

Buildings Working Group Meeting Notes

Meeting on June 12th at 6 PM

Attendees: Gaby Kalapos, Shelley Rempell, Catherine Winkelman (staff support)

Draft Agenda, Next Steps and **Decision Items**

1. Verbal update on HCE net zero effort: Trevor Imhoff from the Climate Change Department is working with HCE and Council members to develop the frameworks for HCE direction on formalizing a net zero road map and plan that aligns with the City of Hamilton GHG reduction target. There will be updates at future meetings re: timing for formalizing that direction.
2. Frank Lenarduzzi presentation on possible community event on advancing low carbon buildings. Moved to a future Buildings Working Group meeting.
3. Review of draft letter for Bill 17 from Committee to province: Below is the draft of the letter **seeking Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee approval of a submission to the ERO on Bill 17 due June 24th.**
4. **Request for approval from Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee representative to provide a deputation to the July 9th Planning Committee meeting where Bill 17 will be discussed to share the input provided by the Committee to the Province on Bill 17 and to request a Hamilton council resolution to ensure that Bill 17 respects the authority of municipalities to advance mandatory Green Development Standards.** The other option is for a Citizen Committee Report to seek council consideration of a council resolution to protect municipal green standards, but think a deputation would be a simpler mechanism to get Committee input to Hamilton council.

Draft Letter from Committee to Province on Bill 17

To: Environmental Registry of Ontario

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Re: ERO Posting on *Bill 17 – Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025*

From: Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee

Date: June 17th, 2025

Subject: Concerns Regarding Bill 17 and its Impacts on Municipal Climate Action and Green Development Standards

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the City of Hamilton's Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC), we are writing to express our deep concerns regarding *Bill 17 – Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025*. While we support efforts to improve housing affordability and streamline development processes, we are alarmed by provisions in the Bill that could threaten the ability of municipalities to implement and enforce Green Development Standards (GDS) — a critical tool for energy efficiency, local climate action and market capability and resilience planning.

As outlined in Hamilton's council approved Climate Action Strategy and its target to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050, green development standards are a key policy lever for reducing emissions from new developments, supporting long-term energy efficiency, reducing stranded asset risks, improving public health, reducing future retrofit costs, and ensuring that growth aligns with affordability, sustainability and equity goals.

Our concerns with Bill 17 are as follows:

- **Undermining Municipal Authority:** The proposed amendments could limit municipalities' ability to mandate energy performance, embodied carbon considerations, or other sustainability requirements through site plan control. This erodes the tools municipalities rely on to implement council-endorsed climate targets at the local and provincial level.
- **Green Standards Do Not Delay Planning Approvals:** There is no evidence that municipalities with green standards in place are slower on approving development applications than municipalities without green standards in place. In fact, there is some evidence that green standards can streamline the development application process by providing clarity right from the start of the planning application process to proponents on the requirements for a complete application for that municipality.
- **Climate Commitments Jeopardized:** Municipalities like Hamilton are on the front lines of climate change. Bill 17 directly conflicts with provincially mandated obligations under the Planning Act that requires municipalities to include climate change as a consideration in managing growth, transportation planning, energy conservation, resilient communities, and promoting compact, transit supportive development.
- **Loss of Market Transformation Momentum:** Over a dozen municipalities across the GTHA — including Hamilton — have developed or are advancing GDS aligned with emissions reduction pathways. The loss of these coordinated efforts risks disrupting market certainty for developers, limiting innovation and market capability, reversing gains in advancing energy efficient new building stock. Green standards have supported

significant increases in energy efficiency and low carbon market capability and has been a critical policy for driving uptake to new and innovative utility business models that address the upfront capital costs burden and advance energy efficiency and beneficial electrification at the most cost effective time to do so - at the time of construction.

- **Cost-Effective Climate Action:** GDS are among the most cost-effective ways for municipalities to reduce future retrofit costs, lower utility costs for residents, reduce stranded asset risks and prevent lock-in of inefficient and high-emissions developments. Removing this progress shifts long-term burdens onto future homeowners, municipalities, and the province.

We respectfully urge the Province to:

1. Not enact any restrictive provisions in Bill 17 that would prevent municipalities from implementing a mandatory green development standard.
2. Work collaboratively with municipalities to develop a harmonized approach that supports local innovation while enabling Ontario to meet its broader energy efficiency, market transformation and climate obligations. If consistency is a provincial goal then it is recommended that the Province align with the National Model Energy Code at a step that increases provincial energy efficiency requirements (which have not been increased via the Ontario Building Code since 2017) and adopt a tiered structure that enables municipalities to work with their development community to build market capacity to meet the higher tiers and thereby build market capability, thereby enabling the market to prepare for upcoming tiers.
3. Recognize that enabling municipalities to act on climate is not an obstacle to building faster — it is essential to building smarter and more sustainably.

Thank you for considering our concerns. The Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee remains committed to advancing practical, locally relevant climate solutions, and we welcome continued dialogue with the Province to ensure affordability, housing and climate goals can be met together.

Possible Deputation to July 9th Hamilton Planning Committee

Would summarize the above input as well as the below recommendations

Re: Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee Submission to ERO on Bill 17 Concerns Regarding Bill 17 and its Impacts on Municipal Climate Action and Green Development Standards

Recommendations

- THAT the City of Hamilton council consider submitting a resolution to the Province and Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that Bill 17 does not enact any restrictive provisions that would prevent municipalities from implementing a mandatory green development standard.
- That the Province works collaboratively with the City of Hamilton and other Ontario municipalities with green standards in development or implementation to develop a harmonized approach that supports local innovation while enabling Ontario to meet its broader energy efficiency, market transformation and climate obligations. If consistency is a provincial goal then it is recommended that the Province align with the National Model Energy Code at a step that increases provincial energy efficiency requirements (which have not been increased via the Ontario Building Code since 2017) and adopt a tiered structure that includes greenhouse gas intensity metrics and enables municipalities to work with their development community to build market capacity to meet the higher tiers within their community, thereby building market capability and enabling the market to prepare for upcoming tiers.
- THAT Hamilton Council consider directing staff to continue to develop and implement Hamilton's Green Development Standards;
- AND THAT Hamilton City Council share a copy of any resolution they send to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, with local and area MPPs, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Big City Mayors (OBCM), the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario (AMCTO), and to the Region/Country and neighbouring local municipalities.

Backgrounder: Implications of Bill 17 on Municipal Green Development Standards

The Hamilton Climate Change Advisory Committee would like to provide Hamilton City Council with its submitted comments to the ERO for Bill 17 related to our concerns regarding the risk Bill 17 poses to the advancement of Hamilton's Green Development Standard and provide recommendation for council consideration on Bill 17.

Context

Green Development Standards (GDS) are an essential tool used by municipalities to advance sustainability objectives while streamlining the development approvals process. These standards consolidate pre-existing planning requirements into a single framework, offering clarity and consistency for applicants and municipal staff alike. Since the introduction of the Toronto Green Standard (TGS) in 2010, GDS have been adopted across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA) to promote energy-efficient, low-emission, and climate-resilient development.

Benefits of Green Development Standards

GDS reduce administrative burden and provide long-term predictability that builders and developers rely on. These standards lower utility costs for residents, reduce infrastructure strain, and help municipalities avoid future tax increases by managing energy demand and climate risks through smarter building design. Municipalities have used GDS to:

- Streamline development approvals through clear and harmonized sustainability expectations;
- Reduce municipal and resident exposure to long-term infrastructure and energy costs;
- Align with federal and provincial GHG reduction targets;
- Foster livable and affordable communities.

Evidence from GTHA Municipalities

Contrary to suggestions that GDS create red tape, municipalities with GDS have seen measurable improvements in development timelines:

- Toronto has updated its TGS to version 4 (2022), leading to a 22% reduction in approval timelines (Canadian Home Builders' Association).

- Pickering, after adopting GDS in 2022, reduced approval timelines by 16%.
- Brampton updated its GDS in 2022 to harmonize with regional peers and saw timelines fall by 26%.
- In contrast, Ottawa, which chose not to adopt a GDS, experienced a 30% increase in approval timelines.

These outcomes reinforce that GDS support—not hinder—housing development.

Current State of Harmonization

Today, all GTHA municipalities with a GDS have aligned their energy and emissions metrics either with the Toronto Green Standard version 3 or 4, enabling consistency across the region. This harmonized approach supports builders operating across multiple jurisdictions, reducing compliance complexity and encouraging innovation.

Potential Impacts of Bill 17

Bill 17, *Protecting Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025*, risks undermining municipalities' ability to implement GDS. If passed, the legislation could limit municipal authority to apply local sustainable design standards, reversing recent progress toward consistent, streamlined, and outcome-based approvals.

- **Loss of Local Authority:** Bill 17 may restrict municipalities from requiring GDS metrics as part of development approvals, impeding their ability to manage climate impacts and local infrastructure needs.
- **Reduced Affordability Over Time:** Without GDS, future homeowners may face higher utility bills and municipalities could face increased infrastructure costs passed onto property taxpayers.

Conclusion

Green Development Standards are a proven mechanism to both accelerate housing development and achieve climate and affordability goals. Bill 17 poses a significant risk to the progress municipalities have made in aligning planning processes with long-term sustainability

outcomes. It is recommended that the Province provide greater clarity to municipalities affirming their authority to implement sustainable design requirements and continue advancing harmonized GDS across Ontario.