

**1. RAIN READY OTTAWA – PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE GRANTS PROGRAM**

**PARÉS POUR LA PLUIE OTTAWA – RÉVISIONS PROPOSÉES AU PROGRAMME DE SUBVENTION**

**COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council approve the changes to the Rain Ready Ottawa pilot program as described in this report.**

**RECOMMANDATION DU COMITÉ**

**Que le Conseil approuve les changements au programme pilote Parés pour la pluie Ottawa comme le décrit le présent rapport.**

**DOCUMENTATION / DOCUMENTATION**

1. Acting Manager's Report, Asset Management, Infrastructure and Water Services Department, dated 11 March 2022 (ACS2022-PIE-EDP-0006).

Rapport de la Gestionnaire par intérim, Gestion des actifs, Direction générale des services d'infrastructure et d'eau directeur, daté le 11 mars 2022 (ACS2022-PIE-EDP-0006).

2. Extract of draft Minutes, Standing Committee on Environmental Protection, Water and Waste Management, 22 March 2022.

Extrait de l'ébauche du procès-verbal, Comité permanent de la protection de l'environnement, de l'eau et de la gestion des déchets, le 22 mars 2022.

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION,  
WATER AND WASTE  
MANAGEMENT  
REPORT 21A  
13 APRIL 2022**

**2**

**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA  
PROTECTION DE  
L'ENVIRONNEMENT, DE L'EAU ET  
DE LA GESTION DES DÉCHETS  
RAPPORT 21A  
LE 13 AVRIL 2022**

**Subject: Rain Ready Ottawa – Proposed Revisions to the Grants Program**

**File Number: ACS2022-PIE-EDP-0006**

**Report to Standing Committee on Environmental Protection, Water and Waste  
Management on 22 March 2022**

**and Council 13 April 2022**

**Submitted on March 11, 2022 by Marie-Geneviève, Nielsen, Acting Manager, Asset  
Management, Infrastructure and Water Services Department**

**Contact Person: Simon Greenland-Smith, Outreach and Communications  
Coordinator**

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**Ward: Citywide**

**Objet : Parés pour la pluie Ottawa – Révisions proposées au programme de  
subvention**

**Dossier : ACS2022-PIE-EDP-0006**

**Rapport au Comité permanent de la protection de l'environnement, de l'eau et de  
la gestion des déchets**

**le 22 mars 2022**

**et au Conseil le 13 avril 2022**

**Soumis le 11 mars 2022 par Marie-Geneviève Nielsen, Gestionnaire par intérim,  
Gestion des actifs , Direction générale des services d'infrastructure et d'eau]**

**Personne ressource : Simon Greenland-Smith, Coodonateur de la communication  
et sensibilisation du public**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION,  
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**COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA  
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RAPPORT 21A  
LE 13 AVRIL 2022**

**613-580-2424, 35625 simon.greenland-smith@ottawa.ca**

**Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville**

### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Standing Committee on Environment Protection, Water and Waste Management recommend Council approve the changes to the Rain Ready Ottawa pilot program as described in this report.**

### **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité permanent de la protection de l'environnement, de l'eau et de la gestion des déchets recommande au Conseil d'approuver les changements au programme pilote Parés pour la pluie Ottawa comme le décrit le présent rapport.**

### **BACKGROUND**

Rain Ready Ottawa (RRO) was approved by SCEPWWM and Council ([ASC2021-PIE-EDP-0008](#)) in February 2021 and launched in June 2021. RRO includes four program areas designed to encourage residents to make landscaping changes on their private property that will improve stormwater management. The four inter-related program areas are:

- industry training through the Fusion Landscape Professional Program;
- home assessments;
- education and outreach campaigns; and
- targeted use of financial rebates.

The financial rebates are administered as a Grants and Contribution (G&C) program. G&C Policy and Procedures dictate that all G&C Programs be approved by Council and

that Council approve any changes to the assessment criteria or redesign of a G&C program.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to use a new eLearning program as a new assessment criterion for eligibility in the existing RRO grants and contribution program. With this approval, the eLearning course can serve as an alternative to the residential home assessment program, which has a long waiting list. eLearning courses will allow more residents to become eligible for RRO rebates in a shorter amount of time and accelerate the adoption of stormwater management practices. This report includes a summary of the RRO's performance in year one, lessons learned, and a description of the eLearning program.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Program Performance**

Overall, the first year of the Rain Ready Ottawa (RRO) pilot program has been a success. Program components were launched as planned and will continue in 2022.

#### **Fusion Landscape Professional Program**

The Fusion Landscape Professional program is an existing landscaper training and certification program offered by Landscape Ontario in conjunction with Credit Valley Conservation in Peel and York Regions. Bringing the program to Ottawa built industry knowledge and installation capacity for stormwater management within landscape designs. [Fusionlandscapeprofessional.ca](https://www.fusionlandscapeprofessional.ca) holds the listing of certified professionals that homeowners can draw upon to complete projects on their properties.

In 2021, nine firms were certified as Fusion Landscape Professionals and together they completed 18 projects on behalf of Ottawa residents who received RRO rebates.

A second round of Fusion Landscape Professional training is scheduled for February 2022 to certify up to an additional 20 local landscape professionals.

*Residential Home Assessment Program*

The residential home assessment program builds residents' ability to take action by recommending specific practices to manage stormwater at each home. During the free home assessments, trained assessors promote best management practices with benefits to homeowners and the City. Residents are provided with information and guidance supporting them to act on their property.

The residential home assessment program was developed collaboratively with EnviroCentre, the delivery agent for the program, and launched in June. Home assessments took less than an hour and were offered in priority and secondary RRO eligibility areas. Participants receive a detailed report outlining the challenges and opportunities for their property. 116 home assessments were completed in the first year of the program.

Demand for home assessments was extremely high. In response, the number of home assessments was increased from the planned 65 to 116. Most assessments (91) were completed in priority areas; 25 were in secondary areas. Feedback from participants has been very positive.

EnviroCentre created a waitlist of residents who were not able to secure a home assessment in year one. The list included over 650 residents by December 2021 which exceeds the number of home assessments budgeted to be delivered under RRO for the pilot period.

2022 will see an expanded home assessment program that will deliver over 100 additional home assessments to partially address the waitlist of interested residents.

**Rain Ready Ottawa Rebates**

A Grants and Contributions Program, *RRO*, provides a set of incentives to reduce the financial barriers to the implementation of stormwater management practices on residential properties. Incentives partially cover the cost of the following practices:

- Downspout redirection
- Rain gardens
- Soakaway pits
- Permeable paving
- Certified landscape design

An online application and claims process was launched in June 2021. 22 applications were submitted and approved in 2021 with a total value of \$74,288. This used about 22 per cent of the \$340,000 dedicated rebate funds. Thirteen applications were for projects in the Eastern Subwatersheds and nine were in Pinecrest Creek / Westboro priority retrofit area. Most applications were the result of referrals from the Fusion Landscape Program. The number of applications is in line with our expectations for a newly established program and reflects the anticipated lag time between learning and action. The pilot will continue to track the transition from Home Assessments to applications to completed projects.

The rebate program will continue in 2022 as it did in 2021.

#### Communications and Community Engagement Initiatives

Community engagement initiatives are designed to engage residents at the neighbourhood level, and target retrofit activities in priority areas in the Eastern and Pinecrest/Westboro subwatersheds.

RRO's communication efforts in year one were focused on social media and were executed by the City program coordinator and EnviroCentre, under contract to the City. RRO has a small following on both Facebook and Instagram and used promoted posts to extend reach to residents. Year one saw a reach of 121,568 touch points with 91,335 on Facebook (bilingual), 30,233 on Instagram and 14,420 visits to the RRO website.

RRO launched and delivered two additional community engagement initiatives on the use of rain barrels and the redirection of downspouts. A demonstration rain garden was also installed at the Manordale-Woodvale Community Building.

In 2022, communications and community engagement initiatives are being expanded through the creation of a bilingual eLearning program that will be available to all Ottawa residents. Four courses will be developed:

1. Rain Ready Ottawa introduction and overview
2. Downspout redirections
3. Rain gardens
4. Soakaways

Staff are not planning to create a course on permeable pavement or certified landscape design because those are best installed by a trained professional.

Each online self-directed courses will take about an hour to complete and offer testing to measure comprehension. Course completion and evaluation scores will be centrally registered on a Learning Management Platform.

### **Year One Lessons**

Home assessments are presently RRO's most intensive and valuable education and outreach tool for Ottawa residents. However, they are costly and time-intensive to implement at scale. Because of the expense, home assessments are limited to RRO's priority and secondary areas – and residents outside these areas currently have limited educational resources to draw upon.

Resident interest in home assessments is enormous in all areas of Ottawa. The waiting list of interested residents exceeded 650 as of the end of December and it continues to grow. RRO is not able to keep up with demand for home assessments and future backlog is likely to get larger.

The current home assessment waiting list represents two groups of residents:

- 1) those interested mostly in custom advice on rainwater management issues
- 2) those interested mostly in becoming eligible for RRO rebates

Treating these residents as one group, as the current waiting list does, is inefficient for both groups. Limited resources that could be providing custom advice is instead expended on residents who are primarily having a home assessment to meet RRO eligibility requirements. The wait time to become eligible for RRO rebates is unduly extended for residents who have already determined what practice they wish to install and are not interested in the custom advice provided by a home assessment.

In addition to residents in the priority RRO areas that are eligible for home assessments and rebates, there are many residents across Ottawa interested in more detailed educational resources on rainwater management practices.

Offering expanded educational resources in the form of eLearning courses will provide a high-quality resource for residents across Ottawa that are interested in learning more about RRO practices. The eLearning program can also be used to address the backlog of residents waiting for a home assessment to become eligible for RRO rebates.

### **Proposed Program Amendments**

Staff propose adding the successful completion of eLearning course(s) as an optional assessment criterion for RRO rebates. This would alleviate the need for residents to seek a home assessment or engage a Fusion Landscape Professional (FLP) unless they are interested in personalized advice or services. eLearning courses will also allow more residents to become eligible for RRO rebates in a shorter amount of time and accelerate the adoption of stormwater management practices.

A series of bilingual eLearning courses are currently being developed and are expected to launch by June 2022. Each course will take about an hour to complete and include testing to ensure comprehension. A Learning Management Platform will be used to



register successful completion of the course, and evaluation results, which can be cross-referenced in the application consideration process.

Additionally, the inclusion of a provision to allow for permeable pavement projects to be installed by professionals certified by the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute will be made explicit in the amendments. This remedies an oversight in the original formulation of section 3.2.4 (Eligibility and Claims Procedure) of Staff report [ASC2021-PIE-EDP-0008](#) to better reflect the original intent of the program as described in the RRO Applicant Guide.

#### Grants and Contributions Policy and Procedure Requirements

The Grants and Contribution (G&C) Procedures stipulate that any change to the assessment criteria or method to determine funding priority and amount of funding in a G&C program must be considered and approved by Council.

Staff recommend the following changes to the assessment criteria approved by Council in February 2021 ([ASC2021-PIE-EDP-0008](#)) in Section 3.2.4 (Eligibility and Claims procedure):

#### ***Change From:***

Homeowners are eligible for financial incentives if:

- They are the owner of a ground-oriented home or have the express permission of the owner of the home within the priority stormwater retrofit areas of the City of Ottawa
- Practices were recommended as a result of participation in the Home Assessment Program or a consultation with an FLP
- Practices have been installed to the satisfaction of the home assessment contractor or FLP (as required)

- The homeowner agrees to terms and conditions specified in the applications procedure

**Change To:**

Residents are eligible for financial incentives if all of the following conditions are met:

- They are the owner of a ground-oriented home or have the express permission of the owner of the home within the priority stormwater retrofit areas of the City of Ottawa
- Practices have been installed to the satisfaction of the Rain Ready Ottawa program coordinator
- The resident agrees to the terms and conditions specified in the application and claims procedures

And one or more of the following conditions are met:

- They have had a home assessment that made specific recommendations for Rain Ready Ottawa practices
- They are employing a certified Fusion Landscape Professional for the installation of any Rain Ready Ottawa practices
- They are employing a contractor certified by the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute for the installation of permeable pavements
- They have successfully completed eLearning modules related to Rain Ready Ottawa Introduction and Overview as well as the modules associated with the Rain Ready Ottawa practices included in their application

Subject to Council approval, staff will amend the RRO application and claims procedures to facilitate the use of the eLearning courses as assessment criteria for RRO rebates. These changes amount to adjustments to online claim forms and an

update to the RRO Applicant Guide. Website information and promotion materials will also be updated.

### **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The eLearning courses will improve educational offerings for all residents including rural residents. Rural residents of Ottawa are not eligible for RRO rebates as these are limited to stormwater retrofit priority areas.

### **CONSULTATION**

The proposed changes to the eligibility criteria are in response to feedback from interested residents and lessons learned during year one of Rain Ready Ottawa.

### **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLORS**

This is a city-wide report – not applicable.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to Committee and Council's approval of the recommendation of this report.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed eLearning course addresses a risk in the overall Rain Ready Ottawa program by introducing a new option to accelerate the adoption of beneficial practices. The key risks in the eLearning program include uptake rates that are either too high or too low. Uptake for the course could be low based on lack of interest or unsuitable fit with resident expectations. Promotion of the eLearning courses will be conducted in conjunction with the promotion of RRO more broadly. Uptake for the course could be very high which could overextend the program and make more residents eligible for rebates than the approved budget. In response, course enrollment will be monitored, and rebates will be subject to available funding.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Projects supported through this program will be privately owned and the responsibility of the property owner.

Reducing stormwater runoff from private properties potentially represents the most important component of the Council-approved plans for the City's priority stormwater retrofit areas. In the long-term, the cumulative effect of on-site stormwater management will help to reduce the impacts on receiving watercourses. Stormwater management retrofits may also help manage capacity in existing stormwater infrastructure and reduce risks of overland flooding in some areas.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications. Funds are available from within existing budget to develop and host the proposed eLearning course, and to implement the updated program eligibility criteria.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

In accordance with the City's Accessible Web policy, all ITS projects and initiatives must include accessible criteria, features and functionality. All public-facing technologies associated with this report including the platform and content of the eLearning course(s) will be in conformance with WCAG 2.0 level AA as required by section 14 of the Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation 191/11 of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities Act, 2005*.

## **CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

Rain Ready Ottawa and the recommendations of this report support the Climate Change Master Plan and help make Ottawa a more resilient city.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

The proposed G&C Program amendments support the objectives of Rain Ready Ottawa

and the goals of the Ottawa River Action Plan, Pinecrest Creek / Westboro Stormwater Management Retrofit Study and Eastern Subwatersheds Stormwater Management Retrofit Study. Better managing rainwater on residential property reduces stormwater runoff, improves water quality, and reduces erosion and flooding in receiving watercourses.

### **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The recommendations in this report support RRO which contributes directly to Council's 2019- 2022 Strategic Priorities including:

- **Environmental Stewardship:** Grow and protect a healthy, beautiful, and vibrant city that can adapt to change.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** Ensure sustainable infrastructure investment to meet the future growth and service needs of the city.
- **Service Excellence Through Innovation:** Deliver quality services that are innovative and continuously improve to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

### **DISPOSITION**

Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development Department staff will update the Rain Ready Ottawa application and claims procedure and accompanying communications materials to reflect Council-approved amendments to the eligibility criteria.