Brian MacLean

Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre

brianpmaclean@gmail.com

**Deputation to Budget Committee, City of Toronto**

Tuesday, January 25, 2022, 1:30-4:40pm

buc@toronto.ca

Thank you, Councillors, for this opportunity to speak with you about this year’s Budget.

I live in Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre, and wish to speak with you primarily about the Climate Emergency the City is trying to address.

I am retired now but I’m nearly a full-time volunteer with various projects I feel are important. Last year, I helped start the all-volunteer group, **Etobicoke Climate Action**. (By the way, I regret that there are no Etobicoke Councillors on the Budget Committee or the Infrastructure & Environment Committee to support the kinds of changes needed in Etobicoke and across Toronto. I want to thank Councillor Layton for letting anyone attend his excellent Budget Town Hall that he offers annually.)

I have lived in 6 different Toronto wards since moving to Toronto as a young man. Moving to Etobicoke 5 years ago reminded me of growing up in a suburb of Ottawa as a child, and as a teenager in a suburb of Kingston. In each case, I lived a short walk away from farm fields, wooded areas, and a pond where we played hockey in the winter. Now, those natural areas within reach have been transformed into expanded suburbs, and those natural areas, that grew food and supported biodiversity, are gone forever.

I hope the City of Toronto, in its planning, transit and transportation, parks will work to limit urban sprawl beyond our boundaries by facilitating more people who work in Toronto to live here. Low-density areas like Etobicoke and Scarborough need planning initiatives that allow for more gentle density in housing, and require shopping and services to be at a walkable distance. If we walk or cycle more, we also keep ourselves healthier while avoiding adding GreenHouse Gas emissions to the atmosphere from driving cars everywhere.

Transportation is the 2nd biggest contributor to GHG emissions in Toronto. It’s imperative that we provide alternatives to driving passenger vehicles for all our needs. Besides bringing everyday destinations closer to us through changes to the Official Plan, we need to support TTC services and replacing gas powered buses with electric buses. And bus service must meet the rush hour demand so wait times are reduced. Of course, usage of TTC is down currently because of COVID, but the investments we need to keep making are long-term investments, and more transit is an essential component of the GHG reduction.

And I also want to see the City keep supporting what are called “nature-based solutions” to reducing GHGs in the atmosphere: our parks and ravines, the amazing Meadoway in the hydro corridor in Scarborough, support for food growing gardens and pollinator gardens. These are proactive measures to restore and protect the nature all around us, and absorb more carbon while protecting the biodiversity we depend on. The Meadoway is an experiment that I hope will inspire change in all of our hydro corridors to eventually be transmitted into people places and places that return nature’s benefits to our city. And a recent development called agrivoltaics suggests how Toronto’s hydro corridors could also produce solar-powered energy and grow food—at the same time! <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/agrivoltaics-of-solar-power-and-farming-are-a-big-success-on-this-boulder-farm/> I will share this idea with acquaintances at the TRCA and the TransformTO team at the city.

So I support the Ravine Strategy, tree plantings there and in parks, and am personally training to be a volunteer Toronto Nature Steward to work with other volunteers in Raymore Park this year.

Finally, I learned recently that the City of Edmonton initiated a Carbon Budget that would be reviewed annually, much as you are doing with our financial budget. That kind of tool is valuable for assessing where we are, how city spending and our actions contribute to overspending carbon, and where we can cut our carbon emissions. I would love to see a parallel and public focus on our Carbon Budget, because where we spend our $15 billion budget can either help or hurt our shared climate future.

Thank you.