

City of Toronto
Climate Advisory Group (CAG)
Meeting #9: September 19, 2024
9:30 am - 12:30 pm EST



Agenda Item

1. Introduction of the Public Engagement Strategy for the Net Zero Strategy 2026-2030 Action Plan

Description: Presentation and discussion of the draft Public Engagement Strategy for the 2026-2030 Action Plan.

Discussion/Notes

- The consulting group contracted by the City to lead the public engagement process, Third Party Public, presented a draft Public Engagement Strategy for the 2026-2030 Short Term Action Plan. This included input received at the CAG-Staff Workshops on May 31, 2024, the overall objectives of the engagement strategy, proposed approach, activities and timing.
- The core elements of the proposed approach focused on a discussion of climate change impacts and what actions people can take to contribute to Toronto's goal of reaching Net Zero by 2040.
- Planned engagement activities include a public survey, an information video, two in-person and two virtual events, and community-led conversations.
- The presentation introduced a draft toolkit and resources to support community-led conversations on the 2026-2030 Short Term Action Plan.
- After the presentation, the CAG was invited to provide feedback on what works well as part of the proposed

engagement strategy, suggestions to strengthen it, and if anything was missing.

- The CAG advice included the following.

- **Positive focus on diversity**

CAG members felt that the strengths of the proposed public engagement strategy include: a focus on reaching diverse audiences, a balance of virtual and in-person participation opportunities, and the peer-to-peer approach via community conversations. The CAG recommended that: engagement materials use diverse imagery, be translated into different languages, and shared widely to encourage diverse participation. The CAG also noted that equity as an overarching theme can be more prominent in the engagement strategy and materials.

- **Balancing messaging around climate impacts and opportunities**

Many CAG members responded positively to the proposed approach of highlighting the impacts of climate change as part of the engagement. They felt this would help make climate discussions relevant and accessible to people. There was a suggestion to quantify the impacts by socio-economic level or connect to specific impacts in individual communities to provide a stronger incentive to get involved. Another suggestion was to highlight the cost of doing nothing not only for individuals but collectively through infrastructure repair costs and to demonstrate how paying for infrastructure maintenance now helps support resilience and lower costs down the road. It was also noted that while climate impacts were a major focus of the engagement strategy, the theme of resilience and adaptation to those impacts was missing.

On the other hand, several CAG members recommended staying mindful that focusing on impacts has the potential to cause fear. They suggested using data to also highlight the opportunities that come with addressing climate change, such as job creation and economic opportunities, as well as demonstrating the positive impacts of existing actions. Emphasizing opportunities for action and showing how they can create a difference is important because it supports feelings of hope.

- **Connect messaging and conversations to what people care about**

The discussion highlighted the importance of connecting climate change engagement to what people care about. For example, this may include starting the conversation by asking people what they want to see come to life in 10 years or, to name their top priorities; then use priorities shared by participants to connect with them about climate change. This would make climate change discussions more relevant to individuals and create opportunities for discussion of interconnected issues and co-benefits, including food access, equity, community, jobs, etc.

- **Engaging everyone in action at different levels**

The CAG recognized that advancing climate action would require everyone to get engaged. There is a need to encourage action at multiple levels at the same time in order to reach TransformTO goals. Different types of action can be taken at different levels, but there's a need to mobilize everyone: households, condominium corporations, workplaces, industries and communities, and others.

It was also noted that some groups are higher emitters, while others, such as the equity-deserving groups, are most affected by the impacts of climate change. Action could also look like organizing and advocating to compel bigger players, politicians and higher emitters to take action and make changes. For example, the toolkit could include recommendations for renters on how to work with a landlord to encourage environmental performance improvements in their rental building.

- **Encouraging collective action**

The CAG discussed another related idea about the need to encourage collective action in addition to individual action. This may include collaboration at a neighbourhood level, joining groups, or participating in organizing to promote policy changes. These types of actions can feel empowering to individuals and help to increase civic action and engagement in general.

The CAG highlighted the need to share stories about opportunities for people to take action together. The toolkit can also provide recommendations for how people can leverage conversations convened as part of this engagement process to continue staying involved, for example how to reconnect with

people after the first meeting.

- **Creating a relevant toolkit for community-led discussions**

When it comes to the toolkit development, some CAG members recommended it should be co-created with the future users and communities the City hopes to engage with. Ideally, the toolkit could be adapted to different audiences because it would be difficult for one resource to speak to everyone. In particular, some members recommended potentially creating a separate toolkit version for youth because youth would have different concerns and interests than adults, and may need different language and messaging to engage them. Creating a toolkit dedicated to youth would help call them in or make them feel invited to participate in the public engagement process.

- **Toolkit offerings to support engagement**

The CAG made several recommendations on what could be included in the toolkit to help strengthen the engagement and help organizers succeed. These recommendations include the following:

- Providing advice on how to organize and convene a conversation, including how participants of a conversation could then lead a conversation themselves;
- Advice on the different activities that could help to bring people together, such as crafting;
- Suggestions on how to address opposition or answer common opposition questions;
- Give back to the participants to create a reciprocal engagement, not just a one-way information gathering. This could look like sharing information or making connections to apprenticeship opportunities related to climate action, relevant grants and funding opportunities, highlighting the benefits of hosting a session, and providing recognition for the hosts and participants, eg., a letter of recognition;
- Sharing how the actions that individuals take could be supported through the plan and by the City through its own actions; and
- Demonstrating how people's input from past engagements has been incorporated into the plan in order to help participants feel like their input is valued and that their voices matter.

- **Consider the capacity of organizers and community groups**

CAG members involved in community groups and organizations highlighted that toolkits can be challenging to work with because the onus is placed on the community members to interpret the instructions and plan the activities. Many organizations and groups who may host these conversations are already very busy and this would create another demand on their limited resources and capacity. Considering that this engagement is planned at the same time as the budget consultation, some groups may need to choose between this engagement or participating in the budget consultation. CAG members recommended considering providing financial or in-kind support to conversation organizers, and finding ways to connect with different consultations that are happening. Support could include honoraria, access to free space, and support with providing refreshments. In terms of connecting with other consultations, CAG members highlighted an opportunity to potentially connect budget consultation with this engagement to discuss both upcoming opportunities via the five-year short term action plan and the related immediate priorities via the 2025 budget.

Outcomes/Next Steps

- CAG feedback was provided to Third Party Public.
 - The CAG Communication and Engagement Working Group will provide further input for the Public Engagement Strategy for the 2026-2030 Short Term Action Plan.
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Agenda Item

2. 2025 City Budget: Mayor's Pre-Budget Public Consultations and Carbon Budget Process

Description: Presentation from City of Toronto staff on the 2025 budget and carbon budget process.

Discussion/Notes

- City of Toronto staff presented information about the pre-budget consultation that will take place in person and online in the fall of 2024, an update on the key dates as part of the 2025 budget process, and an update and key dates on the 2025 carbon budget process.
 - The budget key dates include fall engagement sessions (schedule pending), budget launch on January 13, 2025, budget committee meeting January 15-17, 2025, opportunities for deputation on January 31, 2025, and a special council meeting on February 11, 2025, where the budget will be approved.
 - City staff will come back to meet with the CAG to provide an update when the budget has launched. In 2025, the CAG will be offered another special session focused on the 2025 budget and carbon budget.
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Agenda Item

3. Existing Buildings Team: Introductory Presentation on Toronto Hydro/City of Toronto digital tool to support carbon awareness, education and engagement with Toronto residents

Description: Initial presentation from the City of Toronto Existing Buildings Team on a digital tool to support carbon awareness, education and engagement with Toronto residents.

Discussion/Notes

- The City of Toronto has been working closely with Toronto Hydro to develop a digital tool to support carbon awareness education. This tool intends to help property owners learn about the carbon emissions of their homes and use this information to develop personalized carbon plans for their homes.
- The project timeline includes public consultation in the fall of 2024, procurement and customizing of a digital tool in winter 2024/2025, development and testing in early 2025 and launch later that year.
- City staff provided a demo of a similar tool being used in Saskatoon.
- The CAG asked questions about the sources of data for the tool, what will be included as part of the consultation, strategies for engaging property owners to use the tool, what the procurement process will look like, how the City will be leveraging the relationship with Toronto Hydro, opportunities to engage installers, and opportunities to connect to existing City programs and incentives.

Outcomes/ Next steps

- The Buildings and Energy Working group will provide further review and input on the development of the proposed digital tool.
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Agenda Item

4. Working Group Updates

Description: CAG members heard updates on the ongoing work of CAG working groups and discussed the establishment of new working groups.

Discussion/Notes

- **Communication and Engagement Working Group:** This group worked with a summer student to conduct a scan of community-based climate engagement across the city. At the next meeting, this working group will provide further input on the Public Engagement Strategy for the 2026-2030 Short Term Action Plan.
 - **Buildings and Energy Working Group:** this group has three meetings scheduled that will focus on providing further input on the digital tool that was introduced earlier, the Toronto Green Standard and the Emissions Performance Standards.
 - The CAG discussed a proposal from members for establishing a separate working group focused on energy transition and the decarbonization of the electricity supply. The working group proposal will be circulated by the CAG Secretariat.
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Agenda Item

5. Upcoming CAG meeting agendas

Description: The CAG Secretariat shared proposed discussion topics for the upcoming three CAG meetings based on upcoming decisions coming up at the City and the topics suggested by the CAG in the past. The topics will be shared with the CAG via email for further feedback.

Present:

Andria Babbington
Chris Ballard
Colin Guldimann
David Campbell
John Robinson
Joseph Ogilvie
Julius Lindsay
Kristen Evers
Lanrick Bennett Jr.
Lidia Ferreira
Lindsay Walker
Maria Constantinou
Marine Sanchez
Maggie Chang
Richard Carlson
Rosemarie Powell
Sarah Buchanan
Shivani Chotalia
Zamani Ra

Regrets:

Jeff Ranson
Joyce McLean
Tinashe Kanengoni

Delegates:

Anne Keary for Lyn Adamson
Jennifer Murphy for Cara-Lynne Wade
Jerry Li for Jack Zhou

City of Toronto Staff:

Adrian Lue
Andrew Plunkett
Charlie Hatt
Farrell Tunney
Lindsay McCallum

Guests:

Nicole Swerhun, Third Party Public
Steffanie Quezada, Third Party Public

Facilitators (Groundswell Projects):

Destiny Laldeo
Olga Semenovych
Ruth Silver