



April 25, 2019

**Comment on IE4.4, Pursuing Compensation for the Cost of Climate Change**

Dear Members of the Infrastructure and Environment Committee,

Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) would like to express our strong support for Agenda Item IE4.4, Pursuing Compensation for the Cost of Climate Change to the City of Toronto.

For over 30 years, TEA has been committed to building a greener city for all. We've watched Toronto's flood waters and temperatures rise year after year, and we've seen the costs and impacts of climate change hit our city harder and harder.

This is no longer just a future challenge to prepare for, it is today's problem to respond to.

Let me take you back for a moment to the August flood of 2018. There were stories of flooded underpasses and subway stations, submerged cars, and even people trapped in an elevator nearly drowning in over 6 ft of water. This is what climate change looks like in Toronto today. The costs to human health, our infrastructure, and our economy weren't adequately measured that day, but we know this single event in Toronto cost \$80 million in insured damages alone.

The year before, the Toronto Islands were flooded. Over \$7 million in repair costs quickly racked up - a huge hit to the Parks Forestry & Recreation budget - but there were other costs too. The island ferry lost over \$6 million in revenue in just 3 months. Toronto Public Health had to invest in costly disease prevention measures to keep the West Nile virus carried by mosquitoes under control.

In 2013, a massive July flood cost the city over \$800 million. These aren't even the only extreme weather events Toronto is facing. In the same year, Toronto was hit with a devastating ice storm, causing \$200 million in damage and leaving over 300,000 people without power.

Extreme heat days are on the rise and they are also happening earlier in the season and lasting into the fall. Schools might need to start sending students home on extreme heat days in June and September because it's a danger to be in these sweltering classrooms and they don't have the money to manage this problem by repairing and retrofitting their buildings. Each year City Council has to decide whether or not to even fund emergency cooling centres.

The costs are racking up, but City Council has not yet done a full accounting of climate change impacts on our city that includes quantifying the real cost of inaction.

Our City was unprepared for all of these extreme weather events but it's not because they didn't see it coming. In 2012, Toronto released a Future Weather & Climate report, which clearly identified the impacts extreme weather would have on our city.

Since that report, TEA has been calling on Toronto City Council to do a full cost accounting of climate change, because we all have a right to know what's at stake. We need to collectively understand the scale of the challenge, the magnitude of the costs and harms we will bear if action is not taken.

City Council needs to do more to get ahead of known climate risks and build strong infrastructure to keep residents safe, especially those experiencing precarious housing, homelessness and living in flood zones. The biggest barrier has been the funding needed to invest in climate resilient solutions like stormwater management, green infrastructure, building retrofits and preserving green space.

Toronto's first city-wide climate adaptation strategy, ResilientTO, is set to launch any day. In this strategy there will surely be a number of recommendations for managing extreme floods and heat days, but it will come with a price tag.

The City already has a number of solid policies, strategies and initiatives that promote climate resilient solutions but without fair, transparent and dedicated ways to fund current and future work, Toronto will never get ahead of the climate threats and financial risks facing our city.

So the burning question is: where is Council going to get the money?

That is why TEA strongly supports Councillor Layton and Councillor Colle's motion at Infrastructure and Environment Committee today. To secure the money needed to build a resilient climate-ready city, Toronto City Council should leave no stone unturned, especially fair revenue tools that target the largest sources of pollution. The greatest contributors to climate change, such as fossil fuel producers, need to be held accountable for their fair share of the costs. Given everything that's at stake, it's time to start looking at options today!

Sincerely,

Heather Marshall, Campaigns Director