

March 6, 2023

Dear Members of London City Council,

My name is Brendon Samuels and I am the Chair of the Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Advisory Committee (ESACAC). I am submitting this letter as an individual, not on behalf of my advisory committee.*

The reason for my submission is that I would like to express my concern about the City offering very limited opportunities for my advisory committee to provide Council with feedback on the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan. I am requesting your support to ensure that upcoming advisory committee consultations about the Multi-Year Budget are scheduled in advance to provide more notice to the advisory committees that will prevent similar timing constraints from arising again. A breakdown of my experience of the process is described below.

ESACAC received its first and only [presentation about the Strategic Plan](#) from staff on Wednesday March 1, 2023. After the presentation, the committee was advised that feedback could only be provided by committee members individually through the same process as the general public (e.g., the Get Involved website). Many committee members have technical knowledge and good ideas that could be useful for strategic planning, but they lack familiarity with the context of London's Strategic Plan, and thus are not necessarily equipped to review and provide feedback independently. We would have appreciated an opportunity to provide feedback on the Strategic Plan collectively as a committee.

*As you may know, feedback provided by advisory committees to Council is generally expected to follow a standard process. First, an item will appear on an advisory committee meeting agenda. Then, between scheduled committee meetings, committee members will produce feedback (comments, questions). The feedback is placed on a subsequent committee meeting agenda for review and is subjected to a vote by the committee at large before any accepted materials can be relayed to Council through civic administration. In the case of the Strategic Plan, our committee was unable to complete this process for reasons beyond our control.

When ESACAC received information about the Strategic Plan on Wednesday March 1st, we were told that feedback was expected to be submitted to staff by no later than Friday March 3rd. The earliest that the committee could possibly complete the process of providing feedback through civic administration would be at our next meeting on April 5, 2023, but this would not align with the Strategic Plan review timeline that Council is following. Why was the consultation with our advisory committee (and perhaps others) left until just before the deadline?

I attended the Strategic Plan Open House for Community Advisory Committees held on February 16. I found that in the one hour allocated for the session, which included a high-level presentation by staff as well as discussion, there was insufficient time for participants to provide feedback on the Plan itself, being that most had not yet reviewed extensive new materials, and feedback provided was not representative of input from committees at large.

I hope that Council recognizes advisory committees can play supportive roles in the strategic planning process. While I am disappointed that ESACAC won't be able to weigh in on aspects of the Strategic Plan related to our mandate, such as climate change planning and preservation of natural heritage, I know that my committee is looking forward to contributing to other upcoming planning processes.

I would like to request that Council please confirm with staff working on the Multi-Year Budget that City of London's advisory committees, including ESACAC, will be provided with information at least 1 month before the deadline to submit feedback, for committees to have time to review the Budget in line with scheduled meetings, so that feedback from the committees can reach Council through civic administration.

Thank you for your consideration of this request,

Brendon Samuels
Chair, Environmental Stewardship and Action Community Advisory Committee