

Hello, Councillors. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you regarding Hamilton's budget priorities.

2023 highlighted an often overlooked aspect of municipal policy making, in how the policies act as a signal beacon to higher levels of government about the priorities and concerns of constituents at a grass roots level.

For example, on the green belt file, your collective leadership was instrumental in achieving a spectacular provincial walk back.

And when you, and other municipalities, moved to regulate short term rentals it helped light a fire under the federal government to, hopefully, bring in nation-wide short term rental regulations.

And, during a year that featured heat that smashed all previous global records, fires and smoke that kept students indoors during their final days of school last June, unprecedented weather disasters that [cost Canadian insurers \\$3.1B](#) and inflicted a direct loss of revenue on 44% of Canadian small businesses [recently surveyed by KPMG](#), you underscored your 4 year old climate emergency declaration by creating an office of climate change initiatives.

Its budget, however, is far from emergency status, currently resting at merely 0.1% of the city's \$2B budget. Which, given the scale of the challenge, represents a token sliver. Meanwhile the recommendations brought forward by its staff get put under a fiscal microscope, extensively debated and barely and begrudgingly approved.

Which, in terms of political signals, sends one that says that no matter how small the tax, there's an appetite to "axe it". Especially if its aim is to mitigate carbon emissions. And that these budgetary slivers, are most useful as political wedges.

This was witnessed during the aftermath of the contentious council debates, causing some local media pundits to write things like, "Surely councilors didn't imagine that 4 years after declaring a climate emergency they'd spending \$700K (0.03% of the budget) on an e-bike scheme".

Which begs the question, what did councillors imagine they'd be spending money on 4 years after? And if they knew it amounted to 0.1% of budget, would they be surprised that Hamilton emissions would still be going up at the largest rate in the GTHA?

Also, how do we determine what budgetary items get put under a microscope?

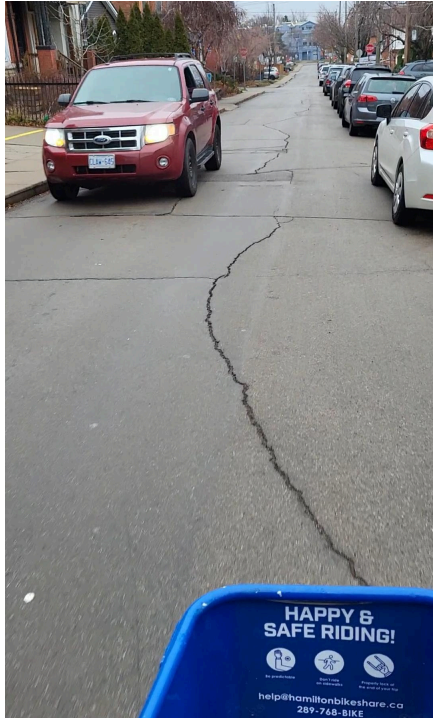
I don't recall hours of debate on the \$5 million spent on Claremont access restoration or the \$1 million spent on rock fall meshing recently added to Kennilworth access.

No one demanded to know how these projects would pay for themselves and be "zero cost to the taxpayer". Why? Because we understand that safe, personal mobility is essential to a city and given so many decades of climate indifference, we know that personal mobility means cars. And so we assume that these projects have enough intangible benefits to outweigh both its financial and environmental costs. This assumption no longer applies, if we're honest.

Alternatively we demand expenses like Hamilton Bikeshare present tangible evidence that it is "zero cost to the tax payer" like it doesn't have its own intangible value.

For example, what value do residents put on being able to find a parking space in front of their house or local shop because their neighbor or fellow shopper's second car is actually a Sobi bicycle? Or what dollar amount

do you put on residential side streets being turned back into the 2 lane/2 way streets they once were, because one the commuters using that street was riding a bicycle occupying a shoulder-width amount of space? Or on a local business being able to access people for customers and labour who are free from vehicle ownership expenses?



It's time to get serious on climate which is why I'm calling for the OCCI budget to be greatly increased.

Briefly on housing, as a supporter of Indwell and contributor to HATS I believe it's time to please stop relying on charity and faith groups for public housing. Get what you're able to afford, built, and if they end up looking like storage containers like Peterborough's Wolfe St tiny shelters then let that shame the provincial and federal governments into action.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Jon Davey