

Memo to: Hamilton City Council and Sr Managers
Re: Corporate-wide Climate Change Action Plan Update
From: Ian Graham
Date: Dec 7 2021

Because I cannot participate today via webex to make my deposition I trust that this alternative will suffice.

It needs to be said at the outset, climate is a symptom, not a cause for the tremendous woe and loss that is unfolding on this planet in real time now. What is the cause, briefly put, of climate disruption? It is ecological overshoot and human habitat loss. We stand to misinterpret and misdiagnose our predicament if we fail to accept this reality. The endgame is there must be fewer people consuming less energy on this finite planet. That may not mean fewer people living in Hamilton but it certainly means living within a smaller carbon footprint.

We can and should act with urgency on climate disruption until such time as leadership and policy makers reframe the situation to be about overshoot in population and consumption.

Hamilton can help in that reframing by speaking out and walking the talk. One way of doing that is to root out the culture of Growth and Development and replace it with a culture of Climate and Ecology Stewardship. Make that Climate Lens paramount. Do not brag about \$2B in building permits any more. Do not build more roads or suburbs.

We must proceed with action at the levels we are positioned to affect to reduce the impact of this symptom on our city. I submit that this action can be visualized as a rubiks cube: Emissions x Population x Impact. Emissions can be arising from existing infrastructure, or from yet to be built infrastructure or they are the carbon legacy emissions in the atmosphere already.

Populations could be categorized as the citizenry, the corporate sector and the civic governance sector. Impacts can be characterized as the Biological environment, The Build environment and the Behaviours. Now it can be seen there are actions in each cell of the cube that will be effective and target populations who can be expected to act. For example:

- The city can build bike paths but that doesn't help if people don't use them instead of driving.
- The people can modify their homes and properties to reduce carbon pollution but the city can help with enabling policies and even grants, education and public promotion of retrofitting suburbia.
- The corporate sector can reduce existing sources or not build more or fund sequestration programs to drawdown existing carbon pollution.

These are examples that come to mind. Each cell has costs and benefits associated with the actions that fit.

Net Zero by 2050 must be called out for the charade that it is. There is no technology to remove carbon at scale from the atmosphere and if there were, there is no way to build out enough capacity to make a difference in that time frame. The whole world has taken up the chant of Net Zero by 2050 but should be "Just Zero". In both senses of the word 'just'. Toronto has set the benchmark at 2040 which is even more impossible to imagine relying on technology not yet proven.

Your climate change taskforce is woefully underfunded and understaffed. That it took two years to produce this modest document is evidence enough. It's a wonder that the core team has not resigned or been hired away by a more ambitious climate savvy municipality. Staff most likely understands that Council is not prepared to get on a war footing against climate disruptions. The Covid response by contrast shows that serious mobilization is possible.

I have been told that city climate action consultants do not believe that Nature-based solutions are cost effective in reducing emissions. That has been proven wrong and obsolete thinking, dangerously so. For example the maintenance of green vegetation on farmlands and fallow spaces, all year long, will immediately reduce the heat stored in soils, reduce runoff in heavy precipitation and cool the local microclimate by stabilizing the hydrological cycle. The taskforce needs to update their information and challenge these consultants.

The steel companies are clearly an atrocious example of carbon pollution and fully a third of all carbon emitted in our bio-region is their fault. Policy should be polluter-pay at a level that makes good business sense to their management and owners to clean it up. Funding from these companies can be invested in infrastructure and public awareness every year through the Climate Change Reserve fund.

We need demonstration sites up and running so that people can see what a 1.5 degree lifestyle looks like. There is only so much carbon we can burn to keep global heating between 1.5 and 2 degrees C and avoid a Hothouse Earth and runaway climate chaos. That translates as a carbon budget for every one of us. (Currently the average north american produces 16 tCO₂e per year: we have to get to 4 T by 2030 and 1 T by 2050. It shows up in our buildings, our vegetation and our lifestyle choices. Bylaws changes seen through a climate lens, not growth and development, will mean enabling capability to withstand shocks and disruption, household resilience.

All these claims can be backed up with documentation and practice. I am pleased to provide them on request.

The people need you to lead, to tell the story like it is. You can't feed false hope, in fact we must be hope-free. You can't hide from this responsibility to the public who elected you. Your awareness of the situation has grown over the years, from being dead asleep to recognizing one problem or two. Now (some of) you clearly see there are many interconnected problems encompassing all aspects of daily life. This is our predicament to minimize and adapt to but it will not go away.