

BurlingtonGreen's Comments on Burlington's Proposed Climate Action Plan

Executive Summary

Climate change is the most critical threat facing Burlington. Its effects will continue to be more frequent, and severe, as it threatens everything around us, our homes, our infrastructure, even our health and well-being. Every day, new scientific data indicates the increasing urgency of climate action and studies are showing that Canada is on track to warm at twice the global average. Time is running out, and we have a small window of opportunity to curb the effects of climate change. The climate crisis calls for immediate action across the whole community, and a shift from our standard lifestyle and decision making into a more sustainable model that puts climate mitigation front and center.

The City of Burlington declared a Climate Emergency in April of 2019. In December, City staff brought forward a proposed climate action plan. The plan lays out a low-carbon pathway to achieve the City's GHG targets through implementing several key programs areas. The proposed plan comes at a critical time in Burlington. In December of 2019, [The Atmospheric Fund \(TAF\)](#) published its [Carbon Emissions Inventory for the GTHA](#). One of the key findings of the inventory is that [Halton has the highest per capita emissions in the GTHA when industry sources are excluded](#). The need to take urgent action on climate has never been more critical, and the City must drive the implementation of the proposed climate action plan, fund it, and work closely with all members of the community and stakeholders to achieve it's target GHG reduction targets. An outward facing plan the drives action, accountability and transparency are essential to the success of the City's climate action goals and our collective future.

Mitigating climate change is the responsibility of the general public, organizations, businesses and industries at large, but they must be given sufficient tools from government in order to make more sustainable choices; choices which may not be easy and may initially be more costly, but are truly in the interest of a more sustainable future for our city and planet.

Goals, Targets and Key Indicators

BurlingtonGreen recommends aligning both the city and community carbon reduction targets with the most up to date IPCC targets, and to plan for even more stringent targets as developments arise on the global front, calling for stronger carbon targets. The most up to date

recommendation from the IPCC is a 50% carbon reduction by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by no later than 2050.

Reduction targets should be reviewed every 3 years or sooner to keep up with the pace of science and climate change developments. We recommend interim targets for all program areas to be set on an annual or 3 years basis depending on the program area, to allow for resource planning and to measure the success of the different program areas.

Key performance indicators for all program areas must be shared with the community on an ongoing basis to ensure transparency and accountability, in addition to annual progress reports.

An Outward Facing Campaign – Engaging the Community for a More Sustainable Future

A strong community engagement strategy must be at the heart of the climate action plan. Applying a climate lens to all decision-making frameworks is essential. Communications and messaging to internal and external stakeholders will drive and support the City's reduction goal and unify the community around a shared goal.

Effectively engaging the community and securing buy in and support for the climate action plan will require good strategy, dedicated effort and community partner participation. How to effectively tackle climate change can be confusing and overwhelming and communicating the technical aspect of the climate action plan may be a challenge. An inclusive approach, providing user-friendly 'tools' (such as a one-stop web platform, social media & outreach communications tactics) for all sectors to learn about and report on their actions to address climate action will be key. Continuous, widespread and targeted communications reinforcing action on climate change to be Burlington's top priority will need to be understood and disseminated from all City departments and staff.

All sectors will need to be actively engaged in advancing solutions. Building partnerships with key stakeholders and industry players will help establish Burlington as a leader in sustainable growth and development.

Buildings are one of Burlington's largest GHG emitters, and it is essential the city incent and work with progressive developers to establish smart community, net carbon places to live, work and play, with one example being the proposed demonstration project located at 901 Guelph Line. The outward facing demonstration project could potentially invite the community to guided tours and presentations, showcasing state of the art design features and cutting-edge sustainability technologies, thereby inspiring the adoption of similar low carbon living features at their homes. The project would also provide an established example for other less progressive developers to follow.

Establishing and showcasing 'living' examples of what sustainable design and living looks like, particularly in highly visible locations, will provide residents a glimpse of what a sustainable future can look like while influencing the less progressive developers to see more clearly what

the needs and expectations are for buildings in a city where a climate emergency has been declared.

Comments on Key Program Areas

Program Area	Recommendations
1. Burlington Low Carbon New Building Guideline	<p>BurlingtonGreen supports a model that reflects Toronto’s tiered approach and incorporates incentives.</p> <p>It will be necessary to work with local businesses and educational institutions to increase the supply of skilled tradespeople. Please see our above comments regarding the value of demonstration project(s) in Burlington.</p>
2. Burlington Deep Energy Retrofit Program	<p>BurlingtonGreen supports this program area.</p> <p>We urge the city to provide the policy framework necessary to move the program forward building on best practices and successes of other municipalities in the region.</p> <p>The program lacks interim targets and timeline.</p> <p>More clarity is needed on how the city will work with the trades and industry to supply the market with the required skills to carry out retrofits on a wide scale.</p>
3. Renewable Energy Cooperative	<p>BurlingtonGreen supports this program area.</p> <p>The program lacks interim targets and timeline (e.g. minimum % renewable energy, annual addition of MW of renewable energy).</p> <p>The program will help to source renewable energy in a cost-efficient manner.</p>
4. Integrated Mobility Plan	<p>BurlingtonGreen supports this program area.</p> <p>We urge the City to provide the funding and policy framework to move the program forward, and to set interim targets.</p>
5. Electric Mobility and Equipment Program	<p>BurlingtonGreen supports this program area.</p> <p>We urge the city to consider all aspects of an EV strategy that include incentives, investing in public charging infrastructure and working with utility partners to ensure the demand on the grid is effectively managed.</p>
6. Waste Reduction Initiative	<p>Recognizing that waste authority and management is a Halton Region responsibility, it is essential the City recognize, act on and showcase to the community how it is leading by</p>

	example in this area and how waste and the circular economy link to action on climate here in Burlington.
7. Industrial Innovation Program	BurlingtonGreen recognizes this is a lower priority area in Burlington’s context, and encourages the city to engage industry stakeholders for further consultations.

Recognizing the City’s current plan to include green infrastructure and biodiversity in ‘phase 2’ (adaptation) of the Climate Action Plan, we believe it important to include ‘natural solutions’ as an 8th Program Area within the current draft plan. “In nature-based climate change mitigation, ecosystem services are used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to conserve and expand carbon sinks” and furthermore [“compared to technology-based solutions to climate challenges, nature-based solutions are often lower cost, longer lasting, and have multiple synergistic benefits for a variety of sectors and political goals.”](#)

Financial Commitments and Investments

The success of the proposed climate action program areas relies on the investments and commitments that the city invests to ensure its success.

City Council’s Declaration of a Climate Emergency demonstrated that Council recognizes how serious of a threat climate change is and why we need to urgently invest in effective solutions to mitigate its worst effects. All levels of government play a role in fighting climate change and need to come together. Please review [BurlingtonGreen’s feedback on the city’s 2020 budget](#) for our recommendations.

Allocating funds to climate action must go hand in hand with reviewing the proposed climate action plan. The plan identifies 23 actions spread over 7 programs that will reduce Burlington’s carbon emissions and transition the community to net carbon neutrality. If the plan is approved and adopted by Council, a financial commitment must be reflected in the City’s budget, both in the short term and the long term. Top priority picks for climate change investments should speak to curbing emissions from the largest emissions sectors. Recommendations for the buildings sector include providing incentives for developers that implement green standards in their buildings and advancing low carbon smart communities / projects, in addition to financing a deep retrofit program similar to Toronto’s HELP program. Investment priorities in the transportation section include financing the expansion of transit services, electrifying urban transit and the municipal fleet and investing in charging infrastructure throughout the City. Additionally, investing in partnerships with environmental non-profits and the business community will accelerate climate action and help to achieve the overarching target.

Conclusion

Climate change is here, and the time to act was yesterday. At no time in our history has the phrase “think global; act local” been more true. There is no greater ‘gift’ that the city can

provide to current and future generations than clean air to breath, safe water to drink, healthy food to eat and a stable climate to sustain life of all forms.

We trust you will find BurlingtonGreen's input on this most critical issue to be helpful and we look forward to future opportunities to collaborate to ensure City and community action on climate change is effective and a front and centre priority.

Sincerely,

The Advocacy Committee

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association