CLIMATE CHANGE CONNECTION

Winnipeg City Council

May 30, 2023 Council Meeting

Make Community Energy Investment Roadmap (CEIR) central to Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP)

On May 16 of this year, I and a number of other delegations made submissions to the Executive Policy Committee (EPC) meeting recommending that the CEIR report become a guide for the Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP).

There is a recommendation in the agenda of that EPC meeting for the Public Service to report on how the SPAP will be measured against the City's adopted policies including CEIR. This is good. However, the CEIR Report is not mentioned in the SPAP nor is it mentioned in the "Strategic Priorities Action Plan, Consolidated Amendment Recommendations" presented to Council today.

CEIR is more overarching and encompassing in scope than other adopted policies and should therefore be referred to explicitly in the SPAP as a guiding document. Achievement of CEIR requires it to be a central focus for planning and budgeting in all City departments.

The CEIR Report was adopted unanimously by Winnipeg's City Council in July of 2022. In my estimation, this is the most important document that has been put before Council in the 16 years that I have been working on civic affairs related to climate change.

The CEIR Report was commissioned by the City of Winnipeg to create a technical, evidence-based roadmap to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. It used state-of-the-art modeling to propose and evaluate a pathway to a Net- Zero Scenario (NZS). It recognizes that achieving this net-zero objective will involve the mobilization and coordination of every city department, business, non-profit organization, household, and other levels of government.

The actions highlighted by the CEIR Report align with the six pillars of OurWinnipeg 2045: leadership and good governance; environmental resilience; economic prosperity; good health and well-being; social equity; and city building. The CEIR Report illustrates the scale of the transformation required to meet the City's climate goals set out first in the City of Winnipeg Climate Action Plan and updated in the OurWinnipeg 2045 development plan. It touches on every aspect of the city, from land-use planning to waste management, from transportation to housing and from the electrical system to urban forests.

From the CEIR Report Summary: "In the era of accelerating climate change, every tonne of GHG emissions matters and an emissions reduction lens will need to permeate throughout City decision-making processes. The roadmap identified in the CEIR is intended to ensure that the City of Winnipeg's response to climate change is transformational, equitable, and effective."

The CEIR Report was intended to inform the Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP) 2022-26 process. The CEIR Report should have become a guiding document for the SPAP. However, this fundamentally important report **isn't even mentioned** in the current draft SPAP.

This Council, and all citizens have an obligation to move away from business as usual - to build climate resilience and to move away from our reliance on burning fossil fuels. Time is running out.

However, as CEIR points out and quantifies - not only will achieving this objective help to prevent future suffering - it would provide tremendous economic and social benefits.

The CEIR Report outlines how comprehensive, energetic, determined climate action will provide many benefits beyond addressing climate change.

The Benefits

These are key insights identified in the CEIR Report and, if undertaken, would benefit the Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP):

- **Climate action is a good investment** - The implementation of the Net-Zero Scenario (NZS) requires an average investment of around $800 million per year until 2050. This investment pays for itself two times over and provides a net benefit to the community of $35.6 billion over 28 years. From an economic perspective, climate action is a no-regret policy with many opportunities for new and existing businesses.
- **Households save money** - The NZS involves shifting away from natural gas, diesel, and gasoline to electricity, using high efficiency space heating and cooling with heat pumps, and improving the efficiency of homes. In the NZS, an average household in 2050 will spend 56% less on fuel and electricity than they would have in the Business as Usual (BAU) scenario. This would go a long way to reducing energy poverty.
- **Health benefits** - There will be health benefits from the reduced air pollution when we stop burning diesel, gasoline, and natural gas,
- **Employment opportunities** - The CEIR Report estimates 103,000 person-years of employment for the NZS over the BAU between 2022 and 2050.
- **Electricity is local** - Manitoba needs to pay to import fossil fuel. The NZS focuses on a resilient and flexible electrical distribution system that enables households and businesses to install heat pumps and to charge vehicles, and to generate and source clean, local electricity.
- **Building retrofits** - Building retrofits stimulate employment, address energy poverty, and improve living conditions for vulnerable populations.
- **Implementation can address equity** - The CEIR Report recommends that an equity lens be applied to decision-making on both the approach to implementation and the costs of inaction.
- **Apply a Climate Test for decision making** - Any investments or policies that the City undertakes which result in increased emissions will become stranded investments that are costly to undo. Therefore, it makes sense that all departments asses any proposed action or initiative to determine if it would decrease or increase emissions. If an evaluation indicates increased emissions, the project or policy should not proceed.
- **A whole-city approach** - The CEIR Report outlines a systematic transformation of the built environment, as opposed to a long list of actions. This means embedding the consideration of climate into every policy and expenditure in alignment with the NZS, a whole- city approach.

The City of Winnipeg cannot achieve the net-zero objective on its own. But it absolutely must accept its responsibility to contribute its share. The federal government has signalled its intention and is making moves toward this net-zero goal. Manitoba's Climate Action Team has been developing a set of documents that have been focused on the actions that need to take place at the provincial level to complement and support the CEIR Report recommendations.

Therefore, for the reasons outlined above, it is essential that the Strategic Priorities Action Plan be revised to incorporate the Community Energy Investment Roadmap as its guide, as its metric for performance, and as its measure of success.