



# For Immediate Release

January 12, 2024

## Presentation to the Media:

Monday, January 15, 2024, Peterborough City Hall steps, 5:30 PM

## City Council is Too Cautious in Tackling Climate Change

**A good start has been made, but more must be done and more quickly.**

**For Our Grandchildren (4RG)** is a local organization dedicated to informing the community and decision makers about the seriousness of climate change, and encouraging everyone to take action to help combat it.

**4RG** has prepared a report card on the response of Peterborough City Councils, past and present, to the threat of global warming and climate change.

The report card credits Councils with acknowledging that global warming and climate change are real, that they are caused by human activity, and that they threaten the wellbeing and possibly even the survival of all living beings. It also acknowledges climate actions initiated or carried through by Council, including energy efficiency retrofits, which began in 2011, the first **Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)** of 2016, and the **Climate Emergency Declaration** of 2019.

For Our Grandchildren acknowledges that much has been accomplished, and that much is in process, but **it encourages Council to take more concrete action and the move with more urgency.** It identifies several recent missed opportunities which underscore Council's excessive caution in approaching climate action.

## Summary of the Report Card on Council's Climate Change Initiatives

**Significant initiatives that past and present Councils have undertaken to help reduce the municipality's contribution to global warming.**

- Established targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and a system for tracking and reporting progress.
- Established stable annual funding for climate change mitigation initiatives through the Climate Change Reserve.
- Deployed various energy-saving technologies in municipal facilities, and initiated studies to identify how to further reduce municipal and community emissions.
- Significantly expanded renewable electricity generation for the city.
- Updated the City's Official Plan, which calls for the creation of walkable, cyclable, transit-friendly "complete communities," and looks to a future where fewer GHG emissions will be produced from transportation.

**The report card points out the limits of the City's actions to help reduce GHG emission.**

- Reports brought before Council by City staff in recent months have stated that targets set by Council for reduction of GHG emissions will almost certainly be missed by a significant margin.
- Little has been done to educate members of the public about climate change and what they can do, collectively, to combat it.
- The City's growth continues, as it has for many decades, to be dominated by the development of low-density suburbs difficult to serve with active transportation and transit.

- Little has been done to electrify the City's vehicle fleet and the heating systems of municipal buildings.
- Council recently missed a major opportunity to require builders to provide adequate power and electrical rough-ins for home-based electric vehicle charging in all residential construction. There is still time to reverse that decision.
- The City is not effectively applying a 'climate lens' to its decision-making process.

The report card credits the current Council with continuing to advance policies initiated by previous Councils, and with taking some measures on its own. However, it finds the current Council overly cautious in its response to the climate change threat, and passive in the face of clear evidence that the measures currently in place to reduce Peterborough's GHG emissions are inadequate.

## Recommendations

For Our Grandchildren recommends the following actions that, at a minimum, Council should take within their current term of office to more effectively address the threat of global warming:

1. Create an effective climate lens to report the climate implications of all Council decisions, as promised in the City's Emergency Declaration in 2019 – ideally linked to a carbon budget.
2. Since only 5% of GHG emissions come from municipal government activities, implement an effective public education/awareness campaign to encourage citizens and businesses to reduce the remaining 95%.
3. Complete the development of the **Home Energy Efficiency Program** and effectively promote it.
4. Ensure that the Official Plan and supporting plans guide the city's development toward a greener future.
5. Ensure that road construction and reconstruction include the active transportation elements identified in the Transportation and Cycling master plans.
6. Adopt **Green Development Standards** to require builders to adopt minimum sustainability measures. One example of a Green Development Standard is that all new and renovated buildings (from single family homes to apartment buildings) be required to incorporate the necessary power, and at least the roughed-in infrastructure, to support home-based electric vehicle charging.
7. Increase the City's investment in public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and locate charging stations where they will be most effectively used.
8. Begin to electrify the municipal vehicle fleet.
9. Set the highest possible energy efficiency standard for construction and operation of new municipal facilities.
10. Retrofit existing buildings to significantly reduce emissions toward meeting the goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

**The full Report Card is attached for further reference.**

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