

A DEPUTATION TO THE BURLINGTON CITY COUNCIL ON THE BURLINGTON CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

March 9th 2020

Madame Mayor, Honourable Councillors, Council Staff, Members of the Community, my name is Mervyn Russell and I am pleased to have this opportunity to be a deputation today on behalf of the Halton Chapter of the Council of Canadians.

We should all be very appreciative of the Climate Action Plan that is before us today. It covers the necessary areas in which carbon emissions need to be reduced. It mentions an extensive number of ways in which those reductions can be brought about. It gives detailed incremental targets for achieving those results. It is clearly written. Obviously a lot of careful, thorough work has gone into its production and we thank Lynn Robichaud and her team for it.

The Plan plays out its strategy according to seven sectors of activity. I am going to make remarks about each one and add an additional suggestion at the conclusion of that review.

Program 1 Burlington Low Carbon New Building Guidelines

'The purpose of this program is to increase the energy performance of new buildings.'

The important word here is 'guidelines'. We are not talking by-laws. So the question arises, to which I see no answer: 'How will Council persuade contractors and developers to adopt these guidelines?'

Program 2 Burlington Deep Energy Retrofit Program

The main issue for the success of this program will be helping building owners to finance the retrofit. Is Council going to be the financing lender for this program? Will Council tell the Federal Government that 600 Million for a nation wide program is totally inadequate? Will Council be telling the Provincial Government that it should 'be for the people' by helping them to keep their energy costs down?

Program 3 Renewable Energy Corporation

The only comment I will make about this program is to share information about the Foreign Office of the government of Denmark. At the introduction of the Oakville Energy Plan a representative of this Danish ministry made two things clear. One is that Denmark has long term experience and expertise in various forms of this technology, and, two, Denmark is very willing to share that expertise with communities in other countries. A call to the Danish Consulate would seem a good idea.

Program 4 Integrated Mobility Plan

I have no comment to make about the 'intention to support mobility planning with emphasis on people movement', except to wonder how Council 'intends to transition the city from its suburban roots to an urbanized city, an intention, I think, that may be troubling to some established Burlingtonians.

Program 5 Electric Mobility and Equipment Program

'The program is to implement measures and policies to support electric mobility options in Burlington and to electrify gas powered equipment'. The program mentions the provision of additional electric charging stations for cars, bicycles, scooters etc. Will there also be initiatives to enable the provision of charging outlets in multi-person buildings, such as I live in? Will Council bring in a by-law phasing out homeowner gas powered leaf blowers and lawn mowers?

Program 6 Waste Reduction Initiative.

The program's description says 'The City's role will be to show leadership'. How is not mentioned.

Program 7 Industrial Innovation.

This program is left very vague and seems to be ,at this point in time, mainly an interesting idea.

My extra suggestion is for a Program 8: Uploading the Burlington Climate Action Plan.

The purpose of this program would be to contribute information about plans, projects, experience, needs to other municipalities, plus the Provincial and Federal governments, in order to strengthen the national effort to achieve IPCC 2030 and 2050 carbon emission reduction targets. It would be designed by sustainability staff in conjunction with their counterparts in neighbouring municipalities. Its time line would be 2020-1. Potential other partners would be local MPPs and MP and or their staff.

There are three Priority Programs: Burlington Deep Energy Retrofit; Renewable Energy cooperative; Electric Mobility Equipment. These three programs will get the Plan underway. From the details given in the charts and in writing, it seems the initial design stage for these programs will be from 2020-22. Implementation, however, will begin in 2025. Why the three year period? It seems a long time in a climate emergency situation. China built 3 hospitals in 10 days in an emergency situation.

As I mentioned at the beginning, the CAP covers areas that are important for reducing energy use and hence carbon emissions and includes many excellent actions for doing that. Reducing carbon emissions, however, can also be achieved by sequestration. There is a section in the report which relates to this but other items such as grass areas, roof gardens, composting could be mentioned,all of which fall within municipal jurisdiction.

Where the Plan seems to me to fall seriously short is in stating how the Plan will be managed. I do not see any intended Council budget amounts. I do not see any mention of staff allocation. I do not see any mention of a Council Climate Action Committee, which is strange because carrying out this plan will be a legacy issue. I see no mention of how the 13 supportive organizations mentioned on page 68 will be integrated effectively to promote the Plan and, whether or not, Council will be the leader of such a group or groups. I also do not see any mention of contracting the services of a first class marketing company to brand, message and generally bring the Plan to the public's attention so as to get their widespread buy in, without which the Plan cannot be a success.

In other words, I see no management structure to lead, oversee, coordinate and evaluate the Plan. Council seems to be at arms length from the implementation of the Plan. Oakville Council deliberately put itself at arms length from the implementation of its Community Energy Plan, but it is putting in place an Implementation Management Organization, governed by directors from a variety of community sectors. This plan mentions neither a Council Committee nor a a management organization. Whose responsibility will it be?

Councillors, you need to express strong, courageous, urgent commitment to the implementation of this Plan if it is to come across to the public as important. It is not perfect .Nothing ever is this side of heaven, but it is a good beginning. Don't keep this plan at arm's length for political purposes. Embrace it ,work with it, improve it. Through its success make Burlington a shining example of what a municipality can do for the benefit of its citizens, for the global environment and for everything that lives within it.

Mervyn Russell
Respectfully submitted
March 9th 20120