

**Comments of the London Advisory Committee
on the Environment (ACE) regarding the 2014 City of
London Operations, Capital and Gas Tax draft budgets**

January 2, 2014

ACE's comments are directed at the above City budgets with regard to environmental sustainability. We thank the City for letting ACE comment on budget items of interest to ACE. In terms of budget decisions, we ask that the following issues be prioritized:

CLIMATE CHANGE –

ACE **asks** that efforts continue to profile London as a champion, particularly as it relates to climate change adaptation. Stabilizing climate change is recognized by cities across Canada as an energy problem. Continued action on conservation, energy efficiencies and improvements, storage, renewables and power requirements (that do not emit carbon dioxide into the atmosphere) involve innovation and community-wide investments in sustainable infrastructure. The City needs to particularly support this direction in 2014 given the multitude of Canadian municipal Council members and staff expected at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Sustainability Conference to be held in London in 2015, an opportunity to showcase London's energy best practices and success stories.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES –

The City is to be **commended** for making a recent commitment to cycling safety and bike lanes through a new proposed Advisory Committee. 2014 cuts to London's bike lane program (for 10 years) need to be reconsidered in budget deliberations as London encourages cycling as a strategy to reduce emissions and pollution. Bike lane funding has been allocated for several years through Gas Tax funds designated to reducing emissions and improving air quality. This should continue. It is counterproductive for the City not to be able to combine bike lanes with other future projects over the next decade.

ACE **asks** that 2014 cuts to purchase replacement buses to maintain its inventory be reconsidered. London Transit has reached a 12.5% mode share already given a 10% mode share prediction for 2020. This also represents a \$2 million dollar reduction of greenhouse gas emissions saving. LTC currently has a service deficit of 200,000 service hours and has had a 77% increase of complaints since 2010 because of this. Ridership from 1990 of 300,000 riders has increased in 2012 to 365,000 riders. 576,000 service hours in 1990 was represented by 550,000 service hours in 2012. LTC continues to face significant growth pressures and must accommodate the needs of Londoners.

It is difficult to imagine the Transportation division's 2014 budget request of \$61.501 million requires \$38.498 million (63%) to maintain road structure, and how this money could be otherwise spent. Emerging issues such as the Transportation Master Plan and Rapid Transit are not included in the City's proposed 3.1% residential levy target but they must not be compromised. Sustainable funds are needed to move them forward.

ACE **appreciates** that the Planning Division has developed multi-disciplinary teams and is working towards online land use application process as part of its strategy to support efficiencies. ACE looks forward to Council's support for Rethink London's new Official Plan opportunities to manage balanced growth.

ACE **asks** that recommendations to reduce monies for UTRCA's contract to manage 5 of the 16 City's environmental significant areas be reconsidered. ESA's represent a variety of habitats, including upland forests, wetlands and river corridors and are an integral part of London's proposed Natural Heritage System connecting parks, valley lands and other open spaces. UTRCA's objectives are to fully protect ESAs, ensure public safety and promote and enforce proper use. Level of service will be reduced.

ACE **endorses** Environmental Services' staff recent work to be 'future-ready' through voluntary, low-cost design principles to accommodate installation of solar systems and district thermal energy loops. ACE also **supports** a pilot of the 'Property Assessment for Clean Energy' (PACE) program involving low-interest financing through use of Local Improvement Charges carried through property tax for residential and commercial building energy and water retrofits. Installing items such as solar panels will become more affordable to many more London residents as well as providing work for installers.

ACE **acknowledges** that Environmental Services has come through with a minimal budget increase for garbage, recycling and composting costs recognizing W12A has between 10 and 11 years of capacity left, private haulers are taking less material to the landfill and using other sites, new homes are increasing London's population yearly, and

new improvements are expected once the province introduces a new Waste Reduction Act. Waste diversion contributes to the protection of human health and the environment. Since this program was first approved, the City of London has steadily increased its performance to the current level of 44% waste diversion while having one of the lowest total waste management costs in Ontario for urban centres.

City staff are to be **commended** for ongoing energy consumption and greenhouse gas reporting given a comprehensive Corporate Energy Management program and the introduction of a new Community Energy Action Plan, noting energy data can be matched to economic indicators such as reduced energy cost and local employment.

ACE **asks** that Council reconsider cuts to facility energy management in 2014 as it will negatively affect the City's ability to achieve targets now mandated to be published annually by the province. Retrofits provide energy savings and monies for investment elsewhere. Energy costs are expected to increase annually (8% yearly). Energy sensitive services include: sports fields lighting, artificial ice plants and community centre room rentals which potentially could mean a reduction of facility use by Londoners.

ACE **asks** that London's environmental considerations be prioritized as quality of life issues and budget requirements not be comprised to move these programs forward.

ACE **asks** the City to give further consideration in budget design to: a) conserve by improving infrastructure performance to reduce long-term costs with the least environmental impact b) link projects with 'green' strategies to any potential leveraged green funding that exists and c) examine the budget with a completely sustainable lens so the City can become less dependent on other levels of government funds and gain more benefit from other monies that become available.

ACE **asks** the City of London to always consider the legacy for future citizens as the responsibility of current decision makers toward a sustainable community.

Presentation to the City public meeting January 13, 2013 by,
City of London's Advisory Committee on the Environment