

**City of Toronto
Parks and Environment Committee
Meeting # 6 (Special)
Item PE6.1 Core Service Review
July 21, 2011**

Good morning Councillors, staff, media and members of the public.

My name is Heather Marshall and I am a Campaigner at the Toronto Environmental Alliance. I have spent many years working with Toronto residents on environmental initiatives in our city.

I've sat on a lot of couches and I've been to a lot of community meetings and it doesn't matter if I'm in Rosedale or Victoria Park I see the same things connecting people together:

- the desire for a clean, green spaces to raise a family
- access to fresh, healthy fruit and vegetables
- clean air that doesn't result in smog days & asthma for our kids
- a reliable energy supply and ways to cut down on their power bills
- a chance to volunteer in their communities
- local, green employment opportunities
- and an overwhelming motivation to do something good for the environment

How communities go about achieving these things is not always the same, but it is always innovative. I've been at meetings where low-income tenants in East York and Scarborough have taken a serious socio-economic challenge in their area and managed to develop a solution that has far-reaching positive gains for their community and the environment.

I've seen the lack of fresh healthy fruits and vegetables at a local food bank turn into a community gardening initiative that doesn't just provide good food to the gardener's families, they share the bounty with neighbours and other folks who would normally rely solely on the canned goods from the food bank.

I've seen tenants run education programs on recycling, energy conservation, water conservation and some have even explored small-scale renewable energy installations for their apartment buildings. Aside from saving energy and water and breaking the isolation of apartment living, they've saved the buildings money - with the hopes that some of those savings might get reinvested into much-needed building repairs or a playground for their kids.

I'm telling you these stories because they might not have been possible without the help of the Toronto Environment Office. It's important to remind the Councillors of this committee to consider the social, economic and environmental impacts of the recommendation to eliminate the Toronto Environment Office.

I wish I could say everyone in Toronto knows about this office but they don't. The Toronto Environment Office is like the set designer and artistic director in a huge production. They don't take centre stage that often but they make sure everything runs smoothly, that the players know which actions to take and which direction to go in, and most importantly that the audience is engaged and invigorated.

The list of players is long and diverse. Various city departments, agencies, boards and commissions work with the Toronto Environment Office but so do community groups across the city, private investors, local businesses and institutions.

The audience is massive. Considering the small number of staff they have, they rely heavily on over a thousand volunteers as well as community animators to reach out to Torontonians in every corner of our city. This enables Toronto Environment Office to communicate their programs, services and activities in over 47 languages!

It doesn't matter where you are from in this City, the Toronto Environment Office has developed programs and policies that work for everyone. Sometimes they are obvious public programs like Live Green Toronto, the Green Toronto Awards, Smart Commute, and the Eco-Roof Financial Incentive. Other times, the services are backstage through what the KPMG report called 'Corporate Environmental Support Services'. This translates to the development of useful planning tools for departments to assess environmental risks and associated costs, studies on Extreme Weather Events and local air quality and much more.

It's usually a win-win situation. For instance, eco-roofs provide green space and cool off buildings (saving them energy) but they also reduce the amount of stormwater runoff going into the sewer system. This saves Toronto Water a lot of money on stormwater management, infrastructure and the prevention of floods. All by providing a small amount of strategic investment or advice to the right business, community group or institution!

It's shameful to see that this report goes as far to suggest that we eliminate the Toronto Environment Office and its activities, especially once you know everything that this office does for our city. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that clean air, clean water, green energy, extreme weather and climate change planning, and effective community and business partnerships are anything less than 'essential' services for the City to provide in the coming years.

I urge the Councillors on this committee - Councillors Berardinetti, Cho, Kelly, McMahon, Moeser, and Pasternak - to seek more information from the City Manager before making such a drastic decision. We are a world class city and a green leader

in Canada. To even recommend the 'opportunity' of shutting down our environmental office to Executive Committee we may as well kiss goodbye our reputation as an environmental leader in Canada. The elimination of the Toronto Environment Office should not even be on the table today, so let's make sure that it does not end up on any table after this meeting.

links

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2011/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-39537.pdf>

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http://www.toronto.ca/environment/pdf/cot_carbon_credit_listing.pdf