

Centre for Climate Change Management
Delegation to Burlington City Council
December 2, 2019

Madame Mayor, Members of Council, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Kate Flynn and I am the Acting Director for the Centre for Climate Change Management at Mohawk College.

And I am here today to speak to Agenda item 4.2 the Climate Action Plan for Burlington.

I understand that today, the proposed Burlington Climate Action Plan is just being tabled and that over the next four months, members of the community, partner, City Staff and Councillors will be able to offer comments and questions about the plan.

However, I wanted to take this moment to:

1. Show our support for Burlington's continued leadership on climate action
2. Speak to some of the most important facets of the climate action plan that is before you today
3. Demonstrate our continued commitment as the Centre for Climate Change Management as one, among partners, who will help drive this plan forward.

Climate change is perhaps the most important issue of our time. For as long as I have been alive, scientists have been warning the world that the effects of a warming climate could devastate our economies, degrade our planet beyond rehabilitation, and result in the catastrophic loss of human life.

The window to act is closing quickly. As of last year, studies are showing that Canada is on track to warm at twice the global average. And, we may be at global tipping point – wherein, if we do not act swiftly and responsibly over the coming decade, our

economies and the quality of life that we currently enjoy will not be possible in the coming years.

It is now estimated that for every degree of warming a developed nation experiences, it will cost that nation an estimated 1% of its GDP. Right now, as a planet, we are on track to experience 4C of warming before the end of this century. Between 1961 and 2019, Canada experienced an average of less than 1% of GDP economic growth rate annually. So effectively, if we do not mitigate the worst of global warming, our economy will not be able to absorb the devastating costs associated with climate change.

Though climate change is a global issue, as the Burlington Climate Action Plan reports, municipalities have an incredibly important role to play in climate leadership. Cities' investments in climate action are critical for us to prevent the worst effects of climate change, but also to use climate action as an opportunity to invest in making the economic and social fabric of our cities better and more resilient.

Municipalities and regions have direct or indirect control over 40-50% of the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change in Canada. In Burlington the biggest areas of impact are:

1. Land-use planning
2. Transportation
3. Support for green building standards and retrofits

These are three of the areas that contribute the most to greenhouse gas emissions in the Burlington area.

As this Plan acknowledges, land-use planning, building standards, and infrastructure are perhaps the most important areas to address today. Buildings and infrastructure built today will last for 50 years or more. Therefore today's planning and investments will "lock-in" the greenhouse gas emissions that will incur decades to come. And replacing and retrofitting buildings and infrastructure will be far more expensive than building smartly for a changing climate in the first place.

That is why we were happy to read that the Burlington Climate Action Plan focuses on these key areas; namely that it...

1. First, calls for an update to the Green Building Standard for new buildings
 - Much like Vancouver and Toronto, this is a great opportunity to encourage smart building design and operations that will save owners and operators money over time

2. Second, the Plan investigates developing a deep energy retrofit program
 - Wherein the city or region can help homeowners and businesses owners to access capital to improve the efficiency of their homes and businesses, and save money overtime while making improvements

3. Thirdly, that the plan identifies the opportunity to develop a renewable energy cooperative
 - To build a renewable energy cooperative to facilitate the implementation of renewable energy projects in a collaborative and cost efficient manner

4. Supporting infrastructure for electric vehicles

- Electric vehicles are the future and in the coming years, this infrastructure will be more in demand. Burlington is currently a car-centric culture, and investments in supporting EVs will help decarbonize the transportation sector.

5. At the same time, this Plan supports integrated mobility approaches in transportation policy

- a. Investments in public transportation are one of the smartest investments we can make – it helps make our streets safer and more efficient, while reducing pollution and traffic
- b. Personally, I am one of those millennial workers that frustrate traditional planners so much – I choose to ride the bus, take public transit and bike or walk wherever I can. Our family owns one vehicle – and that’s because my husband currently works in area unsupported by public transit. But like many people these days, we understand the true cost of vehicle ownership and we’re not interested in living in cities long-term that don’t provide public transit or safe biking infrastructure. These things are of increasing importance to young Canadians.

As I mentioned before, the climate crisis represents one of the most important and pressing issues of our time. But it also represents an incredibly important moment – by greeting this crisis with investments in a better, stronger, and more resilient City of Burlington.

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Implementing this plan is estimated to save Burlington \$2.4 billion and provide new dozens, if not hundreds of new jobs by 2050. It also will improve city services and create co-benefits like economic growth, more resilient infrastructure, and positive health outcomes for Burlington citizens.

It is our hope that in the coming months, as you review this plan, you'll be able to recognize that an investment in climate action is possibly the most important investment that you can make in building a better City of Burlington – in the coming decade and beyond.

As a key partner of the City, we look forward to providing more feedback on the plan to City staff and identifying opportunities where we can continue to support, partner and collaborate.

Madame Mayor, Members of Council, thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to continue to support Burlington in its fight to address climate change and invest in opportunities to create a stronger, more resilient Burlington community.