



CITY COUNCIL REFERRAL OF MEMBER MOTION

Pursuing compensation for the cost of climate change to the City of Toronto

Date: March 29, 2019
To: Infrastructure and Environment Committee
From: City Council
Wards: All

CITY COUNCIL DECISION

City Council on March 27 and 28, 2019, referred Motion MM5.11 to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Mike Layton, seconded by Councillor Mike Colle, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager, in consultation with the City Solicitor, the General Manager, Toronto Water, the General Manager, Transportation Services, the Chief Resiliency Officer, and any other City staff deemed appropriate, to report back to the Infrastructure and Environment Committee by the fourth quarter of 2019 on the long term cost implications of climate change to City of Toronto's infrastructure and programs, and any legal avenues to pursue compensation for these costs from major greenhouse gas emitters.

SUMMARY

Climate change costs Toronto. The City of Toronto will spend billions of dollars rebuilding the homes, businesses and municipal infrastructure damaged by ever-stronger floods, storms, heat waves and flash freezes. We will spend even more proactively to make our City more resilient in the face of those impacts.

Most importantly, Torontonians will experience devastating loss and suffering - a cost that will be felt by all, but which will hit our most vulnerable populations hardest.

Extreme weather is already causing massive damage to Toronto-area infrastructure, homes, services and businesses. According to the Insurance Bureau of Canada, the Greater Toronto Area has had six “100 Year Storms” since 2005. These storms are a direct result of climate change and the resulting flooding has come with escalating costs to both taxpayers and insurers. The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that for every dollar in insured damages to homes and businesses, governments must spend three dollars to repair infrastructure.

Cities across North America are beginning to deal with the question of who should help pay for these climate change-related costs.

Given recent research highlighting the role of oil companies' impact on climate change and their involvement in decades-long efforts to cast doubt on climate science, City Council should explore joining New York, San Francisco and other major metropolitan cities in taking major oil companies to court. Just like tobacco companies knew their products caused cancer, but hid that information from the public, major oil companies have known for decades that their products would cause climate change. As tobacco companies have been held accountable for the health care costs associated with smoking, big polluters should have to pay their fair share for building a climate-safe City.

Communications (City Council)

(March 25, 2019) E-mail from Brock O'Leary (MM.Supp.MM5.11.1)

(March 25, 2019) E-mail from Hamish Wilson (MM.Supp.MM5.11.2)