations:**

At this time, there is no cost associated with becoming a member of Unflood Ontario.

#### **Alternatives Reviewed:**

Council could choose not to join Unflood Ontario as a member.

#### **Strategic Plan Relationship: Strong Organization**

Green Infrastructure can be defined as the imitation of the natural ecosystem in urban settlements through the use of natural vegetative systems and technologies. Some of the more common green infrastructure practices include: rain gardens, permeable pavements, bio-swales, rainwater harvesting, green roofs and parking, etc. The biggest advantage green infrastructure can provide compared to traditional grey infrastructure, such as sewers which are designed to generally perform one function, is that green infrastructure can be multi-purpose, ranging from stormwater management, to broader environmental and recreational benefits by improving the streetscapes and natural connectivity through linkages in the urban environment.

Rather than being perceived as a replacement of grey infrastructure, green infrastructure can serve as a compliment to the existing grey infrastructure, by alleviating the impacts of heavy rainfalls on the storm sewer system, revitalizing

existing streetscapes, and providing vital habitats for wildlife in the urbanized environment.

The Town of Pelham's Strategic Plan identifies actions to protect environmental assets within the town, one of which is to 'Introduce climate change best practice and community education'. The collaboration with Unflood Ontario to promote the use of Green Infrastructure can solidify the Town's position in supporting the protection and preservation of environmental assets and help implement the above stated strategic plan action.

**Consultation:**

The staff liaison for the Niagara Community Foundation, part of the development team that created the Unflood Ontario Network, was consulted during the drafting of this report.

**Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:**

- <https://unfloodontario.ca>

**Prepared and Recommended by:**

Kenny Ng, B.ES  
Planner

Barbara Wiens, MCIP, RPP  
Director of Community Planning and Development

**Prepared and Submitted by:**

David Cribbs, BA, MA, JD, MPA  
Chief Administrative Officer