

Subcommittee on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation  
Parks and Environment Committee  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, West Tower, City Hall  
10 Queens Street West,  
Toronto, ON. M5H 2N2

March 2, 2015

**RE: Toronto Area Faith Communities: Building Resilience to Extreme Weather**

Dear Members of the Subcommittee on Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation,

I am writing to inform you about an exciting new community-based climate adaptation initiative exploring how Toronto's diverse faith communities could be better utilized as local service centers during extreme weather emergencies.

Most of you are already familiar with the important role that faith-based organizations can play in helping their local neighborhoods respond to climate disruptions. To name just a few examples of recent extreme weather responses by Toronto-area faith communities:

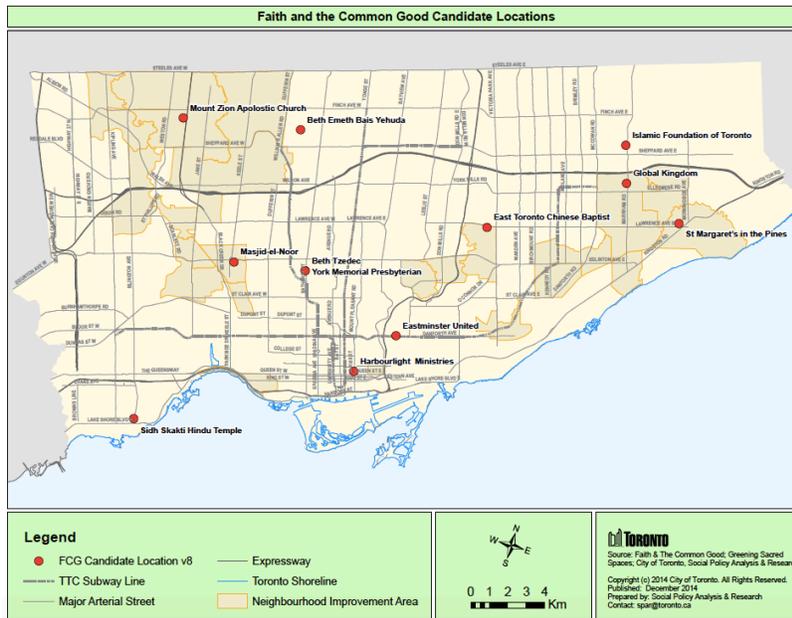
- Ward 26, Don Mills Jamatkhana, Ismaili Muslims opened their doors to the public in the December 2013 ice storms as a warming center.
- Ward 10, Beth Emeth Synagogue, invested in an emergency power generator to act as a community refuge center. They currently have an agreement with Eva' Initiative to provide shelter for their homeless youth program in times of crisis.
- Ward 27, Metropolitan United Church is currently spearheading multi-faith extreme weather refuge project by inviting local faith communities to come together to think about how they can better respond to extreme weather events.
- Ward 34, The East Toronto Chinese Baptist Church is a founding member of the Neighborhood Extreme Weather Team (NEWT), newly formed community based extreme weather response initiative.
- Ward 13, area faith communities are working with Councilor Doucette's office and CREW Toronto to explore neighborhood extreme weather response needs and ways to help
- City-wide, Toronto Area Interfaith Council has been educating its members and exploring extreme weather and climate change adaptation responses for the past year, making a commitment to formulating an interfaith response.

Building upon this momentum (and with support from Live Green Toronto and the Olive Tree Foundation), Faith & the Common Good's extreme weather resilience project will be exploring the extreme weather response potential at 8 diverse faith pilot sites around the city. At each site, we will:

- **Assess community needs** where are greatest extreme weather vulnerabilities?
- **Assess faith facilities & capacity** are faith communities up to the task of responding?
- **Locate partners:** which other municipal and community-based partners want to help?
- **Train congregations:** educate congregations on extreme weather best practices
- **Develop extreme weather response plans:** responsive to congregation capacity and community needs

# Faith & the Common Good

Seeking Common Ground for the Common Good



We will be sharing our learning over the course of the year through educational events, networking meetings and on-line case study reports. We will also eventually spell out the support needed from the city (ex. finance, training, communication, engagement protocols) to effectively leverage these faith-based community adaptation resources. We know, however, that the environmental, social, and economic benefits of community-based climate adaptation projects such as this outweigh the costs in virtually all modeled scenarios around the world.

So far, the enthusiasm for climate adaptation action from faith communities around the city is contagious. I make me proud to live in Toronto!

We would be happy to present our findings to this committee at any time.

Thank you very much.

Lucy Cummings  
Executive Director,  
Faith & the Common Good  
<http://www.greeningsacredspaces.net>  
1-866-231-1877 x104  
[lcummings@faith-commongood.net](mailto:lcummings@faith-commongood.net)