

Ann Rundle

Deputation to Budget Committee, January 20, 2020

Thank you for your work in making our City so liveable and beautiful.

You're owed special gratitude for fantastic initiatives to declare a Climate Emergency; and to implement the Climate Emergency Declaration.

I think of these as our 'New Year's resolutions'.

Yet it feels like one of those New Year's when you wake, knowing it's time to start on the resolutions, but too fuzzy to take action. Or to take appropriate action.

Yes, Councillors, I am talking about the low level of funding addressed to reducing carbon emissions. And I am talking about the allocation of about 44% of Toronto's capital budget to repairing the Gardiner Expressway.

One justification for this decision was the startling assertion that repairing the Gardiner would take cars *away* from Toronto.

That *has* to be the champagne speaking. We all know the Gardiner only takes cars away from the city after it brings them *here*; usually for a day of work, and often to return the following day. Day after day. Emitting carbon all the way.

I should talk. I live near the Don Valley Parkway, but work in Scarborough. So – here I stand, as fully guilty of carbon emissions as any coal-rollin' miner! My problem is, although my workplace is only 20 km distant, ON PUBLIC TRANSIT it can take an hour and a half to travel the 20 km to my work and an hour to travel 20 km home, for a total daily commute of two to two and a half hours. All for 40 km! But in my car I can drive those distances in about an hour a day. *The fact is, I need you to put additional buses on Midland to Kennedy, cutting out 20 minutes of wait time.* But this budget isn't doing that. Its actually going to increase fares on public transit!

Taking this back to the Gardiner, the thing that makes the Gardiner special is that people travelling from outside Toronto into the City have great transit options in the GO system. And there is an alternative roadway in the Lakeshore system. Honestly, repairing the Gardiner looks like the type of New Year's day where I decide to go on a major diet by buying a new set of cake pans!

The day AFTER New Year's day, though, when our heads are clear, we are going to have to ask ourselves: *why is the City of Toronto spending about half its budget on people who live somewhere else and who could easily commute into the city on a GO bus or train?* And maybe add another question, too - *why isn't the City of Toronto spending more money on reducing emissions – maybe by extending public transit?* After all this is the greatest danger to our lives today!

But wait. Councillors – maybe, when you decided to repair the Gardiner, you were thinking we could electrify transportation. Maybe you were looking forward to baking cakes – but using artificial sweetener in those desserts! Maybe all those cars pouring in and out of Toronto on the Gardiner were going to be EVs, and not carbon-blasters at all! I'll certainly get an EV: As soon as I can afford it, that is.

If EVs are what you're counting on to get our emissions down, well - sadly for all of us, the Province has retracted subsidies for EV purchases, and is ripping out all the renewable energy installations it can find. We will transition to EVs much later than we should – at least if we're hoping to meet the carbon goals of the Emergency Declaration. So late, in fact, that the millions we spend on the Gardiner will actually *facilitate and increase* cars and carbon emissions in our city for many years to come.

So I put it to you, Councillors. We should not simply “repair and replace what we already have” because – things are changing; things NEED to change. In fact, things have already changed since you decided to repair the Gardiner, as we see with the Province's hostility to climate initiatives, and as we watch Australia burning.

When you apply that “climate lens” to decision-making that you referred to in the Climate Emergency Declaration, you need to put front and centre that your target is to reduce carbon emissions by 9 megatons/year. Yet the only target named in this budget is .0006 Mt regarding new buildings!

Thinking toward the future with a climate lens means you have to end the mid-century oil and gas solutions. Stop repairing the Gardiner; it's a decision made while we were still hungover from the oil and gas glut of the past!

Instead, applying that climate lens, make public transit *more* available. *CUT* the rates and - we should put on my extra buses Midland to Kennedy – yes? And help Torontonians to get EV's, to start us creating renewable energy for them and for all our infrastructure; help us enhance resiliency for the coming challenges.

Yes, you DO have the money; only you need to be thinking about a future very different from our present and immediate past. Councillors put money into a Climate Fund, available for the future City that we need to start building NOW. You really could take the money from the pile intended for repair of the Gardiner, you know. If you don't want to do that, you could develop tax tools to achieve these goals.

Councillors, you should know that while I have written in a lighthearted manner, I am really sad about this situation. I think it is wrong to take our money and NOT spend it addressing the biggest threat of our time – climate change. And I think it is worse to spend it *enabling* the emissions that are causing the problem.