



June 28, 2023

Michelle Palmer
Senior Manager, Strategic Initiatives and Operational Effectiveness
Department of the City Manager
City of Owen Sound

Re: Draft Climate Mitigation Plan

Dear Ms. Palmer,

The Owen Sound Climate Action Strategy represents a positive step towards mitigating and adapting to climate change. Grey Bruce Public Health looks forward to collaborating with the City of Owen Sound and other stakeholders to address the current and future health impacts of climate change on our communities. Public Health has reviewed the City's Draft Climate Mitigation Plan. We understand that the community actions in the Plan were adopted from Grey County, but we saw it valuable to provide considerations for their implementation in Owen Sound. Please find our feedback below.

Corporate Actions

The corporate actions identified in the Plan appear to be very thorough and clearly establish the City's desire to engage in effective climate action. In fact, the actions listed are very likely to assist Public Health as we review the environmental impacts of our own operations. We hope to discuss the actions further with you soon, if you are willing, to help inform our own planning as we establish a climate change response.

Community Actions

Food Security

In the Plan, "Improved food security" is stated as a community benefit of climate action. Public Health recognizes that food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. Food insecurity is an income-based problem and requires income-based solutions. While climate action can create high quality employment opportunities with living wages and benefits, it is unclear how the municipality intends to improve food security through their climate action. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

A healthier future for all.

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Food-based strategies can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, primarily reducing food waste and increasing consumption of plant-based foods. Thus, Public Health applauds the inclusion of waste diversion in both the community and corporate actions. We encourage the municipality to engage low-income, renters, older adults, and other marginalized populations in the development of an organic waste diversion strategy. [Edible food recovery](#) is a strategy that can support the nutrition needs of all residents and encourage recovery efforts that will not lead to a [two-tiered](#) food system in which lower income households are expected to consume the foods deemed unwanted by others.

Community actions Theme 1, Action 4 focuses on Local Food Promotion. Local food production has benefits to local economies and community food sovereignty, but it is not universally an evidence-based strategy for greenhouse gas reduction. We recommend replacing this statement with or focusing on “Improved access to community food programming and local food opportunities” to better capture its impact.

Green Spaces and Water

Regarding green and blue spaces, we recommend revisiting “Preservation of healthy green spaces and water” as a stated community benefit of climate action. This statement implies that our local green spaces and waterways are healthy and sufficient at the present time. However, the GIS mapping project [HealthyPlan.City](#) indicates this may not be the case in Owen Sound. When considering access to tree canopy cover, there are inequities in access and specific populations may experience the impacts of climate change more severely. Considering this, we support the associated benefits of community action Theme 1, Action 1 “Forest, Habitat and Biodiversity Protection and Expansion” and encourage the municipality to increase green and blue spaces with a focus on equity.

Transportation

Public Health strongly supports the municipality’s efforts to promote active transportation and public transportation opportunities that reflect residents’ needs. Considering that the highest contributing sector in the community inventory was on-road transportation, accounting for 54% of the total emissions, a priority should be to improve public transport and pathways that support active transportation. While the Plan recognizes it is more difficult for municipalities to control the production of emissions by the community, investments in initiatives such as bike lanes, sidewalks, and connected trail systems, make it easier for residents to reduce their carbon footprint, which in turn has several co-benefits for human and environmental health.

Adoption of active and public transportation will likely be bolstered by the establishment of compact, mixed-use developments as emphasized in community actions Theme 4: Planning and Development. Ensuring developments are age-friendly, accessible, and have access to green spaces will be critical to their success. In addition, Public Health recognizes the importance of infrastructure to meet the growing need for EV charging stations. Specific action may be required to ensure that both renters and landowners are able to participate in the transition towards EVs. We encourage the municipality to incorporate supports for E-bikes when establishing public charging stations.

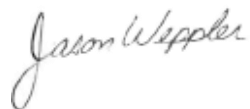
Health Equity

The 2022 report [Health in a Changing Climate](#) states “As many sectors of Canadian society work together to mitigate and adapt to climate change, they must focus on the Canadians who are most at risk of the impacts[...] Existing health inequities (avoidable and unjust differences in health) and determinants of poor health (such as low income, substandard housing, food insecurity) can compound climate change vulnerability and create barriers to adaptation.” Negative health impacts of climate change are disproportionately experienced by older adults, children, racialized populations, low-income individuals, individuals with chronic health conditions, and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

Public Health encourages the City of Owen Sound to consider the health equity impacts of the Climate Mitigation Plan and the Climate Action Strategy in its entirety. The [Health Equity Impact Assessment](#) tool is an excellent way to help identify potential unintended positive or negative health impacts of a planned policy, program, or initiative on marginalized groups. Engaging with the populations that are likely to be most affected by climate change would also be beneficial in developing the final Plan.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our feedback on the Draft Climate Mitigation Plan. We appreciate you taking the time consider our recommendations and we hope they are of value to you and your team. Grey Bruce Public Health is pleased to be working in partnership with local municipalities and counties to develop policies and environments that support healthy, vibrant communities. Should further questions arise, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours truly,



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Encl.