



**Subject:** *Opportunity for Subsidized Community Energy and Emissions Plan*  
**To:** Corporate and Residential Services Committee  
**Date Prepared:** May 1, 2025  
**Prepared by:** Seonaid MacDonell, Sustainability Coordinator  
**Approved by:** Adam Clarkson, Director Corporate Services

### Summary

QUEST Canada is currently collaborating with the Clean Foundation to offer communities in Atlantic Canada the opportunity to develop a Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP) through their Net-Zero Communities Accelerator (NCA) program.

The Province of Nova Scotia has outlined a plan to reduce its emissions by 53% by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. The Municipality has not set formal emissions or net-zero targets. A CEEP is a recommendation anticipated to come from the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan Update project in the 2025/2026 workplan. There is an opportunity to participate in the NCA Program to receive a CEEP at a heavily subsidized rate. Staff recommend taking advantage of this opportunity, and using the information gathered and potential recommendations received in the CEEP to help inform the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan Update and future workplans.

A CEEP includes items such as a community benchmark assessment, an energy and emissions inventory, and an economic impacts report. Developing a CEEP can assist a municipality when applying for funding opportunities, help identify areas to mitigate climate impacts and address vulnerabilities, prioritize infrastructure needs, and assist in preparation for climate events.

### Financial Impact Statement

\$6,000 + HST would need to be added to the 2025/2026 budget, funded by the Sustainability Program Reserve, to participate in QUEST Canada's Net-Zero Communities Accelerator program. The program is heavily subsidized; comparable plans have cost municipalities upward of \$95,000 + HST in the open market.

### Recommendation

Staff recommend that the Committee direct staff to work with QUEST Canada to develop a Community Energy and Emission Plan through the NCA Program.

### Recommended Motion

*Move that the Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommend that Council work with QUEST Canada to develop a Community Energy and Emission Plan through their Net-Zero Communities Accelerator Program, at a cost of up to \$6,000 + HST, to be funded by the Sustainability Program Reserve.*

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## Background

QUEST Canada is a national non-government organization that works to accelerate the adoption of efficient and integrated community-scale energy systems in Canada by informing, inspiring, and connecting decision-makers. QUEST Canada helps communities achieve their emissions goals by offering programs, resources, tools and guidance for developing and implementing Community Energy and Emission Plans, which create economic, environmental, and social benefits.

QUEST Canada's Net-Zero Communities Accelerator (NCA) program equips communities in Atlantic Canada with the tools and knowledge to develop and implement Community Energy and Emissions Plans and to understand the net economic benefit they can provide. Participating communities benefit from a set of services designed to assist them in developing and implementing a CEEP, benchmarking progress, peer-to-peer exchange, and more.

### NCA PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Community Benchmark Assessment to establish community baseline;
- Energy and Emissions Inventory;
- Custom tailored CEEP report;
- Economic Impacts report;
- CEEP implementation planning, support and guidance;
- Initiation of projects identified in the CEEP;
- Community Benchmark re-assessment to confirm measured changes from baseline; and
- Eligibility for financial and skilled support for implementation of CEEP identified projects.

### Timeline and Staff Commitment

Participation in the NCA program is generally a 2-year process. During this time, staff and relevant community partners (ex. businesses) would be invited to participate in workshops to ensure greater participation. Participation in the NCA Program would align with the time remaining in our agreement with Clean's Community Climate Capacity Program, which would allow for synergies and to optimize resources as we develop our sustainability/climate journey.

### Participating Communities in Nova Scotia

Many municipalities in Nova Scotia have already started working with QUEST Canada, including:

- Town of Truro
- Municipality of Pictou County
- Town of Pictou
- Town of Kentville
- Town of Digby
- Municipality of the County of Colchester
- Cape Breton Regional Municipality

### Community Energy and Emissions Plans (CEEPs)

CEEPs typically serve as one of the first steps on the sustainability journey for many municipalities. CEEP outlines the actions and activities a community can take to coordinate actions on energy and reduce emissions in accordance with provincial, national, and international targets.

Having a completed CEEP can bring many benefits to a community, including:

- **Save money** - CEEP can serve as step-by-step guides to help communities save energy and reduce emissions through energy efficiency programs, renewable energy and other industry best practices.
- **Keep money in the local economy** - Most of the money spent on energy in Nova Scotian municipalities leaves the community and supports economies elsewhere. CEEP can show a roadmap to increasing efficiency and conservation to keep more of it in the community's pocket.

- **Access funding more easily** - A CEEP can help a community successfully access funding by demonstrating alignment with goals and priorities of funding programs, a long-term commitment to sustainability and a willingness to engage and partner.
  - **Build community resilience** - A CEEP can help to identify vulnerabilities, prioritize infrastructure needs and defining processes and procedures in preparation for climate events.
  - **Attract new residents and businesses** - A CEEP can help attract new people and businesses by demonstrating how the community offers an appealing, competitive, eco-friendly environment.
  - **Mitigate climate change** - A CEEP can serve as a baseline in advance of adaptation work to ensure emissions reduction work can align.
  - **Promote greater self-reliance and energy security** - Reducing dependence on external energy sources saves money and protects communities from price shocks.
  - **Improve public health** - A CEEP can help envision a well-planned, healthy community with cleaner air, more green spaces, and better active transportation infrastructure.
  - **Environmental benefits** - A CEEP can show how sustainability measures are embedded into bylaws and land use plans to ensure commitments and protections of the environment and maintained.
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## Discussion

Staff are currently working on updating the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (MCCAP) to support the municipality in enhancing our resiliency to climate impacts, mitigate climate risks and help identify priorities and future workplans.

Through the MCCAP update, staff were anticipating to create mitigation and adaptation strategies at a future date. The opportunity available through the NCA program would enhance the municipality's current capacity to develop a mitigation strategy in parallel with the internal staff update of the MCCAP.

The development of a CEEP would help the municipality in determining our priorities around energy to improve efficiency, enhance our community resilience, and manage future risks. It would help us with considering energy in our land-use and infrastructure planning processes and would identify opportunities to integrate local energy solutions. Also, developing this report for the municipality would strengthen the municipality's ability to secure funding for climate-related and capital projects when funding opportunities arise.

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The Plan ties into our key strategy of Sustainable Infrastructure, in particular the objective to invest in energy initiatives that support the sustainability of our organization and the community we serve.

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## Alternatives

Council may wish to not proceed with participating in Quest Canada's Net-Zero Communities Accelerator program.

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