

Background:

Now that Council has endorsed the cities Climate Action Plan, it is imperative that we lead in reducing our own carbon footprint. Over the last term, I have noticed a significant use and wastage of paper for documents and reports by council that can be accessible digitally. I struggle to see the benefit of using paper sources for reviewing Council meetings, reports and other agendas for one day. If we are truly committed to climate change and reducing our own carbon footprint then we must make significant changes to how we do business and this must include how we use paper.

Financial costs of paper

Though cost varies by industry, [experts say](#) the average employee uses 10,000 sheets of paper annually.

With printing and paper costs alone, that amounts to \$800 (USD) each year for each employee's printing. One big problem with spending so much on printing is how quickly printed materials become irrelevant.

U.S. companies spend more than \$120 billion per year on printed forms, which typically become outdated within three months.

But keep in mind that printing costs aren't just about paper. These costs also include paper file storage, ink, equipment, and repairs to machines.

By opting for a paperless government, you can not only drastically reduce costs but increase efficiency.

Environmental cost of paper

Of course, constantly printing takes a huge toll on the environment, which has negative long-term effects.

BACKGROUND
CLLR. GARES – NOTICE OF MOTION
SUSTAINABLE PAPER POLICY

Did you know that [it takes about 24 trees to produce one ton of paper](#)? Since one tree produces just over 8,000 sheets of paper, that means each employee consumes about 1.2 trees a year.

So much paper use can contribute to deforestation, which can affect climate change and destroy many animal habitats.

To produce 1kg of paper requires 324 L of water (Environment Canada). Paper production drives pulp demand which causes deforestation. 42% of the destructive clear-cutting that goes on in this world is for paper production (not even including paper packaging, which makes up ⅓ of our trash heaps). Then add to that the fact that paper production is the biggest fossil fuel polluter in the world and that it calls for chlorine bleach that contaminates land and sea. When paper finally breaks down it emits methane gas, which is toxic. But not as toxic as dioxins (which is what leaches into the world when plastics break down) – although Dioxins are a by-product of paper manufacturing.

Resources:

<https://blog.mesltd.ca/the-true-cost-of-working-with-paper-in-2020>

<https://www.powerdms.com/policy-learning-center/reduce-paper-costs-local-government>

https://environmentalpaper.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/EPN_NA_Reduction_Year-One-Report.pdf

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/shared/cfm/image.cfm?id=24521>