



School of Cities
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

December 1, 2021

Councillor Jennifer McKelvie
Chair, Infrastructure and Environment Committee
10th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Re: City of Toronto Infrastructure and Environment Committee Agenda Item IE26.16

Dear Councillor McKelvie and committee members:

On behalf of the University of Toronto's School of Cities, I am writing to express our strong support for your recent report, *TransformTO: Critical Steps for Net Zero by 2040*. The extensive modelling and consultation process has highlighted an excellent set of priorities for the City to implement.

As an organization that strives to support equitable development and inclusive cities, we were delighted to see the mention of equitable engagement. We believe it will be particularly important to work closely with the City's disadvantaged and racialized communities as you move forward. There is no one-size-fits-all climate action, and there may be stark differences in the types of actions that communities desire and support. It is, in fact, unclear which community voices are fully represented in the surveys and other data collection efforts in Transform TO.

Transform TO neglects disadvantaged communities in another way as well, by failing to identify the potential negative consequences of the plan for equity and inclusion. The *Net Zero Strategy* does make mention of equity indicators as a short-term implementation action, but without specifics. We would like to see a rigorous and systematic evaluation of equity impacts put in place well prior to implementation.

Why? The City has ambitious plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions via buildings, transport systems, energy, parks, and more. Each of these climate actions requires significant public and private investment – and each will generate increases in land values that will result in higher housing prices and rents. Moreover, investment has the potential to exacerbate socio-economic disparities across Toronto. We must not work on the climate crisis separately from the housing affordability crisis. Siloing our problems will make them even harder to address.

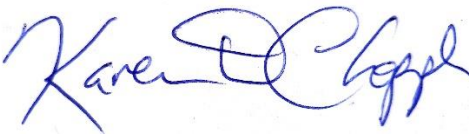
One concrete step would be to build **monitoring and evaluation of equity impacts** into Transform TO via ongoing data collection and analysis -- beyond the periodic collection of equity indicators. How are housing prices and rents impacted? What is the impact on spatial disparities? Who are the winners and losers with specific types of climate actions?

A second step would be to ensure that all Torontonians are **building their own capacity** – not just to understand the impacts of climate change, but to identify where the climate and housing crises are interacting to reinforce disadvantage. This means working in the schools and communities, and producing web-based and other tools that help residents understand how to change their communities for the better.

School of Cities faculty affiliates are already producing climate research and action via our [Urban Challenge Grants](#) on climate and justice. Our [Knowledge Café speaker series](#) highlights some of this important work.

We stand ready to help you in the implementation of Transform TO.

Sincerely,



Karen Chapple
Director, School of Cities and Professor, Geography & Planning