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January 10, 2018

City of Toronto Budget Committee
City Hall, 100 Queens Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: Item BU40.1, TransformTO 2018 Operating Budget Request

Dear Committee Members,

When it comes to meeting Toronto's climate targets, words are not enough. We need to invest to achieve our goals, starting now. That's why the Council decision on the TransformTO 2018 operating budget is so important.

On July 4, 2017, City Council unanimously approved a pathway to meet Toronto's 2050 carbon emission reduction target while driving equity, public health and local prosperity. The TransformTO plan, co-developed by The Atmospheric Fund and the City's Environment & Energy Division, was informed by a multi-faceted long-term modelling initiative and closely guided by a diverse group of 30 community members. It presents challenging low-carbon targets that are achievable with current technology and have the potential to create valuable community benefits.

The July 2017 report to Council stressed that the pace and scale of activity need a major boost to allow us to achieve our goals and that delays would only make the work progressively more challenging and costly. An investment of \$22.2 million was requested for 2018-2020, starting with \$6.7 million in 2018. This initial funding focuses on accelerating existing City programs. The Better Buildings Partnership and the Home Energy Loan Program, for example, target carbon emissions in Toronto's buildings - our biggest emissions source. Additional City staff are required to amplify the scale and impact of these proven programs.

TransformTO is also based on the premise that the City cannot work alone to achieve the goals we have set. A key municipal role is to act as a catalyzing force to make climate action more relevant to the daily lives and interests of Toronto residents. We must ensure that climate actions are designed to generate co-benefits like good-paying local jobs, reduced energy bills, and improved health and quality of life for all.

To get started, we need to enhance staff capacity to find community partners who can co-create and contribute to the next wave of climate programming. Developing external partnerships takes time. The faster we get on with this critical task, the more likely we can launch new programs by 2021 and draw in expanded support from the broader community. If there are savings from deferred staff hiring, they could be used to enable community stakeholders to participate in co-developing the longer-range strategies.

With billions of public dollars emerging from provincial and federal city-focused climate initiatives, now is the time to ramp up our municipal climate work. We need to better position Toronto to receive its fair share of this time-limited funding from other levels of government.

This is why reducing the 2018-2020 budget allocation presented in the Council-approved TransformTO plan is problematic. We are concerned that the current \$4.3 million budget proposed for 2018 is a 36 per cent reduction compared to the \$6.7 million presented in the July 2017 staff report. Our work already lags behind due to Council's decision in 2017 to fund only 20 per cent of a \$1.55 million request to expedite short-term TransformTO actions. Slowing down spending in 2018 will only put us further behind.

TransformTO was two years in the making and has been embraced by City Council and many community members. However, the creation and approval of the climate plan was really just a "race to the starting line." To set the plan in motion and unlock the multiple benefits of a low-carbon economy, full resources need to be in place starting in 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. E. Pickering". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mary Pickering
VP Partnerships & Programs,
The Atmospheric Fund