



To: Executive Committee

Oct 21, 2020

Dear Mayor Tory and members of Executive Committee,

In July Climate Fast sent our submission to the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild (TORR) emphasizing the following points:

- 1) Climate action is absolutely crucial and it is extremely urgent. We are literally choosing the quality of life for our children's future with the decisions we make today
- 2) Climate change affects Torontonians right now, and its impacts will continue and worsen as the global temperature rises. As with COVID, the impacts of climate change will also disproportionately affect marginalized and racialized people in our city.
- 3) Globally, the level of CO₂ in the atmosphere is at an estimated 417 ppm, much higher than what is considered a safe level. We are currently on track for at least a 3 degree Celsius temperature rise when **we need to stay at a maximum of 1.5. To stay at 1.5 we need to reduce emissions by at least 7.6% every year from now through 2030.**
- 4) The current target for the TransformTO climate action plan is 100% net zero by 2050. Following on the Climate Emergency Declaration, **staff are reviewing whether we might be able to achieve this goal by 2040.** Emissions by Canadians are among the highest in the world. Cities need to reduce emissions as much as possible as fast as possible

In light of the urgency of climate action we commend city staff on the positive approach to building our future taken in the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild report and offer our support for its extensive recommendations. From the City Manager's report:

“Building back better also means learning from the past and starting sustainable improvements that make a difference for future generations. Our recovery efforts must take a long-term view towards building the city we want for those who will call Toronto home decades from now.”

We support the call for: **an examination of existing intergovernmental requests, tables, relationships and partnerships, roles and responsibilities, Toronto's priorities, relationships with Indigenous communities and methods for regular updates to advance shared priorities with government and regional partners for a strong recovery.**

We also support **the development of an engagement strategy that promotes meaningful engagement with racialized communities and Indigenous peoples, and improved data and research coordination.** This is a positive and welcome approach.

We are concerned the city could cut social programs that are really needed by the vulnerable and we should not be doing so but instead finding new revenue sources. **Recommendation 28 on neighbourhood food hubs responds to this concern and should be implemented.**

We urge the city to move forward on ambitious retrofit programs that will include training and employment for the city's youth and marginalized communities. **Recommendation 64 should therefore receive your support.**

We also support the following recommendations. (*our comments in italics*)

61 Accelerate efforts and implementation on the City's surface transit network

62 Work with the TTC to accelerate its successful bus electrification program

64 As part of the commitment to lead "net-zero retrofits of Toronto-owned buildings", work with the provincial government to identify building retrofit projects

This program of retrofits needs to be accelerated many times over to achieve the reduction targets for buildings, the single biggest source of the city's GHG emissions.

65 Work in collaboration with Toronto Hydro to accelerate efforts toward electrification and other activities required to support improvements in energy efficiency.

66 Look for opportunities to enhance future access for those least able to access greenspace. *Green space is extremely important for both mental and physical health, and as a way to prevent heat islands and provide relief during heat alerts.*

68 Build upon initiatives put in place during COVID-19 to accelerate progress toward a modern, green and less car dependent City, which is a network of connected complete communities, and includes a more extensive, integrated public transit system supporting complete streets – for all uses, all ages, all abilities – and public spaces with quality materials, shade, public art and green space a) and b. Apply the principle of "build back better" to land-use planning and seek to improve the city's overall built form by prioritizing gentle density that places greater emphasis on a mix of building types and uses

The current comprehensive report by TORR could be strengthened in the following ways:

- full recognition of the urgency of climate action
- specific timelines and financial costing for the recommendations

- identifying new revenue sources
- identifying additional innovative ways of achieving climate action

We recommend the city set up a task force to consider new revenue sources for example increased land transfer tax on luxury homes, vacancy tax, stormwater drainage fees, parking levies, vehicle registration tax and expanded use of green bonds. While the city would benefit from assistance from other levels of government we cannot wait to take action– and we should indicate to these other levels of government that we are willing to find funds in innovative ways; this shows our commitment to investing in solutions.

City council could also indicate its priorities through better budget decisions. For example, the huge diversion of transportation budget funds into the pricey Gardiner rebuild cannot be justified. This uses funds needed for transportation initiatives that support walking cycling and transit. The recent Active Streets initiative is an example of the way that we need to go to reduce emissions and build a healthier and more resilient city.

We must be bold on climate targets and climate action. We urge the city not to delay action. **We need measures that can come forward in the 2021 budget** to help move forward deep mass retrofit programs and other climate initiatives. The climate crisis is not standing still while we respond to the COVID crisis. The report notes that we have seen a substantial drop in emissions during COVID due to a massive shift in behaviour. Now we need sustained shifts in human behaviour. During the Second World War we completely remade the economy – retooling factories, transforming the workforce and creating common cause among Canadians.* This is what ambitious effort looks like. We need to replicate this level of urgency and cities are well suited for rallying residents at the local level.

We urge the city to respond by moving these recommendations forward so that we can ensure a livable future for those who are growing up now in our city.

We welcome the opportunity to work with the City to meet the climate crisis and the COVID recovery challenge together.

Sincerely,



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References:

*Seth Klein, Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency

On the urgency:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jun/18/world-has-six-months-to-avert-climate-crisis-says-energy-expert>

*<https://theenergymix.com/2018/10/07/reaction-ipccs-science-combines-urgency-and-hope-but-every-0-1-is-a-choice-between-life-or-death/>

On emissions by Canadians:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-canada-found-to-produce-most-greenhouse-gas-emissions-per-person-among/>

<https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/each-countrys-share-co2-emissions>

Very relevant on the opportunity side:

<https://theenergymix.com/2020/06/14/canadas-green-recovery-could-produce-6-7-million-job-years-cut-237-megatonnes-of-emissions-by-2030>

Comprehensive 26 part climate emergency program developed by Guy Dauncey (this includes a section on what is needed for a mass retrofit program)

<https://guydauncey.files.wordpress.com/2020/01/pdf-climate-emergency-1.pdf>

ClimateFast webcast programs: EarthDay2020 (April 20) Africa Climate Action Initiative launch (May 7) and Environment Day: Time for Nature- Biodiversity in the City (June 5)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIreo1EqWo4r6fcdU7-pUPg/playlists>