



April 23, 2019 – BurlingtonGreen Delegation RE: Climate Emergency Declaration for Burlington

Good evening Mayor Meed-Ward, Members of Council, Burlington citizens and supporters,

On behalf of BurlingtonGreen, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this evening in support of the proposed Climate Emergency Declaration.

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 for climate action. 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 choices and decision making into a more sustainable model that puts climate mitigation front and centre.

Mitigating climate change is the responsibility of the general public, organizations, businesses and industries at large, but they must be led by example and 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.

Declaring a climate emergency for Burlington will support the prioritization of and **investment in** initiatives to reduce our local carbon footprint such as...

- protecting and growing Burlington's tree canopy
- advancing green building development initiatives
- investing in fossil-fuel free public transit infrastructure
- advancing more local food production opportunities

...and implementing stronger flood protection measures

The City must prioritize community awareness and education campaigns that go hand in hand with all the initiatives proposed here. The fight against climate change is now at the community level, and their understanding, commitment and buy-in are **crucial** for the successful adoption of climate mitigation strategies. The Burlington community will respond well to and rally around a city-wide solution-focused campaign tied to an overarching greenhouse gas reduction target.

Reporting to the community (and vice versa) on each milestone and on progress on each action area will motivate the community and foster a sense of pride and responsibility across the City. Every emissions reduction achieved, every environmental policy implemented, and every tree planted could be tallied up with a running total continually communicated, ensuring climate action stays top of mind and the **first priority** for the City **and** the community.

Additionally, there is hopeful news given...

- there are already partnerships in place to help drive climate action forward such as the Bay Area Climate Change initiative on which BurlingtonGreen serves;
- there are examples of good work being done by other municipalities with strong commitments to climate action such as Toronto and Guelph, with strategies that can be adapted and implemented here:
- and there is the comprehensive solution-focused climate action strategy prepared by our team of advocacy volunteers at BG

And while we recognize that the development and adoption of a comprehensive Strategy for Burlington can take time....this is something we are quickly running out of.

And thus, in the meantime, as per our proposal previously shared online with all of you, we urge this Council to **immediately adopt** a reporting and decision-making framework that **equally accounts** for environmental, economic and social costs and benefits. (Science tells us we actually need to go much further adopting a model that recognizes that community and economic activity occurs **within** environmental or ecological limits). You're a very busy Council making critical decisions right now and in the months ahead, regarding growth strategies, infrastructure, transportation planning and more, and these must be looked at through a "sustainability lens" that prioritize deep greenhouse gas reductions.

I appreciate the opportunity to share BurlingtonGreen's input on climate action, and you certainly have our full support in what we hope will be a unanimous vote

for the Declaration. True leadership begins with the courage to take the long view. The cost of doing anything less is too great a price to pay.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amy Schnurr". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Amy Schnurr

Executive Director  
BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association