

Delegation Regarding
Durham Region Climate Change Emergency Declaration
By Brian Kelly

Introduction

I am Brian Kelly, former Manager of Sustainability for the Region. I resigned my position in May 2019 in protest over the Region's lack of implementation of its three approved climate plans and its 42 proposed programs. Today I work to support Greta Thunberg and I'm here representing Fridays For Future Whitby.

I wish to fully support the proposed Climate Change Emergency Declaration as a valuable first step, one that declares the urgency, importance and scope of the climate crisis.

I wish to address three aspects of the Emergency Declaration.

1. Targets

The Declaration calls for setting of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets at the Regional corporate and community levels for the near-, mid- and long-term. Council approved in 2010 a set of community targets:

- - 5% by 2015
- -20% by 2020
- -80% by 2050

All on a base year of 2007.

These targets were set based on the best international climate science of the day. Since that time, the science has advanced considerably, and the October 2018 Special Report of the IPCC makes it clear that globally we need to reduce GHG emissions by 50% by 2030 and be at net zero by 2050 in order to sustain human civilization.

The Corporation of the Region of Durham has never established GHG reduction targets for its own operations.

Therefore, I want to recommend that the Region maintain its reliance on global climate science and establish for both the corporation and the community the following targets:

- **-25% by 2025**
- **-50% by 2030**
- **-75% by 2040**
- **Net zero emissions by 2050**

All on a new base year of 2020. This will require work now to establish a new GHG emission inventory for 2020.

To make these targets easy to remember: we essentially need to halve our GHG emissions each decade for the next three decades and arrive at 2050 with sequestration balancing any remaining GHG emissions.

2. Review of Regional Budgets and Decisions

The Resolution calls for climate considerations to be “deemed to be high priorities when considering budget decisions and in all decisions of Regional Council”.

This implies some sort of mechanism in Regional decision-making processes to review all proposals from a climate perspective.

Other municipalities have addressed this need through:

- Requiring a new section in all proposals to Council which explicitly addresses climate considerations (both mitigation and adaptation) in all major Council decisions
- Creation of a “climate lens” for all program development and budget approvals
- Creation of an ongoing training program for staff in all departments on the climate implications and opportunities in their work.

I recommend that the Region move quickly to imbed appropriate mechanisms and procedures in its decision-making and resource allocation in order to make climate a priority.

3. Climate Courage

Lastly, I want to say a few words about the magnitude of the climate challenge and the need for personal and political courage. Courage is not a word you hear very much around municipal councils.

The climate emergency is clearly the issue of this century and the survival of human civilization hangs in the balance. Just in the last month, witness the wildfires in Australia, the budget decisions by the EU, the climate risks identified at Davos and the market signals sent by Blackrock (the world’s largest private fund manager).

Do you as elected officials want to have to explain to Greta why you lacked the courage to act? More to the point, do you want to have to explain to your own children or grandchildren why you lacked the courage to protect their futures?