

## **A PRESENTATION ABOUT THE OAKVILLE ENERGY TASK FORCE REPORT**

Mayor Burton, Councilors ,my name is Mervyn Russell and I am speaking on behalf of Halton Action for Climate Emergency Now, HACEN. I was an observer of the Oakville Energy Task Force meeting on Monday April 19<sup>th</sup>. I came away from the meeting with two impressions. The first was that the meeting was very self congratulatory, which probably was deserved, The second was how far this project still is from taking action on the issue for which it was set up, namely, the climate emergency. We, at HACEN, were always doubtful about the ability of this project, with this particular structure, to respond urgently to the climate emergency, and it seems our doubts have been confirmed.

In following through on its Climate Emergency Resolution the municipality deliberately freed itself of directly reducing community energy use. Outside of its internal corporate responsibilities, those reductions would have to be brought about by community involvement, effort and financing. Council, therefore, set up a Public, Private, Partnership where most of the heavy lifting would be done by the private partner. However, unlike a business P3, this partnership would not be driven by profitability for the private partner, but community well being; nor would the private involvement be driven forward by the accountable work of employees, but by volunteers.

The development of the project can be understood as going through three main phases. The first is the setting up of the initial corporation with three founding directors. This task has been carried out by a volunteer group ,Oakville Energy Task Force, consisting of 18 people from different, and complimentary, social sectors.

The second phase consists of the initiated corporation, called Future Energy Oakville, completing the selection of its directors; gaining the financial support needed to for the corporation to do its work and the appointment of an Ex. Director.

Phase three is the Board and the Ex. Director mandating and appointing the Priority Project task forces and supervising their work of gaining community involvement in reducing the use of energy and production of carbon emissions.

Faced with the climate emergency, after one and half years, phase one was completed on Monday April 19<sup>th</sup>. Phase two begins with three founding Directors. They have objectives which will be more difficult to achieve than those of phase one, but which are crucial for the success of the project. Only two organizations, so far, the Town itself and Sheridan College, have made commitments towards reaching between 6,000 and 7,000K needed to finance the project for two years. A search for an Executive Director will not begin until there is money for that person's salary, Businesses are not likely to commit significant funding until there is an Ex Director whose ability they can assess. How much can three directors achieve, even with the continuing support from Town staff. How long, therefore, will it take to get phase three up and running, remembering that phase three is the whole reason for the project in the first place? Clearly the target dates for the Priority projects cannot be met.

We should not blame in any way those who ave been active in the OETF, and particularly not the excellent Deniz Ergun who seems to have been acting in the position of a pro-tem Ex. Director. It is the structure of the project that is the problem. Municipalities in which significant, rapid progress has been made in responding to the climate emergency such as Vancouver, Calgary and Montreal, are municipalities where the municipality itself has taken the primary responsibility for organizing, staffing and financing a response. Of course, Oakville is much smaller than the cities I have mentioned . Maybe

that is part of the problem. Maybe Oakville does not have the resources to carry this project .Maybe it should be a Regional project, like the proposed project for the Region of Peel.

It is HACEN's view that the project that is now called Future Energy Oakville needs help. It needs the OETF not only to oversee the work of the FEO but to continue to actively assist the three founding directors to recruit the remaining directors and to access funding. The Town need to guarantee the Ex. Directors salary for two years so that, as soon as possible, there can be a full time, expert person, carrying forward the objectives of the board and thinking through the needs and means associated with each Priority Project. If the Town wants the FEO to continue going forward as an exclusively Oakville project it needs to increase its overall, ongoing financial support. Such funding from the initiator of the project will indicate to businesses that the Town takes the project seriously and will encourage them to do the same. If the Town does not have the resources to do that, it should consider offering it to the Region.

Maybe it is too late to change the fundamental structure of Future Energy Orville. Surely it can be tweaked. It needs to be if its prospects for success are to be improved.