
Subject: Creating the Ohnia:kara UNESCO Global Geopark

Report to: Planning and Economic Development Committee

Report date: Wednesday, May 8, 2019

Recommendations

1. That Report PDS 18-2019 **BE RECEIVED** for information;
2. That the concept for the Ohnia:kara UNESCO Global Geopark **BE ENDORSED** and the Ohnia:kara Steering Committee **BE SUPPORTED** in their pursuits of developing a global geopark; and
3. That Report PDS 18-2019 **BE CIRCULATED** to the local area municipalities.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding the Ohnia:kara UNESCO Global Geopark;
- A *global geopark* is a unified area with a geological heritage of international significance (UNESCO);
- At an April 25, 2018 presentation to Planning and Economic Development Committee, the Ohnia:kara Steering Committee outlined their desire to pursue a UNESCO geopark designation for Niagara.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial implications stemming from this report. However, it would be reasonable to assume that future financial support may be required to further the geopark initiative. This initiative is currently not funded in the 2019 budget and if supported, required financial support will be included in future budget years for Council consideration and approval.

Analysis

At the April 28, 2018 Planning and Economic Development Committee, a presentation by the Ohnia:kara Steering Committee (steering committee) outlined the potential creation of a geopark in Niagara. The following resolution was carried:

*“That staff **BE DIRECTED** to provide a report regarding the potential creation of the Ohnia:kara UNESCO Global Geopark.”*

Since the presentation in April 2018, Brock University’s Niagara Community Observatory published the attached (Appendix I) policy brief, which is a comprehensive primer on UNESCO geoparks, and the process to achieve the UNESCO designation.

The policy brief, prepared to support the efforts of the steering committee, makes a compelling case for establishing a geopark in Niagara highlighting linkages to existing tourism as well as new tourism opportunities, including international recognition of existing cultural and geological assets (waterfalls, trails, historic sites, etc).

The brief indicates that at least 78 geosites of geological, environmental or cultural interest have been identified across all 12 Niagara municipalities. Due to the cross jurisdictional nature of these features, the report further suggests that the Region, 12 local municipalities, Niagara Parks Commission and Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Ontario Parks, and the St. Lawrence Seaway Management Corporation (Transport Canada) would all need to be involved in advancing the geopark initiative.

Through discussions with members of the Ohnia:kara steering committee, it is understood, that the group has begun to make presentations to local municipal councils, the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority as well as several local non-profit organizations.

Staff would suggest that once the steering committee has achieved input from as many local stakeholders as possible, an update could be provided to Council with respect to feedback received and anticipated next steps.

This report recommends that Regional Council endorse the concept of a Niagara Geopark and support the steering committee in their pursuit of a UNESCO designation. The support of Regional Council may be beneficial to helping the group advance this initiative with local stakeholders.

Alternatives Reviewed

Council could choose not to endorse the Ohnia:kara Global Geopark, or not to support the steering committee in pursuing its designation. However, these options are not recommended.

Other Pertinent Reports

N/A

Prepared by:

Erik Acs, MCIP, RPP
Manager Community Planning
Planning and Development Services

Recommended by:

Rino Mostacci, MCIP, RPP
Commissioner
Planning and Development Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was reviewed by Doug Giles, Director Community and Long Range Planning.

Appendices

Appendix 1

Ohnia:kara Policy Brief

Page 4