



Together we make a difference

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BurlingtonGreen Executive Director Delegation: [Feb 9, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting: 1.58 mark](#)

February, 9, 2026

Good morning Mayor Meed Ward, Chair, Members of Committee, City staff, and the Burlington community.

On behalf of BurlingtonGreen, thank you for this opportunity to provide feedback on the City's latest [Climate Plan](#).

I'm joined today by two young BurlingtonGreen team members. Their generation—and those that follow—have the most at stake when it comes to climate action and ensuring a liveable future. I felt it was important for them to witness civic engagement and local advocacy in action on an issue that is top of mind for them—and I hope, for all of us.

Respectful of your time, I connected in advance with Jesse from the Bay Area Climate Change Council, (on which I also serve), for some light coordination to avoid duplication. While we didn't have the opportunity to share notes, our plan is for my comments to focus more on broader context and process, while Jesse will speak to some specific elements of the Plan.

I want to begin by congratulating City staff—particularly Lauren—on producing a comprehensive and thoughtful report. **This work matters, and it shows.** I couldn't find any missing actions. The Plan reflects significant effort, and it's encouraging to see both City and community progress on climate action since the last update.

### **Global context**

Scientists have warned us for decades about climate change and its capacity to devastate people and nature. Most recently, again, scientists have warned that global warming is accelerating beyond previous projections—that the planet could hit very dangerous temperature levels by the year 2050—**that's just 24 years from now. This should alarm all of us and compel urgent action at every level of government.**

### **Municipal role**

At the same time, we cannot wait for all levels of government to align perfectly before acting. Cities must continue to lead on climate because they can—and because they must. As this Climate Plan states, municipal governments are on the front lines of climate action, implementing policies that directly affect daily life.

## Revisit the target

Given the urgency of the moment, we need to critically examine whether the Plan's 2050 net-zero target is achievable as currently framed—and whether it should be accelerated, as other municipalities are now doing in response to the science. Toronto's target is sooner with the aim of achieving net-zero community-wide emissions by 2040. Hamilton is examining this as well.

At a minimum, Burlington's Plan should include clear interim milestones—for example, a 45 percent reduction by 2030 and deep reductions by 2035—along with KPIs that prioritize greenhouse gas reductions and clearly track progress toward the target.

Even if the City retains a 2050 target, the question remains: **is it achievable without foundational changes in how the City embeds, governs, and resources climate action?**

BurlingtonGreen would like to offer suggestions across five areas that address this:

### 1. Vision: Climate must be core

**First**, Climate and the environment must be explicitly embedded in the City's vision and mission. While environmental language appears in parts of the [draft Horizon 2025](#) vision currently under review, this moment demands clarity. Climate change is an existential crisis. It is not separate from community well-being or the economy—it underpins both. *"Environment" and "climate change"* is currently missing from the Horizon 2050 mission statement, **and we strongly recommend that it be included**. If climate is not clearly reflected in the vision, it becomes optional in practice.

### 2. Integration: Climate ACTION across City Hall

**Second**, climate action must be fully integrated across all City departments. It cannot sit only with transportation, forestry, or sustainability teams.

Every department—planning, procurement, parks, events—should apply a climate and equity lens from the outset of every report, policy, investment and business case - up front, not after the fact.

**As one example**, an item on today's agenda related to the Lakeshore Music & Arts Festival had the strategic alignment box for environment left unchecked. That should not happen in a city that has declared a climate emergency. Large-scale events have environmental impacts and real opportunities for emissions reduction—but only if climate considerations are built in from the start. **We certainly hope that sustainability practices are an evaluation criteria for the city's RFP process.**

BurlingtonGreen has long advocated for a consistent triple-bottom-line approach, so environmental impacts are never optional and social impacts, especially on vulnerable populations, are always considered. **We recommend adopting this approach consistently as soon as possible.**

### 3. Capacity: Resources must match ambition

**Third, capacity.** A plan without the resources to implement it is just a document. Plans don't reduce emissions—people and budgets do.

If climate action is truly a priority, it must be resourced accordingly. This includes staffing, funding, and accountability.

When the City declared a climate emergency in 2019, the declaration directed Council and staff to quote “*increase the priority of the fight against climate change and apply a climate lens to City plans and actions, including the Council strategic workplan and future **budgets.***”

We see an important opportunity for greater transparency, accountability and public understanding by more clearly and **distinctly presenting city investments in climate action in the annual budget.**

The Climate Plan outlines an ambitious list of actions. Some are already moving forward through strong partnerships with community stakeholders, including BurlingtonGreen's work at the community level. However, there is not sufficient capacity within City Hall to implement all of these actions at the scale and pace required.

### 4. Leadership beyond City Hall

**Fourth,** we strongly agree with the report that all levels of government must work together.

While factoring the many serious environmental setbacks of the provincial context, —this cannot be a reason for pausing or slowing of action. On the contrary, these challenges demand fiercer municipal advocacy. We must push for supportive legislation and reliable funding while doubling down on municipal led climate action.

### 5. All hands on deck: Community engagement

The City cannot do this alone. Community climate action is essential.

BurlingtonGreen is proud to serve as the City's primary partner for community environmental engagement. Through our work, we hear growing frustration, confusion, and eco-anxiety. People want to act, but feel overwhelmed and discouraged by a belief that climate inaction is not due to lack of knowledge or solutions, but a lack of political will— with real and escalating consequences.

At its core, people feel a **widening gap between words and action.** Governments declare climate emergencies, set distant net-zero targets, and release plans—yet emissions continue, approvals for high-carbon projects move forward, and timelines keep slipping.

People want implementation, accountability, and timelines that reflect the urgency of the crisis.

Two relatively straightforward actions could help:

First, merge the City's three primary climate-related plans into a single, clear, user-friendly Climate Action Plan that is consistently promoted and signals that we are all in this together.

Second, climate leadership in Burlington should be visible and easy to find. Currently, climate change is not mentioned on the City website homepage or primary navigation. While this may seem minor, visibility signals priority. Climate action should be front and centre alongside the City's other strategic pillars.

To summarize, BurlingtonGreen recommends that the City:

- **revisit and potentially accelerate the net-zero target & prioritize actions with the greatest emissions impact**
- **embed climate action in the City's vision and mission,**
- **ensure cross-departmental accountability, across the board triple-bottom-line reporting**
- **resource climate action appropriately,**
- **continue strong advocacy to senior governments,**

**and improve public access to a clear, unified Climate Action Plan.**

In closing, this updated Plan is an important foundation—but in the face of a climate crisis already affecting our city, what matters now is timely action, at the necessary scale, and supported by the resources to deliver the results that science calls for.

BurlingtonGreen looks forward to continuing to support the City's efforts.

Amy Schnurr



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