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HAMILTON REGION

'Respectfully scrappy' activist Lynda Lukasik will now lead Hamilton's climate change office

Longtime head of Environment Hamilton — who once successfully took the city to court over landfill pollution — will now push for change from inside the corporation.

By **Matthew Van Dongen** Spectator Reporter

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Lynda Lukasik famously proved you can fight city hall by [taking Hamilton to court](#) in 1999 over a landfill leaking toxic pollution into Red Hill Creek.

Two decades later, one of Hamilton's best-known environmental activists is still pushing the city to do better. But soon, she'll be doing it from the inside.

Lukasik, 55, has just accepted a job as director of the city's new climate change office starting Dec. 12. It's a chance to directly affect the city's approach to "an urgent climate crisis" that Lukasik said she couldn't pass up.

"This was an opportunity to jump in and make a substantial contribution in a different way," said Lukasik, who as an advocate publicly urged the city to [act faster](#) on a pandemic-stalled climate strategy. "I felt compelled to give it a try."

That probably means a "shift in approach" at times for the activist turned civil servant, who laughingly acknowledged a "respectfully scrappy" relationship with past city councils.

Lukasik also pointed out, however, that she has a track record of "collaboration" with the city on everything from tree-planting campaigns to an [ongoing air quality monitoring partnership](#) with the advocacy group she has lead for 20-plus years, Environment Hamilton.

The new job means stepping down from the top job at Environment Hamilton, the organization she helped found and fund with municipal fines awarded from that successful private prosecution over landfill pollution so long ago.

Lukasik had already stepped away from that job in recent months to run for an open Ward 5 seat in the October election, a position [ultimately won by new Councillor Matt Francis](#).

The longtime organization director told her staff last week about the new gig.

"I'm not going to lie ... I was a little bit weepy," she said. "I've put a lot of my life into Environment Hamilton and the work we've done in this community and I'm very proud of that work. But I know I have a lot to offer in this new role, to help see a lot of good ideas become a reality on the ground."

The [director role](#), which is pegged at around \$215,000 a year for salary and other costs, will see Lukasik oversee a climate change office focused on slashing Hamilton's greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and implementing a climate change adaptation plan.

The high-level strategy envisions everything from energy retrofit programs for old homes to more tree-planting to encouraging transit fleet electrification. Prepping the city for more flooding, extreme heat and storms is also a priority.

The plan recently earned Hamilton one of the top “climate action” scores in an international ranking of cities by the not-for-profit [Carbon Disclosure Project](#).

One of Lukasik's first tasks is to help prioritize the laundry list of actions in the city's high-level strategy. Another is to set up a public advisory committee on climate change.



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