

BurlingtonGreen's Comments on the Climate Action Plan for Burlington (Staff Report CW-20-19), December 2, 2019

Good morning Chair? Mayor Meed Ward, Members of Council, staff and residents of Burlington.

My name is Marwa Selim and I am delegating today on behalf of BurlingtonGreen.

I would like to thank City Sustainability Staff and Members of Council for their cooperation over the past year, and for taking the time to meet with us to discuss a Burlington Climate Action Strategy.

BurlingtonGreen has advocated for stronger action on climate for over a decade. In the winter of 2019, we met with the Mayor and all Members of Council to discuss proposed recommendations on a Made in Burlington climate strategy that recognizes the climate challenges specific to the Burlington community and works to address them. We supported the climate emergency declaration in April and have since delegated on the proposed climate action plan in June. BurlingtonGreen serves on the Climate Action Stakeholder Committee and as well as the Bay Area Climate Change Council.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide some input on the staff report presented today (CW-20-19) and Appendix B of the report, the Plan's Engagement Strategy. Appendix A was released on Friday, and we have not had an opportunity to review it yet.

The staff report lays out the City's target for city operations to be net carbon neutral by 2040 (CW-20-19, pg. 9)¹. A wider community target is missing. We look forward to the next phase of the Climate Action Plan and further details on how all sectors of the community will be incorporated into the plan with a measurable emissions reduction target. BurlingtonGreen agrees with the staff report that priorities need to be set when tackling the issue of climate change and consistent with the GHG inventory research produced, the City and community at large needs to focus a significant portion of their efforts to reducing emissions from the transportation and green buildings sectors. However, the climate action plan needs to capture all aspects of environmental health as it pertains to climate. Nothing should be left off the table. Direct links to protect, restore and fund tree protection, planting and education which our Executive Director Amy Schnurr will be back to speak to this evening are crucial, as is circular economy and waste. Recognizing that the Region is considered the government responsible for waste management, like all environmental issues we need to take

¹ [CW-20-19, pg. 9](#)

responsibility as well within our own communities with a coordinated approach with the Region and all levels of government.

To ensure the success of the climate action plan and to dovetail current City initiatives and bring in various sectors of the community, the scope of the Red Tape Red Carpet Task Force can be expanded to include programs and initiatives that work with businesses on reducing their carbon emissions and providing opportunities to accelerate innovation and collaboration with industry. The community will rely on green products and services to transition into a net carbon neutral city and establishing strong ties and incentives for the green sector early on is very important. Being a leader in this area will also establish Burlington as a hub for green technologies in the GTA and beyond.

The level of community engagement shows a keen appetite for climate and environmental action in Burlington as mentioned in the staff report (staff report CW-20-19, pg. 9). Residents overall supported the proposed direction and action. The community is also looking to the City for leadership and for the tools and programs to implement changes in their daily lives. BurlingtonGreen is encouraged to see that action on climate is beginning to appear in reporting and decision - making at city hall and we are pleased to learn our long-time advocacy for a triple - bottom line / 3 pillar framework and process appears to be gaining traction.

Our recommendations for public communication strategies include:

- Establishing a community emissions reduction target. The target should be broadcast and communicated at every opportunity. All sectors of the community, residents, organizations, business, and government must be able to see how their lifestyle changes and their choices feed into that target.
- Highlighting the cost of doing nothing now, and how that translates to catastrophic results in the future. Utilize visuals and stats from the 2014 flood and 2013 ice storm, and analysis and forecasts from the insurance industry. Establish a strong tie to mental health. Paint a picture for people about what their life will look like if we don't act now. The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) estimates that up to 10% of Canadian properties may soon be too high risk to be insured by the private sector if no measures are taken to mitigate flood risk by the owner or through public policy² (ECO 2018 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Report, Part 1, pg. 30). The 2014 Burlington flood caused damage to over 3,000 homes and cost \$90 million in insured claims. The City's Disaster Relief Fund paid out over \$2.6 M in relief funds³ (Council Workshop April 4, 2019. Slide 29). The Intact

² [ECO 2018 Greenhouse Gas Progress Report](#), Part 1: pg. 30

³ [Council Workshop April 4, 2019. Slide 29](#)

Centre on Climate Adaptation (Intact Centre) interviewed 100 homes in Burlington that had experienced basement flooding after the 2014 flood and non-flooded control households that were in close proximity to one another. Three years after their home was flooded, almost half (48%) of respondents from flooded households were very worried when it rained, compared to 3% of respondents from non-flooded households⁴. In neighbouring Mississauga, a 2015 study indicated that the average ice storm will cost approximately \$9 million per year⁵ (Mississauga Climate Action Plan, pg. 5, Study by Insurance Bureau of Canada). If we don't take bold action now, the impacts of climate change will continue to be more devastating and costly, and affect the budgets of all Burlington households.

- Celebrating milestones and the small wins. The City can't do it alone, however it must be the leader providing education, opportunity, transparency and accountability. An online portal to highlight initiatives and success stories, support for the Showcase Cities program, and measuring progress on an established timeline is an important and impactful tool for the whole community. BurlingtonGreen was recently pleased to consult on a project vision and funding opportunity to the Bay Area Climate Change Council that would directly benefit both cities of Burlington and Hamilton. The project would support the development of a shared online web platform with a potential built in carbon calculator that would invite residents, and all sectors of the community and both two municipalities to input and track their climate actions.

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

We look forward to future opportunities to collaborate on the Climate Action Plan. Thank you very much for your time and attention.

Sincerely,



⁴ [After the Flood Report](#), pg.

⁵ [Draft Mississauga Climate Action Plan](#), pg. 5

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