

Lynda Lukasik – Notes - GIC Delegation RE: City Climate Actions Update

Good morning Chairperson Vanderbeek and members of the General Issues Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I want to begin today by saying that the staff update regarding climate actions achieved during 2020, honestly, is disappointing given that the Climate Emergency was declared over a year and a half ago. Staff have indicated that COVID-19 is, at least partly, to blame. **THE CITY NEEDS TO PANDEMIC PROOF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY!** The climate crisis and its impacts are **NOT ON HOLD** during the pandemic. Precious time has been lost because most of the city's already limited number of climate staff were redeployed to respond to the pandemic. Moving forward you need to figure out how to deal with multiple crises in tandem. This might mean committing more staff resources, or even hiring new staff to ensure that this is possible in the future. The cost of inaction is great enough to justify such investments.

We at Environment Hamilton have been waiting a very long time for more concrete timelines, and a detailed plan of action for realizing the city's goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050 – so it's good to see more information on this front. But we're still not seeing the details we need to see to know what the city's pathway forward to net zero will be. And while we wait, key processes are continuing to unfold on that front that will have profound climate implications over the long term.

I want to underscore the challenges these delays bring by zeroing in on planning for **URBAN GROWTH MANAGEMENT** as an important **CASE IN POINT**. **URBAN GROWTH MANGEMENT** is arguably the most urgent and challenging of our municipal climate emergency issues. When you declared the **CLIMATE EMERGENCY** back in March of 2019, Environment Hamilton was there – urging you to make that declaration and asking, among other things, that you commit to keeping our municipal urban boundary firm. The more an urban area expands outwards – the more likely residents in these areas will be car dependent - and the increased kilometers travelled per household increases greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. There are other climate impacts from expansion outward – including loss of prime agricultural land (think Elfrida) and the impact this has on long term food security – and the loss of rural natural areas – which inevitably leads to increased risks from extreme storm events because these outlying lands play an important part in slowing and absorbing stormwater flows – easing impacts in urbanized areas of a watershed.

In the update report prepared by staff, under **GOAL 4 – To ensure a climate change lens is applied to all planning initiatives to encourage the use of best climate mitigation and adaptation practices**, planning staff report that they have '**drafted climate change evaluation framework/lens as part of GRIDS 2**'. GRIDS 2 is already underway – there was mention a year ago that this framework was coming – staff confirmed for me yesterday that the draft is coming and that the public will be consulted on it. This situation is cause for concern – especially when key assessments that will direct where and how urban growth will be accommodated to 2051 are already underway. This includes the land needs assessment – the document that sets out what sort of land budget the city will require to accommodate urban growth over the next 30 years – **it determines IF the city needs to expand the urban area outwards and by how many hectares of land**. No surprise – the land area required changes substantially depending on what is fed into the assessment in the way of urban intensification and density targets. Given that the land needs assessment is underway – with the GRIDS 2 public timeline showing 'release of the land needs assessment and related reports' in just under two weeks – we are left wondering – How is a climate lens /framework being applied to this foundational assessment? Will there still be an opportunity to apply one 'retroactively' as this foundational assessment works its way through the growth planning process? We truly hope so – because the outcome of this process will lock the municipality into a land budget that will set the course for 30 years. And given the challenges

that outward growth brings where climate impacts are concerned – you should be very worried about this from a climate emergency point of view!

We are also concerned that the proposed approach to assessing planning initiatives using a climate lens is very one dimensional. It simply won't be good enough to continue to expand our urban boundary and build large new communities on the edges that are climate friendly within – because that physical expansion of the city's geographic area will more than cancel out the climate benefits realized within that new area. A larger geographic area brings a larger carbon footprint – there is no way around that. As Dr. Dianne Saxe, the former Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, has so aptly put it – **urban sprawl is Ontario's Oil Sands.**

We will certainly continue to follow and weigh in on the city's urban growth management processes – but council has a responsibility to critically assess these 'foundational' processes and set direction that ensures that the climate emergency is carefully considered.

I want to conclude today by recognizing that figuring out how to assess and address climate impacts in a meaningful, measurable way is not easy - but it is an absolutely essential process. Kudos to Trevor Imhoff and his team for coordinating across city departments to get things this far, even with a pandemic thrown in the mix. But so much more needs to be done to address the climate emergency!

One suggestion too – please direct staff to share more information about the Corporate Climate Change Task Force – at least by publicly sharing who its members are and the departments they represent. Ideally, the public should also be aware of how frequently the Task Force is meeting and the key issues it is working through. This would provide more information in between the annual updates that council receives – an important step for the growing number of community members and organizations that are deeply concerned about the climate crisis and the urgent need for action. THANK YOU!