

Item IE22.9 - Transform TO Net Zero Strategy - 2024 Annual Report
Recommendations from Matt Noble,
Executive Director, Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank

Esteemed Infrastructure & Environment Committee members,

Hope this finds you all well.

I'm registered to speak tomorrow on [Item IE22.9 - Transform TO Net Zero Strategy - 2024 Annual Report on Implementation Progress](#) - to make a few recommendations - and I'm emailing to give you a heads-up about what I'll be suggesting.

I'll also give you a quick overview tomorrow of the great progress TSSS and SSLTC are making on reducing corporate emission through food so far.

Recommendations for tomorrow:

- 1. Include consumption-based emissions into future TransformTO surveys***
- 2. Incorporate food-related consumption-based emissions information into the Live Green Toronto website and climate action awareness campaigns.***
- 3. Trial a pilot Plantlicious restaurant week in Fall 2026***

Because of the City's Consumption-Based Emission Inventory, we know that ***food is the largest source of Toronto's community-wide emissions.***

And we know that the City's own corporate food procurement (7-million meals) makes up only 2 percent of the 6 per cent (only 0.12 per cent) of the City's total consumption-based emissions.

Meaning that ***community-wide*** food consumption is the largest driver of the City's emissions.

Yet this is not reflected on the Live Green Toronto website, the TransformTO public survey, or in any community-wide TransformTO goals related to food.

And, as per the City's own data, we know that these emissions disproportionately come from the consumption of animal-based products.

I'm not 100 per cent sure if community-wide consumption-based emissions are part of the City's emissions reduction targets but ***we can't ignore the significant risk and opportunities they present.***

Because food is the largest source of emissions there are a few easy things the City could do to align the TransformTO survey and the Live Green Toronto website with what the City knows about our community-wide emissions.

IE22.9 - Attachment 1, says that...

*“While methodologies and practices for tracking consumption-based emissions are nascent, they show potential for supporting local government in developing targets, policies and programs. **The goal is to help shift Toronto residents towards more responsible production and consumption of goods and services in order to reduce Toronto’s global carbon footprint.**”*

TransformTO action item Number 24 (in Attachment 1) says to **“Leverage Live Green Toronto to develop and implement a city-wide climate action awareness campaign,”** yet despite food being the number one emitter of GHGs, no education about the consumption-based emissions of food is mentioned on the Live Green website.

I know the Short-term Implementation Plan 2022-2025 was created before we had the consumption-based inventory, but...

There are a few easy things the City could do now to align the TransformTO survey and the Live Green Toronto website with what the City knows about our community-wide emissions.

1) Update future TransformTO surveys to include Consumption-based emissions information about food.

The last survey stated that *“Over 90 per cent of GHGs in Toronto come from two sources: Burning fossil (natural) gas for space heating and water heating in buildings... [and] burning gasoline/diesel fuel for personal and commercial vehicles.”*

This is misleading to Torontonians (re: where they can make personal changes in their day-to-day lives), skews the survey results, and is a missed opportunity to educate about the importance of our food choices for the planet.

2) Revamp Live Green Toronto website to include everyday actions that Torontonians can take around food (like increasing consumption of plant-based proteins) to reduce their carbon footprint.

The consumption-based emissions inventory is on the City’s TransformTO web page, but is not represented on the Live Green Toronto website.

Live Green Toronto is an ideal place for an educational awareness campaign around Scope 3 emissions related to food, because the website has low overhead (re: cost) and is highly accessible, because it’s online.

The recent [TransformTO Public Consultations](#) have recommended:

Advice on Education: *“There is an opportunity to highlight the impact that consumption has, and what residents should consider every time they buy new products. This is especially important..”*

Advice on TransformTO goals: That the City, *“Consider providing people with simple guidelines or templates to calculate the emissions reduced in a household based on transportation and home energy use so that people could see their emission improvements and be encouraged to act.” This should include information about the impact of our food choices (specifically around proteins).*

At the very least, infographics from the consumption-based inventory reports showing that food is the greatest source of our community-wide emissions, and simple infographics showing how you can reduce emissions by choosing plant-based proteins should be induced on the Live Green Toronto website.

This information can cite the Canada Food Guide’s advice to consume mostly plant-based proteins.

Last week, Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank launched the [Plant Based Toronto TTC Ad Campaign](#) - a public awareness campaign focused on organizations and individuals leading education around food, nutrition, health, and environmental literacy, in Toronto (and internationally).

Veg Food Bank is well connected to a diverse group of plant-based chefs / dietitians / doctors / foodies / influencers (who represent the City’s diversity, and) who could help with educational content for the Live Green Toronto website.

3) Create a *Plantlicious* week in the Fall of 2026 (like Summerlicious and Winterlicious).

A *Plantlicious* week in the Fall (2026) could boost the local restaurant economy (restaurants can see a 50 percent increase in sales) and give restaurants an opportunity to highlight plant-based dishes and proteins in creative ways that inspire Torontonians to try more plant-based foods.

This would help reduce emissions at the plate-level at restaurants for the week, could inspire Torontonians to eat more plant based foods, and inspire restaurants to serve more plant-based foods, which could have a significant impact in terms of long-term community-wide consumption-based emissions reductions.

There are a number benefits to a plant-based restaurant week:

- The City already has the infrastructure it uses for Summerlicious and Winterlicious, which could be leveraged for a Plantlicious week.

- Only 36 out of 230 restaurants had plant-based options for Winterlicious.
- Fall is a good time for local restaurants because business slows down in November.
- Could see a 50 per cent increase in sales for the restaurant economy.
- Fall is also a time when a lot of local food is harvested.
- Opportunity to expose Torontonians to the diversity and possibilities of plant-based cuisine.
- Dining out is one of the consumption-based emissions categories and would be affected by a plant-based food focused restaurant week.
- The more people try plant-based foods the more they are likely to eat plant-based in the future.
- A Plantlicious week could also signal that the City understands the environmental impact of food.
- Other educational campaigns could also be coupled with a *Plantlicious* week by leveraging a revamped Live Green Toronto site that has new food-related information.

Chapter 669 of the Municipal Code (Climate Change Goals and Governance) has general emissions reductions targets, but doesn't mention food at all, despite food being the largest source of the City's Community-wide emissions.

I chose these recommendations because they are impactful, easily actionable, and should be cost-effective and low-barrier for the City to implement, since all the infrastructure is already in place.

Thanks so much for your time!

See you all tomorrow at Committee.

Sincerely,

Matt Noble
Executive Director
[Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank](#)