

Committee of the Whole, June 10, 2019  
CW-21-19

## Address to Council in conjunction with a Staff Report on City of Burlington Climate Action Update

I'm here as a citizen of Burlington. I live on Parkhill Ave. I'm representing myself and my family. I'm here to speak in conjunction with the expected Staff Report on Climate Action Update CW-21-19.

On April 23, as you know, Burlington City Council, declared a 'State of Emergency for Climate Change' similar to other cities, states, and countries that have done likewise.

I need to question Council's definition of EMERGENCY.

If my house is on fire, without hesitation, I would gather my family and leave immediately. That to me is an emergency. And I think you would agree.

If a house has 3 feet of water in the basement – Is that an emergency?

If a hurricane were to hit Burlington, if lake levels were to reach 100 year projections, if the water treatment plant were to break down for 3 days, if the QEW was closed and traffic had to be re-routed through Burlington streets – would those be considered EMERGENCIES?

If we're going to decide something is an emergency, and we want to do something about it, then we need to **define** what we mean. We need to develop an exit strategy. We need to set goals, targets and timelines. We don't need 'objectives' or outlines or aspirations.

We've been told that we have 11 years in order to act decisively to keep our world temperatures from rising by 1.5 degrees Celsius above 'normal' - and that's just to keep things at the status quo. There's no 'cleaning the air' or 'avoiding climate change'. That's to keep the toxins in our systems at today's level. That's to prevent our wacky weather from getting worse.

So let's keep 2030 in mind as our timeline.

Now it's easy to throw up our hands and say, "China and India and the U.S. must do more". We can complain that this is a global issue and what can we in Burlington do to reverse worldwide pollution. We can argue that the province or federal government has the responsibility to act. We can hide behind the fact that we're just trying to earn a living to provide for our family; that without a strong economy, we can't do much; that eleven years isn't enough time to reverse what has occurred over the past century and a half.

During the next 11 years, most of us will purchase a new car, move to a new residence, change our job, and make a thousand little decisions on what to eat, how to move around, make daily choices in what to buy and from where. We'll say hello to new babies, goodbye to family and friends, watch our children or grandchildren grow up, and our partners grow old.

Individually, we can make good choices. As a community, we can have a greater effect. But none of that will come if all we do is talk about the mess we're in.

#### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS.

I want to talk about Words. It's nice that we've declared a Climate Change Emergency. It's nice that the City of Burlington has a 25 year Strategic Plan. We have nice words such as 'A City that Grows' and 'A City that Moves' – but what do those words really mean?

In the past, Burlington has proclaimed that we need to take BOLD steps. BOLD this and BOLD that.

But, you say, 'We have a Community Energy Plan', 'We're developing a Master Transportation Plan', 'We've had a Sustainable Development Committee since 1990',

And yes, some progress has been made. You can go online, to the City's website, and with a little digging you can discover that City operations, that is the buildings and resources under the control of the municipality, have reduced GHG emissions since 2011 – but the data ends in 2016.

All municipalities in Ontario must report, yearly, their emissions, electricity use and water usage. And, speaking of water usage, City operations in water consumption went up because we continue to install splash pads. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not against \$500,000 splash pads but what I want to know, and please use this as an example of how this Council should examine **every** decision through an Environmental Assessment lens -  
– are we recycling the grey water from this new splash pad to irrigate park lawns or be used in community gardens, or does it just go down the drain to add to the water treatment plant – like we warn citizens not to do to waste water by overwatering their lawns or excessively wash their cars?

I look at the example of other cities, states and provinces as to what we can accomplish – despite what nations around us fail to do.

In 2011, Vancouver set out to become the greenest city in the WORLD. As Gil Penalosa stated here in Burlington just a few months ago. It's not enough to be the best city in the province, or country. To measure success today, you have to compare your efforts to the entire WORLD. Burlington's goal should be to be, like Vancouver, the Greenest city in the world.

**Vancouver** wants to double the number of green jobs and companies that are greening their operations. They want to make walking, cycling and public transit as the 'preferred' transportation options. They want to have the cleanest drinking water of any city in the world. And they want to be a global leader in urban food systems.

**Costa Rica** plans on banning all single-use plastic bags, for the entire country, by 2021.

**Edmonton** has initiated its 'Change for Climate' strategy where citizens go online and tell others what they are doing to fight climate change. The City hosts regular public meetings, citizen panels, and workshops to develop an Energy Transition Strategy. If you go to their website you'll find 30 Ways to Reduce your Ecological Footprint.

**Calgary**, last year, introduced its Climate Resiliency Strategy, complying with provincial targets to reduce GHG emissions by 20% by 2020, and 80% by 2050.

And if you need an example a bit closer to home, you might want to read **Oakville's** 'Climate Change Strategy' written in 2014 with some 400 actionable items.

We have to do better. And this is why I'm here today. The next Community Energy Plan, or the Climate Action Plan, has to have clear GOALS and TARGETS. It has to have milestones and if we fail to meet those milestones consequences need to be handed out. We don't have time to 'study' the situation any more. We don't need form a committee to discuss 'moving forward'. We have to think about long-term consequences of what we do – and we need to start **today**.

Council has spent thousands of dollars to bring in **world class experts** on Sustainable Development, Transit and Transportation, Walkable communities, Smart Cities, and many other urban planning issues. And yet you, or at least your predecessors, didn't listen to what they were saying.

You've got Staff sitting here. They're knowledgeable, they go to conferences. They know what to do.

Anyone who reads a newspaper or watches the news – they know what to do. We need to **stop talking and start Acting**.

- We need to get people out of their cars and onto public transit - and if that takes free buses for everyone – all day, so be it.
- We need to offer rebates for homeowners that install conservation methods, solar panels and energy efficient systems into their houses.
- We need to electrify our City fleet, our Transit system, our personal vehicles.
- And even if the Province abandons those incentive programs, Burlington should be BOLD enough to introduce it on the local level. Today, Burlington Hydro Electric Inc. will report that it had a net income of \$5.6 million in 2018, and will be paying a dividend to the City worth \$2.6 million. Please use that money wisely.
- We need to consider the environmental impacts of every decision we make.
- We need to ban all single-use plastic bags – or fine those that won't use alternatives.
- We need to protect our tree canopy because the urban forest is the lungs of our citizens.

- We need developers to construct, as a minimum, LEED certified buildings. And affordable housing.
- We need to enforce our Idling By-Law, and that includes City vehicles. It is *concerning* that only 125 tickets have been issued in 10 years.
- We need to ban gasoline-powered leaf blowers.
- We need to stop the sheer idiocy of lawn sprinklers that turn on during a rainstorm.
- We need to have up-to-date floodplain maps and make them available to the public.
- We need to offer bursaries to university students that take environmental courses.
- We need to sue any person or company that dumps toxic material, or spills dangerous chemicals within our municipal boundaries.
- We need to attract Cleantech businesses to help us achieve our goals and to help them reach a global market.
- We need to build more community gardens, support local farmers, and develop food security strategies.
- We need to fight the LPAT or the OMB that disregards our efforts to make Burlington a world leader in Sustainable Development and Resiliency.

And we don't need to think about it until the next Staff Report due December of this year – or, as 'Option 2' presented by Staff – to delay things until April 2020.

Finally, we need to implement these and other common sense, practical ideas, with firm timelines and milestones if the City of Burlington is to meet its stated goal of being Carbon Net-Neutral.

#### ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

On Friday, September 20<sup>th</sup> I encourage everyone to join the 'Global Climate Strike' – even if symbolically for ten minutes to join others around the world who are demanding more be done to fight human induced climate change.

Thank You.