

**February 24, 2016 - London Advisory Committee on the Environment
(ACE) delegation on 2016-2019 City draft budgets**

February 9, 2016

We thank the City for letting ACE comment on the City's first multi-year budget (2016-2019). Last year we addressed the London Plan and waste diversion opportunities. This year our focus is London's **strategic investment business cases** review. These high level strategies embrace Strengthening our Community, Building a Sustainable City, Growing our Economy, and Leading in Public Service. Several of these cases offer opportunities to define the budget through a sustainability lens with consideration as well to the London Plan's agenda for a 'Green City'. **We ask** that Council build flexibility into this four year process to support ambitious provincial targets that London has already signed on to, to reduce climate impacts. ACE recognizes past near net-zero budgets have been challenging and 2016 involves priority setting and prudent fiscal management in a range of business case options toward operating/capital budget tax levy impacts between approximately 2.6% and 3.1%.

Thus, the decision process surrounding \$12 to \$17 million additional budget dollars will expect to incorporate balanced financing to make the best use of limited financial resources. We ask that our remarks be assessed in the review process of the following.

BIG PICTURE -

With respect to London's most recent Cycling Master Plan underway, **ACE asks** that the City endorse London Cycle Link's (LCL) 5 recommendations to generate maximum impact on cycling infrastructure for London cyclists, achievable within the four year budget term. These are:

- a) the Richmond-Adelaide multi-use pathway gap already underway,
- b) an east-west cycle track on King Street,
- c) a north-south protected route through downtown,
- d) safe, monitored, bike parking downtown and to expand
- e) Cheapside's bike lane to Clark Road (Fanshawe link to downtown).

Expenditures are estimated at \$1.5 million. LCL has shortlisted a practical and cost effective vision to increase safe mobility choices.

ACE fully supports and encourages investment in local conservation authorities' current planning to set new environmental targets to achieve measurable improvement in watershed health. Climate effects over time are expected to escalate threats to Ontario's water sources such as water quality and supply, drought and more severe weather, increased flooding and erosion, lowered river flows, disappearing wetlands and degraded biodiversity. Enhanced mitigation and adaptation planning prioritized now allows for a more flexible response to meet these challenges of the future. Another important issue is Environment Canada's proposed 40% reduction of phosphorus in the Thames River influencing agricultural and other land use practices.

ACE asks that efforts continue to profile London as an environmental champion, recognizing COP 21 outcomes have charted a fundamentally new course of action that Canada has already endorsed. Continued action on conservation, energy efficiencies and improvements, energy storage, renewables and power requirements require

groundbreaking community-wide investments in sustainable infrastructure, policy and program. London should continue this direction to allow flexibility within its Community Energy Action Plan milestones and other energy efficiency strategies.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES -

BUSINESS CASE 1 – Library’s 10 year capital plan, S Krimmer, Library Services

It is hoped LED upgrades can **be accommodated** in this budget by other means for our library system such as the Capital Asset Renewal and Replacement reserve fund or other means. Libraries attract thousands of citizens. Showcasing new environmental upgrades can have numerous benefits for the community overall.

BUSINESS CASE 2 – Road 2.0 – Road to increased resource recovery and zero waste, J Stanford, Recycling & Composting

ACE supports increased waste diversion strategies to reflect the province’s 60% waste diversion target first set in 2000. The City’s plan for 2016-2019 is designed to increase London’s diversion rate up to 5% (by weight). See our Green Bin remarks on page 4. New provincial legislation underway could introduce extended producer responsibility, economic instructions, green procurement and product design strategies that London can embrace. Green Bin, increased recycling and incentives still remain viable options. **ACE commends** Environmental Services for revenue efficiencies in 2015 from a) the Material Recovery Facility and b) existing diversion, collection, disposal operations.

BUSINESS CASE 3 – Urban Forestry Strategy, J Fleming, Urban Forestry

As always, **ACE supports** funding to maintain existing tree canopy. The Urban Forest Strategy and Corporate Asset Management Plan identify current maintenance levels of existing trees and newly planted trees do not meet current best practices nor sustain the long term health of street, park and woodland trees. City approved targets of 23%-28% by 2035 are not achievable with existing City funding. American Forests recommend an average 40% canopy cover to sustain the urban forest and maximize ecological, social and economic benefits. For example, Canadian cities that already utilize this guideline include Toronto, Kitchener, and Peterborough.

Recently, the Invasive Species Act received royal consent. This Act allows municipalities to access tools and support to "ban the possession and transportation of species, allow for early intervention and rapid response of invasive species, and to ensure compliance through modernized inspection and enforcement." Many duties of inspection, enforcement, and intervention will/may fall on municipalities. Yet **there is no inclusion** in the City budget to account for the increased costs associated with these duties. Visit <https://news.ontario.ca/mnr/en/2015/11/invasive-species-legislation-receives-royal-assent.html>.

BUSINESS CASE 4 –Thames Valley Corridor Plan, J Fleming, Parks & Natural Areas Planning & Design

Londoners recognize the Thames Valley Corridor Plan (TVCP) as our most important natural, cultural, recreational and aesthetic resource, connecting communities with an equitably distributed open space system of natural areas, parks, activity areas and facilities. The Municipal Class Environmental Assessment study is still in progress for the north branch gap between Richmond and Adelaide Streets as well as secondary connections to area neighbourhoods. This has been discussed with the public. The

Environmental Impact Study is underway for two preferred routes. Please **keep momentum** with this project given the strong public support for this connection.

BUSINESS CASE 6 – Rapid Transit Implementation Strategy, J Braam and E Soldo, Roadways and Public Transit

Transportation costs dominate 66% of the City's 10 year capital budget. Rapid Transit's is **supported by ACE** to increase ridership and take cars off the road for regeneration and cost-effective growth.

BUSINESS CASE 7 – State of Infrastructure Report, M Hayward, Corporate Financing

A forecasted \$449 million for 2016-2025 for local road widening, on the other hand, requires stronger cases that give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and transit users in conjunction with vehicles (in that order), and greater public awareness of associated costs such as planned upgrades for water mains, conduit, cables, transit bays and improvements to district heating as part of road widenings. Cultural and social priorities on spatial preferences for London can benefit from public input for creative solutions. The proposed 10 year roads and bridges lifecycle renewal cost of \$238 million and \$85 million for additional transit buses are easier to justify and demonstrate benefits. **ACE asks** for innovation, substitution and efficiency on road widenings and more examples of segregated bike lanes. **ACE commends** staff actions on new LED street lighting, durable pavement markings, pavement recycling technology and the London Middlesex Road Safety Strategy.

BUSINESS CASE 8 – Garbage Collection On-Board Weighing & Tracking Technologies, J Stanford, Garbage Collection & Disposal

ACE supports increased on-board tracking technologies for garbage trucks for route optimization, increased productivity, and controlled fuel costs.

BUSINESS CASE 10 – Establish Public Engagement as a Focus, J Fleming, Planning Services

City staff are to be commended for community involvement strategies built into the development of the recent London Plan process. **ACE asks** that the City develop neighbourhood level feedback options, similar to those proposed for planning applications. A similar investment in Strengthening Neighbourhoods to address community matters supports the City's Strategic Plan, and the strategy "Support neighbourhood driven activities and decision making". This initiative would then provide access to information to support stronger input across the City.

BUSINESS CASE 13 – London Strengthening Neighbourhoods Strategy (LSNS), L Livingstone, Community Development & Funding

LSNS **needs to continue** as resident-led with City support toward momentum in solving complex community issues. This moves citizens from knowledge to practice to impact learning. Empowering residents and cultivating community leadership is a strong base for celebration of the uniqueness of London neighbourhoods.

BUSINESS CASE 17 – Winter Maintenance Strategy, J Braam, Snow Control (Winter Maintenance)

Enhancing existing winter maintenance programs for pedestrian and cyclist mobility safely **should emphasize** transit stops, schools and hospitals.

BUSINESS CASE 18 – London Community Foundation’s ‘Back to the River Project’, J Fleming, Planning Services

ACE supports a riverfront improvement surrounding the Forks in such a way that ‘ecological enhancements’ as referenced may include sustainable development strategies for stormwater management, regeneration of natural habitat, functioning ecological demonstration landscapes and a potential discovery centre that highlights floodplain protection, natural heritage systems, aquatic habitats, water cycles and so on. A centre contributes to economic prosperity as a venue for tourism as well. As a note, Burlington’s riverfront received \$17.4 million from the Canada Ontario Infrastructure fund. **ACE understands** the value of integrating supporting recommendations from the TVCP, Downtown Master Plan, Parks & Recreation Strategic Master Plan and ReThink London to help leverage riverfront funds with strong consideration to outcomes.

BUSINESS CASE 20 – London’s Downtown Plan – small scale projects, J Fleming, Planning Services

ACE supports small scale projects in this plan that enhance cycling and walking, (the London Plan states Downtown, the city’s premier pedestrian experience), community involvement with plantings and public art; enhanced streetscapes/lighting, placemaking, permeable pavements, while maintaining a strong focus to preserve buildings and structures of heritage or architectural significance.

BUSINESS CASE 22 – Dundas Place, J Braam with J Fleming, Roadway Planning & Design with Planning Services

ACE supports small scale projects for Dundas Place including winter maintenance, non-vehicle use, shade/shelter, distinguished spaces, boulevard planting, living trees, habitat value, more community events, and public plaza space that links with the Forks, accessible to all. The City needs to encourage a unique mix of shops toward an ‘urban’ character for the downtown and tourism. **ACE asks** that the City also identify increased cultural hub or district opportunities to enhance downtown. For example, Burlington, Oakville and Hamilton have strong art districts that bring people downtown. Hamilton hosts a monthly Art Crawl (spearheaded by the arts community and buskers) that successfully engages residents and visitors to stroll along James Street.

Additional cases –

Green Bin as a new business case option for consideration to move waste diversion from 45% to 54% provides a strong opportunity to reach the province’s existing target of 60%. Impacts of the landfill’s remaining capacity of 9-11 years remain **a critical consideration in terms of the higher costs of alternatively supporting a new landfill capacity.**

ACE supports consideration of re-instating the Brownfields Contamination Assessment Study Grant regarding the Evaluation of CIP Incentives. This program was discontinued in 2014. The draft case proposes it be re-instated for four years, coincident with the multi-year budget, with an annual contribution of \$20,000 (\$80,000 over four years). The program would provide a grant equal to 50% of the cost, up to \$10,000, for a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for contaminated sites. Copies of the completed ESA, Remedial Action Plan and/or Risk Assessment would be provided to the City.