

December 2, 2021

Deputation to the City of Toronto

Dear Chair and Councillors,

We, at Drawdown Toronto, appreciate this opportunity to share our perspective on the strong merits of the vision being put forward in the TransformTO plan.

We agree that having a **Net Zero Strategy at the city level is essential** during this time of climate emergency, one that requires applying a climate action lens to all levels of municipal decision making.

We believe that by focusing on the **benefits** of taking action we can draw together people of differing political orientations, who might otherwise be resistant to scenarios of fear and danger, without diminishing the urgency of the need to act.

Drawdown Toronto, together with other civil-society organizations working in climate action, have the capacity to help mobilize education and projects for citizens within the community, in partnership with the City.

The United Nations estimates suggest that cities are responsible for 75 percent of global CO2 emissions, underscoring that the City of Toronto's planned actions through TransformTO are significant both locally and beyond.

Generally, key benefits at a city level of taking climate action include:

- Improved health through decreased pollution leading to reduced asthma, cancer and disability, and direct costs to the health care system;
- Increased economic productivity;
- Increased energy security from locally produced electricity through photovoltaic installations and wind power generation as well as neighbourhood-level geothermal heating;
- Greater comfort in buildings and reduced energy bills and energy-grid requirements from building retrofits for energy efficiency.

Project Drawdown research has demonstrated ways in which a vigorous, bold investment in cities can improve the lives of their citizens in many ways.

Drawdown Toronto strongly supports the intent and vision of the TransformTO plan to mitigate local GHG emissions and achieve its other goals. In the following sections, we comment more specifically on actions and interventions with low barriers to implementation, or which we believe are key to supporting long-term action by creating momentum and establishing enabling conditions. We would also like to propose some supplementary recommendations (drawn in part by Project Drawdown research) as complements to the TransformTO plan, to further strengthen its implementation.

Reduce Food Waste

- On a global scale, Project Drawdown calculates that food waste is the single greatest contributor to emissions (mostly methane). Reducing food waste would avoid diverted agricultural production and land conversion, as well as provide ecosystem protection.
- Reducing food waste, beyond its GHG reduction benefits, is a course of action accessible to virtually every citizen and business in Toronto, so merits particular attention.

Suggested actions, complementary to the City's proposed courses of action and recommendations from other deputants:

1. We wholeheartedly support Toronto fully implementing its commitments to its *C40 Good Food City* declaration.
2. At this time, organic waste collection from multi-unit buildings is voluntary, as it is for restaurants and supermarkets. The City could achieve significant GHG reductions by systematically supporting the effective collection of food waste at these buildings and creating and enforcing bylaws to make multi-unit and restaurant organics collection mandatory.
3. Engage neighbourhood citizen working groups in education and action programs to promote food waste reduction programs, including composting, food redistribution and savings.
4. Explore opportunities to transform parkland into agroforestry venues, converting large, industrial lawn space and flat roof surfaces to agro-ecological food production and similar actions. This would have the added benefit of more support for community gardens/farms in order to develop increased food self-sufficiency within the city.

Refrigerant management

- To our knowledge, emissions from refrigerant gases are not addressed or modelled by TransformTO. Many refrigeration chemicals in common use (in commercial refrigerators/freezers, ice rinks, heat pumps, air conditioners, fire fighting foam products) have extremely potent global warming potential (GWP), on average about 3000 times more potent than CO₂. Leakage of 25% is common.
- Replacing high-GWP refrigerants and limiting leaks are among the most significant global solutions to climate change. Some jurisdictions, including the EU and Japan, have been highly successful in phasing out high-GWP refrigerants.

Suggested courses of action:

1. Toronto could take effective action in shifting to the use of low GWP chemicals in refrigerants, including a strategy to reduce refrigerant leakage and replace high-GWP refrigerant equipment.
2. This could be achieved through regulation, incentives, partnerships with key actors and citizen mobilization.

Natural gas emissions

Natural gas (NG) is responsible for ~50% of Toronto's total sectoral emissions, and 90% of emissions targets in the building sector have to be met by replacing NG use in space and water heating. Action on this issue is paramount, given the long service-lives of NG appliances and Toronto's 2030 goals relating to building GHG emissions.

TransformTO already includes targets and policy objectives to reduce NG emissions across several sectors. We urge the City to emphasize actions with low barriers to implementation and which will help create enabling conditions for further action with a view to meeting 2030 goals, including action to increase conservation, immediately limit installation of new NG appliances, and enhance creation of local and distributed renewable electricity generation.

The 15 minute city

Transportation is the second largest source of emissions in Toronto, also characterized by long service-lives and capital-intensive investments. Toronto has many opportunities to obviate the need for high-emission transport use altogether through city planning and incentives, without waiting for federal or provincial action.

We like the vision of the “15 minute city”, where infrastructure and key services are accessible through short trips by foot, bike or public transit. Inherent in this vision is the promise of cascading benefits beyond reducing emissions, including increased community cohesion and more social interaction among citizens, reduced car dependency, reduced infrastructure costs, and reduced pollution, with attendant improvements to local air quality and public health.

We find that TransformTO includes many of the right ingredients to realize this vision. Given the scale of the challenge, we urge the City to move whole-heartedly and with all haste to implementation. We also believe, however, that realizing the full potential social, economic and environmental benefits of this vision requires a much wider scope. Creating a 15-minute city would have enormous impact on the character of the city and the daily lives of Torontonians, asking for a much broader engagement by the City with citizens and neighbourhoods to ensure public buy-in, establishing locally contingent parameters, and finding appropriate solutions to specific issues.

Conclusion

We would like to thank City staff and City Council for their courageous willingness to set a clear plan for a Net Zero Strategy for Toronto.

From the wealth of contributions to the TransformTO consultation and deputation process, it is clear that the solutions to the current climate emergency are many and are known. We hope that the thought and passion expressed in this process will help provide the political impetus to take the many necessary actions to implement the Strategy, and in doing so, create a more equitable and sustainable city.

On behalf of Drawdown Toronto,

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