

December 6, 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Board of Health,

Re: Climate Change and the role of Public Health

With Toronto set to debate its path to a 2040 Net Zero Climate Action Plan, it is imperative we look to ensure all of the City's efforts are geared toward achieving the targets our plan will set out.

The targets included in the City's plan are great, but The City of Toronto lacks the explicit powers to do what is necessary - a full phase out of natural gas in existing and new buildings imminently.

There are pathways the City can look to implement from other jurisdictions in Canada, but Toronto lacks the power to implement a phase out of natural gas equipment compared to Vancouver and other municipalities with greater powers granted to them by the province. As a result, the recommendations going to council are requesting a phasing down of natural gas, but we are not able to institute it ourselves.

Toronto Public Health must play a role in protecting the public from the greatest health threat of this century. Climate change will exacerbate heart-related illness, lung and heart disease from wildfire smoke, vector-borne diseases including Lyme disease, and physical and mental illness from extreme weather events like flooding.

Therefore we should look to see if the Medical Officer of Health can support the City of Toronto to advance the issue. We have been able to demonstrate this power when we instituted a cosmetic pesticides ban which was later upheld and implemented province wide. If we can use the same mechanism again we can help influence the outcomes on this important file.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health to review the potential to declare a public health emergency as it relates to the phasing out of natural gas if the Province of Ontario refuses to implement such policy in the coming year.

Thank you,

Councillor Mike Layton
Ward 11, University-Rosedale