

Delegation to Nov 4th GIC by Ian Borsuk

Thank you members of the committee for allowing me to speak digitally to you today to provide comment on the City's climate action progress.

While I and others in Environment Hamilton have been able to look over the report documents, in the five minutes I have, I would be hard pressed to be able to comment on every aspect that we find concerning or would like to see more detail on. Generally speaking, this update seems to be a variety of promises of more reports to come - without it being clear to us whether these future reports will help accomplish what we have communicated to the City Manager and staff needs to be done by the City. It still remains unclear to us when the City will effectively communicate with the public about the climate emergency and what it means. Nor is it clear if the City is even planning to develop an actual SMART plan, which stands for Specific Measurable Actionable Realistic Timeline. We are nowhere close to what other municipalities like Vancouver, Kingston, Whitby, and others have begun to discuss - which are plans that have tangible deliverables with associated costs that their City Council's must now make tough decisions on with regards to how to take action on the climate emergency while at the same time dealing with the global pandemic. Right now that isn't happening in Hamilton.

I hope you will forgive me when I say that personally, this has been incredibly frustrating to watch. I'd like to provide a recent example of Hamilton lagging behind other municipalities when it comes to action - an example that I fear is quite representative of Hamilton overall.

During the last term of Council, I met with several of you personally to discuss the potential of a Home Energy Retrofit Opportunity program - or HERO for short. To save time I won't get into the weeds of our proposal, but essentially we wanted and still want to see the City of Hamilton help homeowners access low interest loans for the purpose of making energy efficiency retrofits to their homes and ultimately reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy production - but also help Hamiltonians save money on their hydro bills. This is the type of program that has proven to work elsewhere that truly gets to the heart of what people call "climate justice" in that a program like this would enable homeowners to make retrofits to their home that would improve their lives that they otherwise would not be able to afford, such as seniors with fixed incomes - while also at the same time helping with the creation of green jobs. The necessity for a program like this has become even more clear the longer our current provincial government remains in power as well.

To my recollection, none of you who were on Council last term who I met with were opposed to this idea - and in fact the former Ward 3 Councillor brought forward a motion directing staff to look at building a HERO (Home Energy Retrofit Opportunity) program to Hamilton. That was nearly five years ago, at some point during this time the HERO program was decided upon by staff to be part of the Community Energy Plan or CEP - a plan that we're now being told will be completed for 2021. It still remains unclear what the CEP will actually accomplish, it's also unclear what exactly staff are planning with regards to this HERO program aside from the fact it will be part of the CEP in *some* form.

While this may sound frustrating in itself, my frustration that I speak of actually comes from another aspect to this. Back in June of this year the FCM announced a round of grants for municipalities to look at home energy retrofit programs - essentially free money to enable cities to begin acting on a proposal that staff were already directed by Council to look into five years ago. As a non-profit organization Environment Hamilton is always looking for relevant grants that can help support our work so my assumption would be that the City of Hamilton would apply - they did not. However, and this is relevant to Hamilton, the City of Burlington did apply. You may recall that Hamilton provided money to the Bay Area Climate Change Council to continue its activities - part of those activities is the formation of implementation teams of experts focused on helping both Hamilton and Burlington accomplish specific climate action outcomes, one of which I am currently sitting on. This implementation team is tasked with addressing how we can get both cities to implement home energy retrofit programs for their residents.

So when I tell you that I am currently sitting on a volunteer committee that exists in part because of the financial support of the City of Hamilton that is looking at how we can learn from Burlington as to how to finally get Hamilton to work on implementing a program that Council has already direct staff to look at half a decade ago - I hope you can understand my frustration. There are opportunities like this all throughout Hamilton that are not being acted on, and there is a growing number of comparable cities acting faster on ideas that we've been already talking about for years.

I and everyone else at Environment Hamilton of course understand that what we are saying must be done is not easy - it will require work and time. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and the fact that not much additional resources have actually been allocated to climate action - we've essentially lost a year of progress, and based on the report being presented to you today - that lost progress would not have been adequate still. There are specific things that the City of Hamilton can and should do that will help reduce emissions and tangibly improve the lives of our community - but we are not doing them. We need you as Council to ensure that staff have the resources they require, as well as the oversight that they are actually working towards a plan that truly is a SMART (Specific Measurable Actionable Realistic Timeline) - we also need you to ensure that the 2021 budget and all future budgets are actually put through a climate change lens. We know what we are asking is possible as other cities are managing to do it despite the pandemic, we just need Hamilton to realize it's possible too.

Thank you for your time.