

Re: March 26, 2024 Council Meeting Agenda Item 4.1 City of Hamilton Resolution

I am writing in agreement with the motion supporting the Ontario Energy Board

When most heating was by gas, it made sense to spread costs of new hook-ups among consumers. But the world is changing rapidly: given the climate emergency and heat pumps' impressive efficiency and low long-term cost, more and more people are switching, especially those who can afford the up-front cost. As that happens, remaining lower-income gas customers would shoulder more and more of the cost of new hookups. Worse still, gas infrastructure will become stranded assets as fossil fuels are phased out. So after detailed hearings of expert testimony, OEB's recommendation - to charge new hook-ups to developers rather than to all remaining customers - is both wise and fair.

And the Ford government's unprecedented reversal of the OEB is both unwise and unfair. Maintaining the status quo will burden those who can least afford it, discourage climate action – the impacts of which disproportionately affect lower income citizens, and create far greater future costs. The government's stated concern of adding to housing costs is misleading: Enbridge estimates the average added cost per home would be \$4,412, a mere 0.47 per cent of the average Ontario home price as of May 2023. On-going gas costs would soon swamp that added amount.

New homes present an enormous opportunity to combine housing affordability and climate action. As Mark Carney, member of Canada's Task Force for Housing and Climate, recently wrote in the Globe and Mail, "Climate change and housing affordability aren't just solvable problems; there are also common solutions that apply to both. Politicians at every level should take note and take action."

The Task Force stressed building to more energy-efficient standards, thereby lowering both residents' operating costs and carbon emissions. Smaller, denser, pre-fab, well-insulated units, close to existing infrastructure, and heated (and cooled) by heat pumps or district systems will offer affordable, resilient, healthy and low maintenance homes.

As the urgency for action on the climate crisis mounts, any encouragement of gas heating in new homes is irresponsible: it is supporting Enbridge over the well-being of Ontarians, new homeowners, existing gas customers and the environment. For Guelph, gas encouragement seriously undermines the City's Race to Zero strategy, its Community Energy Initiative and its Guelph Green Homes Energy Retrofit Program.

Toward meeting the City's Strategic Plan vision of "an inclusive, connected, prosperous city where we look after each other and our environment" I urge Council to support the motion.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Snell