

**City of Toronto
Climate Advisory Group**

**Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and
Accountability Report Workshop
May 3, 2024, 9am-1pm**

Workshop Summary



Overview

On May 3, 2024, the Climate Advisory Group (CAG) held a special workshop to review the first Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report, to reflect on the status of TransformTO NetZero Strategy and provide advice on how the City of Toronto reports on and communicates about the NetZero Strategy and progress.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- Learn about and reflect on the status of TransformTO NetZero Strategy: GHG inventory (brief overview), actions (% completion), successes, challenge, lessons.
- Learn about and reflect on what the City has authority over: direct control vs. policy level influence vs. advocacy
- Receive CAG response to and feedback on the 2023 Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report.
- Receive CAG advice for future annual reporting and communications on NetZero progress.
- To produce a public report summarizing the CAG perspective on the City's reporting around the NetZero Strategy.

Workshop participants included 20 CAG members and 10 City of Toronto staff from the Environment & Climate Division Policy & Research, and Outreach and Engagement Units. The workshop was facilitated by Groundswell Projects. The workshop agenda included a short context-setting presentation followed by two rounds of facilitated small group and plenary discussions. The first discussion focused on reviewing the current status of TransformTO NetZero Strategy. Participants shared their key takeaways from the Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report of how the City is doing relative to its net zero targets, reflected on the four critical steps presented in the report, and discussed the leverage points the City has access to in order to advance the net zero targets. During the second discussion, the CAG provided feedback on the first Annual TransformTO NetZero Progress and Accountability Report and shared advice for how the City reports and communicates about the NetZero strategy going forward.

This report provides a summary of the Climate Advisory Group's input and recommendations shared at the workshop.

Key messages

At a high level, the Annual TransformTO NetZero Progress and Accountability Report provides comprehensive information about the progress on the NetZero strategy in one place. The CAG appreciates the transparency around the fact that as a city we're off track on our NetZero goals and the need to accelerate action.

As outlined in the report, reaching our NetZero target and 2030 interim targets requires the participation of all stakeholders, residents and communities. Accordingly, the CAG recommends that communication and reporting on NetZero should be strategic and focus on the goal of mobilizing collective action around the NetZero Strategy.

Communication and reporting should be driven by an engagement strategy. This

includes listening to people and learning about their priorities and aspirations and then making communication relevant and connected to what people care about. Communication and reporting on NetZero should help each stakeholder to feel that they're a part of something. It should convey shared accountability and responsibility among all stakeholders for the achievement of Toronto's NetZero targets and help them understand their role as part of this collective goal. Accountability is key for building trust among all stakeholders and with the City of Toronto.

The first Annual TransformTO NetZero Progress and Accountability Report is technical in nature, lengthy and comprehensive. It appears to be most suitable for City staff and academic audiences. The CAG's overall recommendation is to streamline technical reporting for City staff and shift resources and increase attention on more strategic public communication, reporting and engagement that is tailored for diverse stakeholders, residents and communities.

Specifically, the CAG offers eight **key takeaways and recommendations**:

1. Include Community Engagement and Equity as part of the critical steps to achieve net zero targets.
2. Consider adding Waste as part of the critical steps to achieve net zero pathways.
3. Collaborate with other levels of government and private sector actors as partners in climate action.
4. Make connections across priorities in order to make participation in NetZero relevant to diverse stakeholders and to support a holistic approach to climate action.
5. Connect reporting on mitigation and resilience to highlight multiple benefits of climate action and center equity.
6. Identify your stakeholder audiences and tailor reporting and communications to their interests and priorities.
7. Support stakeholders to take action by providing a clear value proposition, transparency, education and guidance.
8. Use different types of communication assets and formats to enable audiences to engage with the content in multiple ways.

Each of these recommendations is explained in more detail below.

Detailed recommendations

1. Include Community Engagement and Equity as part of the critical steps

The Annual TransformTO NetZero Progress and Accountability Report identifies four critical steps, which it states are "the largest opportunities to advance our progress on aligning with our net zero path." The CAG recommends adding Community Engagement and Equity as another key area of opportunity that needs to be highlighted as part of the critical steps. This means including this as an additional step or integrating it as part of all of the existing steps. This is especially important as part of the "Buildings" critical step to address the political and social dimensions of the required changes. Equity means understanding and considering the potential impacts of various actions on diverse groups. A commitment to equity also means ensuring that recommended actions are accessible for all communities and stakeholders. Creating choices is also important for accessibility and equity. To support this, communication and reporting should highlight different types of actions that can be taken, including low cost options and pathways.

The CAG identified a variety of ideas for actions that can be taken to engage individuals and communities in equitable ways. These include the following:

- Outreach and engagement of different constituencies:
 - Community education
 - Creating a curriculum based on the NetZero strategy
 - Integrating a climate lens as part of all public engagement processes. For example the community development plan tool can be used to do that. This would encourage developers to do more to respond to the public feedback.
 - Making connections with consumer advocacy groups.
 - Knowledge co-production projects (eg. Visionary Communities project in the Kingsston-Galloway-Orton Park and Urban Just Transitions project in Scarborough).
 - Partner with different sectors to make information about climate impacts more accessible (eg., partnering with real estate to give homeowners a climate health rating, share energy bill with MLS at time of sale, include information on tax bill about how tax dollars are spent at neighbourhood level to bring light to suburban vs. urban neighbourhoods).
- Community level capacity building:
 - Funding for or collaboration with community organizations to support climate champions in organizations that work with residents (eg. TCH, Housing Now) to help make their programs/activities more climate friendly.
 - Neighbourhood-level initiatives: support community networks such as Facebook groups, climate action coalitions, etc.
- Supporting communities/residents to take action:
 - Providing a list of vetted partners and contractors;
 - Making connection to community organizations that are leading the work on climate action;
 - City Councilors and politicians have a role to play in supporting and enabling climate change in their communities. They can serve as advocates of climate action by convening climate action meetings.
 - Provide ideas and suggestions on climate actions that residents can take.
 - Gamifying taking action (eg., golden recycling bin, climate health rating for homeowners, etc.)
 - Provide incentives, eg:
 - no interest loans/grants/refunds/ cost sharing etc
 - tax incentives with lower energy bills
 - park EV for free
 - Encourage positive behaviour (eg. TTC ridership vs. fare evasion).

2. Consider adding Waste as part of the critical steps

Another area that provides a critical opportunity to advance progress towards net zero is waste. Not including waste as part of the four critical steps is a missed opportunity, as waste represents 7% of the total emissions in the City of Toronto. As a critical step, "Waste" provides an opportunity for low-cost solutions and innovative connections to other critical steps such as energy. It is also an opportunity for engaging communities as it is potentially more tangible for people because it connects to what communities care about such as food security and other co-benefits. [Project Drawdown](#), a global initiative that supports the acceleration of climate solutions in partnership with diverse stakeholders, identifies reducing food waste as one of the top 5 most impactful GHG reduction solutions.

3. Collaborate with other levels of government and private sector actors

In addition to engaging individuals and communities, a key focus should be on building collaboration with other levels of government and public agencies (e.g. Toronto Hydro, IESO, TTC, Metrolinx, etc.) and private sector stakeholders (e.g. development industry, building owners and managers, waste disposal companies, freight companies, etc.) as partners because the achievement of NetZero strategy goals require heavy lifting from them. In particular, Toronto Hydro is an organization that needs to be a bigger partner as part of the NetZero strategy implementation. There is also an opportunity to encourage developers to consider climate action/resilience as part of community benefits plans. Finally, it is important to have an active inter-jurisdictional portfolio within the City of Toronto working to build support for TransformTO at the provincial and federal levels.

4. Make connections across priorities

Something that would help to bring in more partners into the NetZero Strategy implementation is making more connections between GHG reductions and different priorities that people care about like employment opportunities. Connections should also be made across the actions as part of the identified critical steps. It is important to help all actors to see how all of the critical steps are circular and interconnected, not isolated in order to encourage collaboration and reduce silos.

It is crucial to connect employment and jobs; as climate action has the potential to create new employment opportunities in the low carbon and green economy. It is important to communicate this tangible benefit to all Torontonians. Connecting emissions reductions to other individual and community priorities and socio-economic needs such as housing and food security helps to make climate action relevant and meaningful to people in their daily lives. The CAG also recommends focusing on making connections between economic and climate or environmental programs across all four levels of government.

Another important connection that needs to be demonstrated is between land use, zoning and urban design and how the interactions of these areas shape our GHG emissions across the city, for example transportation choices, neighbourhood density and building types. In particular, demonstrating how zoning shapes GHG emissions enables a systemic view of the net zero challenge. As an important leverage point that the City has access to, it may also reveal opportunities for actions that have not yet been considered.

It is also important to make connections explicit between retrofit and EV developments and energy system planning, including electricity capacity expansion. Deep energy retrofits (and EVs acting as mobile storage) may significantly alter electricity load growth, relative to delinking fuel switching and energy efficiency. There is a danger in treating EVs only as electricity consumers. It is important to take a whole system approach to costing these various possibilities.

5. Connect reporting on mitigation and resilience

The CAG recommends that NetZero reporting should address both mitigation (reducing GHG emissions) and resilience or adaptation (addressing the impacts of climate change). Connecting mitigation and resilience helps to create an integrative approach as many climate actions create benefits for both objectives. For example, green infrastructure such as tree planting or green roofs helps to reduce energy consumption on AC and to deal with heat waves by providing shade. The CAG noted that nature based solutions

were notably missing from the current report.

Connecting climate mitigation and resilience helps to make climate action more tangible for people and connect to their priorities, such as health and safety. It also helps to center equity in the discussion by considering how climate change impacts different communities and their access to climate solutions.

The CAG cautioned for a communications approach that integrates mitigation and resilience in a thoughtful way, considering that to date, the NetZero strategy has focused on GHG reduction. Clarity around terminology is also important, for example using resilience or adaptation to describe how the city and communities cope with climate change impacts.

6. Identify your stakeholder audiences and tailor reporting and communications to their interests and priorities

A common question during the CAG discussion of the Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report was “who is this report for?” It is important to identify the primary audiences for the report and communications and understand their interests, issues they care about, what they need in order to take action, and how they consume information. By knowing your audiences it is possible to create effective and impactful communications for each stakeholder group.

The CAG brainstormed a few ideas to identify potential audiences, which include:

- Identifying different types of constituents, for example, single family homeowners, renters, people who live in MURBS, companies, community organizations, etc..
- Creating personas of stakeholders based on their ability to make a difference towards the net zero challenge. However, it is important to use caution when creating personas because there is a risk of losing sight of the people behind the personas.
- Neighbourhood-based constituencies identified geographically.

There is a need for each type of constituent, community or stakeholder to be able to see themselves in the report and to have a clear call to action that they can respond to. For example, this can include filtering information in the report for their interests or to be able identify actions that would be most relevant to them.

7. Support stakeholders to take action by providing a clear value proposition, transparency, education and guidance help stakeholders take action

As noted, all communication and reporting should consistently connect to what people care about, their goals and aspirations. This is important to motivate them to take action.

Transparent information about the cost, budget decisions and financial investments related to the NetZero strategy and how decisions about financial investments are made, supports stakeholders' understanding and consideration of taking action. This is especially important for organizational and industry stakeholders as part of their long-term forecasts and capital planning.

In addition to transparency, education and guidance helps stakeholders assess different actions available to them. Providing examples and case studies of individual and collective actions is valuable to make these actions tangible and help people envision what it would look like in a similar context. Storytelling of successful case studies locally

and globally was highlighted as a simple and impactful approach to help climate action connect to people's lives and priorities.

It is also important to educate stakeholders about the cost of doing nothing and how that would impact different communities. There is a higher cost to doing nothing to address the climate crisis and it would negatively impact vulnerable people and communities the most. Communication can highlight to each audience what the impact would be on them if we do nothing and if we work together.

8. Use different types of communication assets and formats to enable audiences engage with the content in multiple ways

The CAG provided advice on a variety of tactical approaches to make communication and reporting more accessible through the use of different assets and communication formats. These include the following:

- ***Different ways of presenting information:*** diagrams, callouts, textboxes and headings and other visuals are useful to help break down information into more digestible pieces and highlight key points.
- ***Different communication assets:*** match the type of asset to the stakeholder group. Could include assets such as video, subway billboards, and leaflets.
- ***30/3/30 approach:*** Communications should include different commitments from the reader and include a 30 second image, 3 minute short read, and 30 minute more detailed read.
- ***Dynamic approach:*** dashboard or a living document providing up to date information. A newsletter could also be a tool for providing regular updates about City-led actions. An interactive map of actions can help people find and connect to actions that are happening in their community.
- ***Interactive tools:*** ways to elicit people's views and establish two-way communication, for example participatory games.
- ***Using plain language:*** Climate change is often perceived as an opaque issue, one that feels difficult to understand or engage with. Communication about the NetZero strategy in plain language would help to make it more accessible to a broader group of people.
- ***Translating information into multiple languages:*** Many languages make it accessible for diverse cultural communities, especially newcomers to participate.
- ***Non-digital communication:*** Consider how to reach people who face barriers with digital access to information.

Priority recommendations for the upcoming 2024 Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report

For the 2024 Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report, the CAG recommends prioritizing creating a short report to Council and increasing the focus on creating content that helps connect climate to people's lives and priorities. This would make the report (or other asset) relevant for different audiences, which can serve as a catalyst for engagement. This can include the following:

- Sharing stories and case studies (locally and globally) of existing inspiring actions to demonstrate how climate action will make people's lives better; from employment, health, food, transit, housing etc. What are people struggling with? How can climate action make their lives better?
- Creating a map of climate actions happening across the city.
- Dashboard or visuals of where we are now and where we need to go to reach net

zero in order to make information about City actions more accessible.

The CAG recommends prioritizing the following audiences for the communication methods described above:

- **People who are already interested in taking action but are not sure where to start:** reaching this audience provides an immediate opportunity to engage more partners in climate action.
- **Equity deserving groups:** the City should partner with equity deserving community groups and allocate funding to engage these groups as part of content production (i.e. to collect stories and case studies).

Finally, the CAG recommends for the City to focus on building capacity to connect climate to people's lives by developing a knowledge repository about how to make climate relevant to different audiences and by developing partnerships to support engagement and communication.

Appendix

Participants

Climate Advisory Group Members

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Alex Burton
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Guests

Nicole Swerhun, Third Party Public
Stephanie Quesada, Third Party Public

Workshop Agenda

City of Toronto Climate Advisory Group

Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report Workshop

May 3, 2024, 9am-1pm (Breakfast 8:30am | Lunch 1-1:30pm)

Canoe Landing Community Centre | 45 Fort York Blvd | In-Person only

OBJECTIVES:

1. Learn about and reflect on the status of TransformTO NetZero Strategy: GHG inventory (brief overview), actions (% completion), successes, challenge, lessons.
2. Learn about and reflect on what the City has authority over: direct control vs. policy level influence vs. advocacy
3. Receive CAG response to and feedback on the 2023 Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report.
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The Workshop will produce a public report summarizing the CAG perspective on the City's reporting around the NetZero Strategy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS *(please also refer to the worksheet provided):*

Reflection on Progress to Date

This is a high level discussion to help set the stage for the 2026-2030 Short-term Implementation Plan Workshop on May 31, 2024.

1. What are your key takeaways from the report that the City should be aware of specific to your sector/community? After reviewing the report in detail, do you have a clear understanding of how the City is doing relative to its net zero targets? What is clear to you? What is unclear?
2. Please review the four critical steps – do you agree that these are the right four areas to focus on? If not, please explain.
3. What leverage points should the City focus on, given what the City has direct control over or can influence?
4. Given there are lots of areas where the City has limited to no control, how do we support the community/stakeholders in making the shifts necessary to advance the Net Zero Strategy?

Feedback on NetZero Strategy Reporting and Communication

The purpose of this discussion is to reflect on the first Annual TransformTO NetZero Progress and Accountability Report in order to inform how the City reports on the NetZero Strategy going forward. We're interested in feedback on the report content, messaging, storytelling approach, format, etc.

1. What do you like about the Annual TransformTO Net Zero Progress and Accountability Report? What changes would you make for next year's report, and why?
2. How does this report **help the reader understand the progress on the NetZero Strategy and the impact from City-led actions**? How can this be improved in future reporting?
3. How does this report help the reader **understand the steps that need to be taken city-wide to achieve net zero emissions by 2040**? How can this be improved in future reporting?
4. How do you see this report helping **inform actions or supporting the mobilization of your sector/community in climate action**? (i.e. understand what role organizations, businesses, communities and individuals can play or what needs to be done to accelerate action) How can this be improved in future reporting?
5. How does this report **enable / support the city's accountability around the NetZero Strategy implementation**? (specific mechanisms that support accountability) How can this be improved in future reporting?
6. For future Annual Reports, what would the potential benefits and drawbacks be of providing reporting on mitigation and resilience together?

Agenda:

Time	Duration	Activity
8:30-9am	30 mins	Light breakfast
9-9:30am	30 mins	Opening & brief presentation and Q&A for clarification, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how feedback will inform annual reporting - City's influence and control - where we're at and why
9:30-10:45am	75 mins	Part 1: Reflection on progress to date 40 mins - Breakout group discussion: Discuss the questions from the pre-read worksheet on NetZero progress and complete a poster to share your ideas. 35 mins - Share back to the main group & discuss
10:45-11:00am	15 mins	Break

Time	Duration	Activity
11:00-12:40pm	100 mins	<p>Part 2: Feedback on NetZero Strategy Reporting and Communication</p> <p>50 mins - Breakout group discussion: Discuss the questions from the pre-read worksheet on NetZero reporting and complete a poster to share your ideas.</p> <p>50 mins - Share back to the main group and identify shared ideas</p>
12:40-1:00pm	20 mins	Closing and next steps
1-1:30pm	30 mins	Lunch