

Attachment 6. Summary of Input from Climate Advisory Group

The Climate Advisory Group (CAG) provided advice and input over 2024-2025 to the City to help shape the development of the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan (2026-2030). The City values and appreciates the perspectives, experiences and expertise that CAG members have shared. This document summarizes CAG input received and outlines how the City followed up on the input during development of the Plan.

The CAG is an external body convened and managed by the Environment, Climate and Forestry Division (ECF) of the City of Toronto. The CAG was established as part of the Accountability and Management Framework for the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy ([2022.IE29.10](#)) to advise the Executive Director, ECF on the policies, programs and initiatives under development for implementing the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. The CAG has 25 members, made up of individuals and representatives from organizations, who were selected for a three-year term to act as advisors, champions and reviewers. A major part of the CAG's role to date was to provide advice and input on the development of the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan (2026-2030).

CAG consultation process

Staff organized three workshops and seven sector-based sessions from spring 2024 to spring 2025 to consult the CAG on the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan. The sessions were as follows:

Workshop #1

On May 3, 2024, the CAG met with City staff to discuss reporting and communications on the Net Zero Strategy. The workshop was designed to allow staff and CAG members to reflect on progress to-date, and to have in-depth discussions on how the City reports on and communicates progress on the actions in TransformTO.

Workshop #2

On May 31, 2024, the CAG met with staff from several City divisions and agencies in a half-day workshop to begin brainstorming on the content and key considerations for the next Net Zero Strategy Action Plan. The session was organized into the key themes of existing buildings, new buildings, renewable and low carbon energy, transportation, waste and circular economy and communications and engagement. Each thematic group discussed key climate actions and considerations to assist staff in the creation of the draft list of actions for consideration in the Action Plan. The discussions were documented for use by staff, and a workshop report is available on the [TransformTO website, Climate Advisory Group tab](#).

Sector-Based Working Sessions

From late February through early March 2025, staff convened seven working sessions with CAG members and division and agency staff to review and refine the first iteration of the actions under consideration for the Action Plan. The working sessions were again organized in key sectors: buildings, energy and electrification, transportation, waste and circular economy, resilience, communications and engagement and intergovernmental. Discussions from each session were documented and used to refine the draft Action Plan for further discussion at the April workshop.

Workshop #3

On April 4, 2025, a workshop was held for the CAG and staff from City divisions, agencies and corporations to share feedback on the draft Action Plan.

The CAG workshop reports are available on the [TransformTO website, Climate Advisory Group tab](#).

CAG input received

Over the course of the workshops and sector-based working sessions, the CAG provided a considerable amount of input to staff, which is summarized below by sector.

CAG Input on Buildings:

- Support Toronto Green Standard (TGS) enforcement and improvements due to its proven high performance and strategic positioning.
- In the TGS, be clear on what the goals of each sub-action are and prioritize the most impactful carbon reducing actions.
- Focus on Buildings Emissions Performance Standards (BEPS) because of the significant amount of emissions associated with existing buildings in the city.
- Prioritize Residential Concierge Services to help homeowners access retrofit solutions.
- City programs should connect with utilities to understand how they interact with existing and planned programs.
- Include all land use opportunities that lead to net zero emissions.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

The City continues to implement TGS Version 4 with high levels of compliance. The City recently completed a year-long study to update the TGS energy and emission targets, costing and energy modelling guidance for future versions of the TGS. The study utilized an expert steering committee and stakeholder engagement to guide and test the study parameters and results. For existing buildings, the City is developing new, and enhancing existing resources and programs to enable voluntary action to reduce GHG

emissions from all types of buildings. This work includes developing and implementing a carbon awareness and engagement tool to support decarbonization in residential buildings. This free home energy tool will model energy consumption and carbon emissions data to generate a personalized retrofit roadmap for each property.

Further, the City continues to work closely with Toronto Hydro to provide additional residential supports through BetterHomesTO, which provides support to homeowners in making their homes more energy-efficient and climate-resilient. Enhancements and additional programs will accelerate adoption of heat pumps, solar photovoltaic and other low-carbon technologies by simplifying the process, providing guidance for homeowners and providing targeted incentives for low-to-moderate income households and access to preferred financing options. On land use, the City continues to identify and assess high potential areas for redevelopment, and technologies that enable large scale energy efficiency and carbon reductions.

CAG Input on Energy:

- Add an action to the Plan on the importance of a modernized and expanded electricity grid.
- Create and implement a Distributed Energy Resources (DER) Strategy.
- Provide residents and businesses with accessible information on where DER projects are most feasible, financing options for solar and electrification, and the role of institutional and business stakeholders in scaling up adoption.
- Target efforts that ensure DER deployment benefits the grid and contributes effectively to emissions reductions. Balance bulk system needs, managed by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), with Toronto Hydro's focus on local grid constraints.
- Shut down the Portlands Energy Centre (members noted that City Council has already supported this on several occasions).

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

Toronto Hydro (TH) is committed to making the necessary investments to enable cost-effective electrification of critical sectors of the economy without compromising reliability or affordability. Over the next five years, TH plans to invest more than \$5 billion in the electricity grid and core operations to ensure continued reliable service for customers, while supporting growth and advancing the City's energy transition objectives.

Toronto Hydro is seeing an increase in requests for new connections and service upgrades from commercial and residential customers driven by city growth and the energy transition. TH is ready to support these requests now, and has a plan to support future growth as more customers want to connect electric heat pumps and EV chargers.

The City, through the Environment, Climate and Forestry Division, is also developing a DER approach for City-owned buildings. As directed by City Council under the Mayor's Economic Action Plan in Response to United States Tariffs, ECF, TH and TAF will report back in early 2026, building on the City's high-level electrification and renewables commitments.

The SolarTO program continues to help homeowners and businesses through a [GIS solar map](#) that assesses solar potential. ECF is also developing a Battery Storage Calculator, an educational tool to assist users in estimating the battery storage needed to back up appliances or other electrical loads during an electrical outage. The tool should be ready by the end of 2025, pending final approvals. The City offers low-interest financing for solar and other home energy projects through the [Home Energy Loan Program](#). The City's [Energy Retrofit Loans](#) provide low-cost financing to large building owners and support to access incentives, including feasibility work and program navigation. ECF continues to tackle DER barriers through a joint working group with Toronto Hydro that has lowered costs and simplified grid interconnection; Toronto Building has reduced permit reviews from two weeks to three days; and City Planning has launched a zoning review for solar and storage installations.

Toronto Hydro is committed to making it faster, easier and cheaper for customers to take meaningful climate action and has added new programs and tools to accelerate customer installation of solar panels and batteries. These efforts include: the Generation and Storage Capacity Lookup Tool; personalized energy coaching for homeowners; help accessing loans and incentives; electricity data analysis and solar incentive selection calculations for businesses; and access to the Cleantech Service Network and Directory to help customers find reliable contractors.

One of Toronto Hydro's signature programs - the first of its kind when the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) approved it in 2015 - is the Local Demand Response program. For areas where the grid is near capacity until expansion work is performed, the OEB allows TH to pay customers to reduce electricity use. To be eligible, the customer must offer a total resource capacity of at least 500 kW. They can do this by shutting down equipment, or by activating their own generators, storage, bi-directional EV chargers, or other equipment. Over the next five years, Toronto Hydro plans to increase the size of this program from 5 MW to 30 MW, which creates more win-win situations for even more customers.

For the Portlands Energy Centre (PEC), the IESO has indicated that the PEC contract expires in 2034, which aligns with the planned in-service timing of the third electricity transmission supply line to the Port Lands proposed by IESO. The third line will add grid capacity and enable more DER connections.

CAG Input on Transportation:

- Reduce car use and support policies/strategies that “get people off gas” (such as electrification of transportation).
- Invest in public transit and active transportation infrastructure.
- Assess and remove barriers to taking e-bikes onto transit.
- Consider how communicating with the public might encourage more public transit ridership and multi-modal transportation choices.
- Reduce the barriers to EV charging; slow charging times, access to charging locations.
- Consider a plan to move towards free transit, first by offering it free to students and removing the barrier of the TTC-specific student card.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

The Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) continues to improve transit service for its customers. As part of the 5-Year Service and Customer Experience Action Plan, the TTC is looking to make improvements to ensure an expansive, fast, frequent and reliable transit network. The TTC also continues to electrify its bus fleet through the Green Bus Program (replacing the diesel bus fleet with electric and hybrid electric buses).

The City's Cycling Network Plan continues to guide the building of new infrastructure to encourage active transportation, expanding and upgrading an all-ages and abilities cycling network across the city to provide safe transportation options. Regulatory changes may result in fewer new facilities (bike lanes, cycle tracks, etc.) being installed than were originally forecast. E-bikes are permitted on transit vehicles at certain times, based on some seasonal safety and space restrictions that are currently in place. Any time of the year, e-bikes and e-scooters can be parked at or near entrances to most subway stations or at City of Toronto bike storage rooms, available at several TTC stations, GO stations and civic centres.

While the TTC does not currently have plans to eliminate fares, transit riders can travel for free or reduced rates under certain circumstances, such as children 12 and under or through the One Fare Program, which eliminates the double fare for customers travelling between the TTC, GO Transit, Brampton Transit, Durham Region Transit, MiWay and York Region Transit. Eligible residents can also apply for the Fair Pass Transit Discount for financial assistance.

On EV charging, the City is developing a three-year public electric vehicle charging implementation and funding plan that will include strategies and actions for publicly available charge points.

CAG Input on Waste and Circular Economy:

- Waste management is a powerful opportunity for engaging people around climate. This is one area through which people make a connection to climate action and it is something that everyone participates in.
- Providing information and educating people is critical for advancing this area of climate action through building trust and motivating action. This includes:
 - More transparency and information about the waste management process after collection;
 - More information about City-led initiatives and leadership;
 - More information about opportunities for action and success stories.
- Organizations represented at the CAG can support awareness-building through their networks.
- Share information about what the City is working on around renewable natural gas and how the strategy around this is evolving.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

Toronto City Council adopted the [Long-term Waste Management Strategy](#) in 2016, which set an aspirational goal to work towards zero waste and a circular economy and to make Toronto the first municipality in the province of Ontario with a circular economy. This goal has been reinforced in key City strategies, including the [Corporate Strategic Plan](#), the [TransformTO Net Zero Strategy](#) and the [Resilience Strategy](#).

Since 2016, the City has pursued a circular economy work plan, initiated by Solid Waste Management Services. Through this work, it became clear that transitioning to a circular economy requires a whole-of-city approach that extends beyond the scope of programs delivered by Solid Waste Management Services. Recognizing that all City Divisions influence waste generation in Toronto, the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy directed the creation of a City-wide governance framework for Toronto's Circular Economy Road Map. Fifteen City Divisions were convened to provide oversight and interdisciplinary perspectives on the recently developed Circular Economy Road Map, which sets out the City's goals, outlines strategic directions, and presents action for the City to support Toronto's circular economy transition.

As a 10-year strategy (2026-2035), the Circular Economy Road Map includes actions to empower City staff to advance circularity and demonstrate leadership through City operations. This includes integrating circularity into purchasing, policies, processes, and services, as well as facilitating circular practices in the design, planning, and construction of the built environment. Given the importance of information sharing and awareness building, the Road Map also includes actions to communicate the benefits of a circular economy to everyone in Toronto, celebrate Toronto's circular business leaders, and establish dedicated industry forums. These actions focus on creating enabling conditions and a supportive environment for all residents, communities, and businesses to participate in Toronto's transition to a circular economy. The City of Toronto has also encouraged the adoption of reuse systems in place of single-use and takeaway items through the pilot Circular Food Innovators Fund (CFIF) program. In addition to supporting the [Single-Use & Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy](#), CFIF has provided support to small businesses to de-risk the transition to reusable foodware. To share their successes and raise awareness of this City-led initiative, [success stories](#) are available on the City of Toronto website. Staff are considering additional opportunities to promote the success of the pilot program.

The City is working to update the Implementation Plan of the 2016 Long-term Waste Management Strategy, which shares several guiding principles with the circular economy portfolio, including waste elimination / avoidance, reuse and resource recovery, community-level activation, and climate action. Staff from both ECF and SWMS have been and will continue to collaborate to identify opportunities for intersection, leverage engagement activities, and ensure key messages for both projects are being clearly and broadly communicated to internal and external stakeholders.

The City provides information about what happens to waste after it is collected, the importance of properly sorting and [reducing waste](#) to mitigate climate impact, and the

City's [renewable natural gas programs](#). Information is provided via public education campaigns, the [Waste Management Guide](#), the [City's website](#) and social media channels and through outreach efforts. The City will continue to provide key information about waste to residents through various channels and continue to explore new avenues for public education and outreach.

CAG Input on Communications and Engagement:

- Communicate the benefits of net zero to the public, with targeted and personalized messaging.
- Use existing engagement infrastructure (such as community hubs) and people on the ground to communicate with communities that may not have trust in the City.
 - In communities where there are existing engaged organizations/grassroots groups, focus on collaborating with them, supporting them (e.g., with space access) and amplifying their work.
 - In communities where there are no such groups, the City can lead the creation of a hub, but it should be broadly focused, not only on climate.
- Promote tangible success stories so people see the impact of their actions.
- Have clarity on the overarching goals and the strategic approach to how these actions are implemented. What are the outcomes we are trying to create and how do these actions work together in a coherent way to create those outcomes?
- Consider how organizations and leaders are moving through the set of programs in a way that support their sustainability instead of one-off grants and initiatives. One-off grants are insufficient to remove barriers.
- To engage equity deserving groups, the opportunities need to include paid roles/honoraria, cost reimbursement.
- Consider other ways to provide reciprocity, e.g., via connections or support with accessing other opportunities and funding.
- Be explicit about the two-way learning, from the City to the participants of these actions and from communities/ participants to the City.
- Connect reporting on mitigation and resilience to highlight multiple benefits of climate action.
- Share success stories on climate change as a way to build climate action momentum, increase public trust and motivate people to engage. Targeted messaging about success stories can show people that “their part” in climate action is helping reduce emissions on a bigger scale.
- Be bold in treating the climate crisis. It would be useful to focus on the local and tangible impacts of the worsening climate, such as impacts on health from heatwaves and poor air quality. Messaging could also explain the personal and financial consequences of inaction with business as usual, such as higher insurance costs or infrastructure damage.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

The City of Toronto continues to evolve its communication and engagement strategies, incorporating new actions in the upcoming Net Zero Strategy Action Plan (2026-2030) that are based on CAG feedback. The actions include a renewed focus on tailored

engagement guided by community priorities and equity considerations. Outreach and engagement efforts will be directed to areas identified for investment. Engagement initiatives will be redesigned to better align with local priorities and be based out of existing community gathering spaces such as libraries, community centres and community hubs.

The City of Toronto has also recognized the need for ongoing post-grant and capacity building program supports. As such, an action has been put forward in the next Action Plan to establish a climate incubator pilot which will provide post-program convening and supports for participants of all ECF's existing capacity building and grant programs to facilitate the co-creation of a self-supporting climate action community. New participants will also be welcomed into the development and implementation of the incubator pilot. The pilot incubator will endeavor to grow and amplify the impact of early-stage climate action projects and business ventures by offering mentorship, strategic guidance, training, skills matching and networking opportunities guided by participant priorities.

ECF is also committed to improving the visibility of climate action work being done across the city, highlighting success stories and tying messaging to local priorities, needs and interests.

CAG Input on Intergovernmental Issues:

- Include focus on public priorities such as housing, affordability, and safety.
- Provide input and engage on:
 - The development of the provincial Integrated Energy Resource Plan, which aims to provide a long-term outlook on energy use across all sources in the province; and
 - Potential federal government changes that may influence critical decarbonization policies.
- Continue participating in regional alignment opportunities, for example, via the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.
- Organize meetings with other levels of government to share Toronto's Net Zero priorities.
- Use the Action Plan release as an opportunity for proactive engagement with other levels of government.
- Develop climate action programs and package them to be ready when the political window opens up.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

The City continues to advance work in each of the suggested areas as part of its ongoing efforts to achieve net zero emissions and strengthen intergovernmental collaboration, recognizing the importance of aligning climate action with broader public priorities, including housing, affordability and community safety. These considerations are being embedded into the City's core messaging to ensure awareness that climate

initiatives deliver co-benefits for residents and support the overall social and economic priorities of City Council.

The City will continue to share its perspectives on the provincial Integrated Energy Resource Plan, ensuring that Toronto's energy needs and net-zero objectives are advanced. The City will also monitor and engage on potential federal and provincial policy changes that may influence critical pathways to net zero, including funding, regulatory and program design developments. The upcoming publication of the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan will provide further opportunities to engage with other levels of government on the City's climate plans and priorities.

The City remains an active participant in regional and municipal forums, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), The Atmospheric Fund (TAF), and the Clean Air Partnership (CAP), to support alignment on climate and energy priorities and to advocate for municipal perspectives. The City will continue to prepare for evolving policy and political contexts and be ready to adapt its programs to meet the needs of all Torontonians.

CAG Input on Equity and Co-Benefits:

- The Net Zero Strategy Action Plan should make it clear why people should care about the climate crisis. Tell people a compelling story as to why they should be acting now. Different ideas on how to do this include:
 - Link the Action Plan to tangible co-benefits. Throughout small group and plenary discussions, there was an overarching theme that co-benefits should be central to both communication and implementation of the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan. Co-benefits, such as improved health, affordability, comfort, safety and community well-being, can be powerful motivators for public support and political momentum. Currently, people don't understand co-benefits, and this is an opportunity to explain to the public how taking climate action can better their life.
 - Co-benefits must be tangible and personal. Move from abstract framing to real-world, visible impacts that people can relate to. The public may resonate more with lower bills, cleaner air, improved health, walkable neighbourhoods, affordable food or more greenery more than with technical descriptions of climate action impacts. Some don't use or don't know this climate language of "GHG, emissions, or TransformTO".
 - Apply an equity lens as an overarching theme throughout the plan. Equity was repeatedly mentioned in both the small group discussions and during the plenary discussion. CAG members said equity should be a key principle in the Action Plan and not just a checkbox. There should be a focus on the vulnerable communities most affected by climate change to ensure they benefit from the proposed actions. Equity also means building on what communities are already doing — not duplicating or imposing new programs from the top down. Additionally, it's important to call attention to who isn't in the room during these planning conversations. Meaningful and equitable engagement is ensuring all communities are represented in the process.

Follow-up from City of Toronto:

The City applied an equity lens as an overarching theme in the Action Plan. Equity considerations associated with each action are identified (where applicable). Each section of the Action Plan (e.g., buildings, transportation) starts with an overview of equity considerations and potential co-benefits that are expected to result from the climate actions in that section. Actions detailed in the Plan give attention to equity-deserving groups, including a focus on low-moderate income households for the Home Energy Loan Program (HELP) and BetterHomesTO, and the implementation of a community-centred approach when expanding engagement initiatives. For the first time, a set of climate equity indicators has been developed to evaluate whether equity priorities are being addressed through climate mitigation action. The indicators are specific and articulated in ways where the City is able to effect change favourable to equity deserving populations. The indicators will be tracked on an annual basis where possible.

General CAG Input on Approach:

- Include Community Engagement, Equity and Waste as critical steps in the Net Zero Strategy Action Plan.
- “Do less, better”. Focus on fewer, more effective policies rather than spreading efforts too thin. Actions in the plan should be prioritized based on their potential to deliver major emission reductions in the most efficient, realistic, and cost-effective way. The plan should narrow down and concentrate on a smaller number of impactful policies rather than trying to do too much at once.
- Actions should be coupled and integrated with economic development and the prosperity agenda – and affordability.

Follow up from City of Toronto:

Waste has been added as a critical step. Community Engagement and Equity are included as crosscutting themes that apply to all critical steps and actions in the plan. City staff have worked to reduce the number of actions in the draft action plan, to increase focus on the most impactful, net-new or enhanced initiatives. As part of the Action Plan, and consistent with the Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy (2025-2035), the City will continue to grow Toronto’s green industries and train the workforce required to develop, deploy, and maintain net-zero technologies critical to meeting Toronto’s climate targets (e.g., heat pumps, high-efficiency windows, solar panels, energy advisors, bicycle repair, EV chargers, and tree planting and maintenance).