

2021 12 06 CLIMATE MOTION DELEGATION

Dear Mr. Mayor and City Councillors,

I was meant to delegate at Monday's COW meeting; unfortunately, due to a scheduling conflict, I had to withdraw. Here is what I had prepared for my delegation.

I watched the budget meeting on Thursday December 2nd, and one of the big take-aways for me was that the many years of delaying the basic upkeep of city infrastructure resulted in years of short-term gains in the form of happy constituents enjoying (what might be argued to be) artificially low property taxes. Now we face the consequences of not taking the long view: unhappy constituents paying much higher taxes over the next few years.

With regard to climate change, the majority of developed countries have also avoided short-term pain while ignoring the inevitable long-term pain. We have known for decades that we must change the way we live on this planet. The past 6 months alone have made it crystal clear that our politically-safe climate accords to address climate change have had – and will continue to have – devastating effects: half of the planet is flooding while the other half is on fire.

Unfortunately, we humans are hard-wired to avoid short-term pain: it's nigh on impossible to take the long view when the focus is on staying alive in the here and now.

Equally unfortunate is the position in which politicians find themselves: voting for short-term pain is generally not appreciated by voters and is a risky decision to make, especially before an election.

Last Thursday, one councillor noted – and I am paraphrasing here – that while we may be building the best city, we are not necessarily building an affordable one. While I'm not convinced that this is a zero-sum game, I do know that if we continue to put off making significant changes in our behaviour, then the issue of affordability will become increasingly moot. One might argue that our inaction with regard to climate change has made life increasingly unaffordable – if not completely untenable – for the majority of people in the world.

Effective leaders have the courage to make the hard decisions, the ones that deliver long-term gains for short-term pains. Time is running out. The longer we continue on this path of environmental destruction, the bigger the long-term pain will be. For decades, we have ignored the environmental costs of our reckless and unsustainable use of fossil fuels.

Be bold and make the right decision now. Support this climate motion.

Thank you for your consideration on this matter.

Regards,

Tanya Gevaert