SUBJECT: Canadian Walking Master Class (BOH08028a/PW09003) - (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:
That the Board of Health approve the City’s involvement in the Canadian Walking Master Class initiative and Public Health Services’ leadership with support from Public Works.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In March 2008, Green Communities Canada applied for a grant from Transport Canada’s Moving on Sustainable Transportation Initiative (MOST) to create a Canadian Master Class project. On March 30, 2008, City Council signed a letter of interest to participate in the Canadian Walking Master Class project as a lead City. In an earlier corresponding action, on March 26, 2008, City Council showed additional support for the importance of creating a culture of walking in Hamilton, when the Mayor signed the International Charter for Walking.

The City of Hamilton was selected as a Canadian Walking Master Class City. As per the resolution of City Council March 30, 2008, Public Health Services is submitting this report with the details of the City’s involvement in this initiative.

Walkable communities have many health and environmental benefits for citizens. Changing from motorized to active modes of transportation will result in increased physical activity, pedestrian and road safety, sense of community, and a decrease in air pollution. Active modes of transportation, such as walking, will improve the health of Canadians, ultimately reducing health care costs.

The City of Hamilton’s involvement in the Canadian Walking Master Class will occur through the leadership of Public Health Services, in partnership with Public Works Department. Public Health Services will dedicate a .5 FTE for one year to coordinate the activities of the initiative both locally and nationally. Public Health Services and Public Works will jointly contribute $10,000 to the national costs of implementing the initiative across jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND:

In March 2008, Green Communities Canada applied for a grant from Transport Canada’s Moving on Sustainable Transportation Initiative (MOST) to create a Canadian Master Class project. On March 30, 2008, City Council signed a letter of interest to participate in the Canadian Walking Master Class project as a lead City. In an earlier corresponding action, on March 26, 2008, City Council showed additional support for the importance of creating a culture of walking in Hamilton, when the Mayor signed the International Charter for Walking.

The City of Hamilton was chosen as a Canadian Walking Master Class City. The objectives for the Canadian Walking Master Class project are as follows:

1. To promote walking as an indicator of sustainable, healthy places and demonstrate the benefits of walkable communities to reduce the impacts of climate change.
2. To encourage and support cities and towns to commit and invest in practical actions which build sustainable, liveable places where people choose to walk.
3. To research, publish and share best practice for the principles of the International Charter for Walking, as part of the continuing process of ensuring it is a practical delivery framework for local action.
4. To build and support an international network of skilled professionals around the world to share and evolve best practice and deliver walkable communities.
City of Hamilton’s involvement in the Canadian Walking Master Class Initiative

Public Health Services will:

- Represent the City as the Project Leader for the Canadian Walking Master Class
- Collaborate with key stakeholders within the City of Hamilton and broader community partners
- Undertake a Benchmarking Survey to baseline current commitment of the City of Hamilton to walking and the effectiveness of existing policies and investments
- Organize and host a Regional Master Class based on the eight principles of the International Charter for Walking. This would consist of a series of events and activities with political leaders, key stakeholders and the public
- Contribute to the development and delivery of the International Best Practice Notes
- Work to develop a Walking Action Plan for the City as a delivery framework for implementing initiatives which aim for more walkable communities
- Monitor and evaluate the local Walking Action Plan, share the results and lessons learned to inform the evolution of The International Charter for Walking
- Link and coordinate existing walking projects currently underway in the City of Hamilton
- Contribute $5,000 toward the fixed costs over and above in-kind contributions of staff time and venues

Public Works will:

- Contribute $5,000 toward the fixed costs over and above in-kind contributions of staff time and venues
- Be an active partner with Public Health Services in this initiative.
- Provide support from both a Transportation Master Plan perspective and from a Transportation Demand Management perspective for the review and delivery of the Walking Action Plan.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

Participation in the Canadian Walking Master Class project will help in the implementation of the pedestrian/foot travel/walkability component of the Hamilton Master Transportation plan. This 30 year municipal growth strategy has an emphasis on walkability. Staff from Healthy Living Division of Hamilton Public Health Services are currently involved in several initiatives related to walkability. Participation in the Canadian Walking Master Class project would enhance dedicated time and commitment to link and coordinate existing walkability projects and develop and support future projects.

Changing from motorized to active modes of transportation will result in increased physical activity, pedestrian and road safety, sense of community, and a decrease in air pollution. Active modes of transportation, such as walking, will improve the health of Canadians, ultimately reducing health care costs.

Walkable communities have many health and environmental benefits for citizens. A walkable community supports and encourages people who choose to walk. Research supports promoting walking as an entry level activity for inactive people (Hillsdon & Thorogood, 1996) and also shows that Canadians want pedestrian friendly environments to such an extent that 82% of Canadians strongly support spending
government money on more paths in their community to make streets safer for cyclists, cars, and pedestrians (Go for Green, Environics, 1998). Older adults want pedestrian crossings that are regularly spaced, well designed (islands, visual and audio signals) that allow older adults sufficient time to cross (WHO, 2006).

Walking has been shown to reduce the risk of chronic disease and promote healthy weights by increasing rates of physical activity. Each additional kilometer walked per day is associated with a 4.8% reduction in the risk of obesity (Frank et al., 2004). In terms of older adults, they need to remain physically active to maintain muscle strength and bone health, reduce their risk of falls and fractures and to maintain independent living. Recreation centres and walking trails in a community may play a role in promoting physical activity (CPHI, 2006)

When it comes to economic benefits of people being more physically active, a 10% increase in physical activity would save Canada roughly $5 billion in health care costs (Katzmarzyk et al., 2000).

Safe communities are part of walkable communities. Safety concerns keep one in five Canadians from walking or bicycling more (National Active Transportation Survey, Go for Green, 1998). Neighbourhood characteristics such as availability of sidewalks and better lighting are associated with increased physical activity and walking respectively (CPHI, 2006). Active transportation leads to a reduction in crime and fosters a greater sense of personal/family security in a community, through increased presence of “eyes on the street” with walkers and cyclists being active in the neighbourhood (Go For Green, 2000).

With air quality being an increasing concern in Hamilton, the Walking Master Class will create an opportunity to demonstrate the City’s commitment to reducing greenhouse emissions and increasing public health in Hamilton. Cars and light trucks can produce as much as 70% of the pollutants which contribute to creating smog in major cities. It is known that air pollution can cause or intensify a variety of health problems including heart disease, emphysema, pneumonia, cancer, and asthma (Go For Green, 2004).

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Council could choose not to support the Canadian Walking Master Class Initiative. In doing so, the City would forego the opportunity for a deliverable local Walking Action Plan, informed by international experts and best practice. Without the Canadian Walking Master Class Initiative, walking activities would continue in the City of Hamilton in a piecemeal fashion, without providing city stakeholders with the tools and the confidence to increase walkability and put the pedestrian first.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

A 0.5 FTE position within Healthy Living Division will be dedicated to represent the City as the Project Leader for the International Walking Master Class project for one year. The 0.5 FTE is part of existing complement.

Public Works support for Transportation Demand Management programs, such as this, has been included in approved work plans and budgets.
POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

The work from the Canadian Walking Master Class project complements the Hamilton Transportation Master Plan by working together with community partners, City staff, and experts in the field to deliver more walkable communities. Providing a more walkable community will also help achieve the Transportation Master Plan goals of reducing single occupancy vehicle trips by 20%, and of increasing the amount of trips made by walking and cycling from 6% to 15%, by 2031. In addition, the Canadian Walking Master Class project aligns with the Public Works Strategic Plan priority of being the leader in “greening” and stewardship of the City.

The project supports Public Health Services’ Strategic Plan Goal A: Implement public health initiatives to improve local air quality; Goal C: Maximize impact on community health in four key areas of chronic disease prevention: tobacco control, nutrition, physical activity and mental health; and, Goal E: Be recognized as public health experts in the community.

The project also aligns with the following Vision 2020 goals: To encourage a shift in personal lifestyle and behaviour towards transportation choices that enhance personal health and fitness, save money, and have the lowest environmental cost; and to use alternative modes of movement, such as walking, biking, and public transit every day.

The project supports the City of Hamilton’s Strategic Plan Focus Area #7: Healthy Communities (Increase the percentage of Hamilton residents who are moderately active (22.4%) and physically activity (26.6%) from 49% to 54% by 2011; Stop the rise in the percentage of residents who are overweight or obese; and, Increase alternative transportation usage in areas such as transit ridership, walking, cycling).

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Public Health Services has met with Public Works and the Recreation Division of Community Services to discuss collaborative opportunities related to the Canadian Walking Master Class project.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑Yes ☐No
A walkable community means that goods and services that a resident needs on a regular basis are within easy and safe walking distance. A walkable community ensures safe and inviting pedestrian corridors for all residents and visitors alike. Active modes of transportation, such as walking, will improve the health of citizens and thus reduce health care costs.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑Yes ☐No
A more walkable community will allow the choice for using active modes of transportation to get to work, school, and play resulting in fewer vehicles on the street and less pollution in the air.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑Yes ☐No
A walkable community will be more attractive to businesses and tourism.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?  ☑Yes ☐No
Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes  ☐ No
A walkable community is a better place to live, work, learn and play.