

# Final Report of the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action

**December 2025**









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# Note from the Moderator

**Jasmin Kay**

*Moderator, Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action*



The Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRRPICA) brought together a thoughtful group of volunteers who were excited to be asked to contribute their experiences and expertise as residents of this city to a policymaking conversation about one of the most significant challenges of our time, climate change.

The panel was convened to give advice to the City of Toronto as it prepares to update the implementation plan that guides its TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, and to give advice on how the City can become more resilient to climate stressors and shocks. Preparing for climate change and reducing our carbon emissions will require a whole-of-society effort, and we are often told that we all have a part to play. The 35 members of TRRPICA broadly represented the population of Toronto, and they were asked to consider how the City and those it works with might make climate action more inclusive, accessible, and affordable so that every resident of Toronto could play their part and reap the benefits.

Deliberative processes like this reference panel bring together people with diverse experiences and perspectives to find common ground, and a shared sense of purpose and responsibility. The panel met over three weekend days in November and December 2024, where they learned from more than a dozen guest speakers and engaged with City staff from multiple Divisions about their work. This report is a product of their collective learning and thoughtful dialogue; it names six barriers to inclusive climate action, six principles and 29 recommendations that members felt would help more people take action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or to prepare for a new normal of living with extreme weather events.

On behalf of TRRPICA, I offer sincere thanks to the guest speakers and City staff who shared their perspectives and expertise with us.

On behalf of the City of Toronto team that commissioned this panel and their colleagues, I congratulate the members of TRRPICA for demonstrating that everyday people care about big issues, can find common ground on divisive topics, and want to share their time and expertise in service of the broader public good.

On behalf of the panel team, I thank the members of TRRPICA for bringing their energy, collaborative mindset, and conviction into their work with us. This report has much to consider, and I am confident that the advice of the panel members will be received with the openness and good will in which it was developed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jasmin Kay'.

Jasmin Kay  
Director, MASS LBP



# What Policy-Makers Should Know

The Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRRPICA) brought together 35 diverse Toronto residents through a civic lottery process, ensuring broad demographic representation. Over 22 hours of in-person sessions, the panel engaged with subject matter experts, City staff, and each other to understand the barriers to inclusive climate action and to develop recommendations for making Toronto's climate strategies more accessible, equitable, and effective.

Together, they identified six barriers to inclusive climate action and then developed 29 recommendations to address these barriers. A short, thematic summary of the recommendations to address each barrier follows.

## **Barrier 1: Lack of Information and Awareness**

Residents often lack accessible, accurate, and culturally relevant information about climate change and existing solutions. Communication and outreach efforts need to address misinformation, overcome language barriers, and connect with diverse communities across the city. Equity in communication can be achieved by meeting residents where they are, whether through community hubs, multilingual resources, or targeted outreach to underrepresented groups.

## **Barrier 2: Affordability and Financial Constraints**

Financial barriers to climate action were a recurring concern. The panel emphasized the need for grants, subsidies, and streamlined access to financial aid so that low- and middle-income households can benefit from initiatives like home retrofits. The City of Toronto is urged to prioritize equity, ensuring that low- and middle-income households can benefit from climate action programs.

## **Barrier 3: Time and Convenience**

Residents are often juggling multiple priorities in their busy lives and this limits their ability to adopt climate-friendly practices especially when they don't feel practical or easy to access. Expanding green spaces, improving access to compost and recycling, and expanding cycling routes are essential to making climate action more convenient and the benefits shared equitably among residents.

## **Barrier 4: Individualism and Community Connection**

Individual climate actions are important, but the panel stressed the power of collective efforts. Recommendations encouraged fostering community connections through neighbourhood programs, partnerships with local organizations, and community-led initiatives. Supporting volunteer networks and grassroots action can enhance resilience and inspire broader



participation in climate solutions.

### **Barrier 5: Distrust in Corporations and Institutions**

Greenwashing by corporations and a lack of unified government action erode public trust. The panel recommended transparency measures, proposing solutions like a new “Environmental Impact Score” for businesses and public accountability for City programs to ensure progress is shared across the city. Bold leadership at all levels of government is key to restoring confidence and driving meaningful change.

### **Barrier 6: Structural and Policy Barriers**

Many buildings, neighbourhoods, and transportation systems are not designed with resilience and sustainability in mind. The City should support residents to prepare for emergencies, enable building energy retrofits, and help advocate for the expansion of waste management to all types of buildings, particularly for renters.

*The panel’s recommendations reflect the lived experiences and diverse perspectives of Toronto residents, offering ideas for how to make climate action in Toronto inclusive, practical, and equitable.*







# Understanding a Panel Process

A Reference Panel is a long-form deliberative process that typically involves 30 to 48 randomly selected residents. These residents are chosen using a process called a civic lottery, a random selection method that prioritizes fairness and wide representation. The individuals selected for a reference panel come together to learn about, and then advise public authorities on divisive and complex issues that typically involve trade-offs or compromises. The panel members' objective is to reach a consensus on a series of recommendations that can be directed to government, professional associations, and society at large.

## What is a Civic Lottery?

A civic lottery is a balanced way of selecting the members of a reference panel. It is based on a form of sortition that uses a randomized selection process to recruit panelists from a pool of volunteers that have indicated their interest in serving on the panel. The result is a group of volunteers that broadly matches the demographics of the jurisdiction it represents.

# About the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action

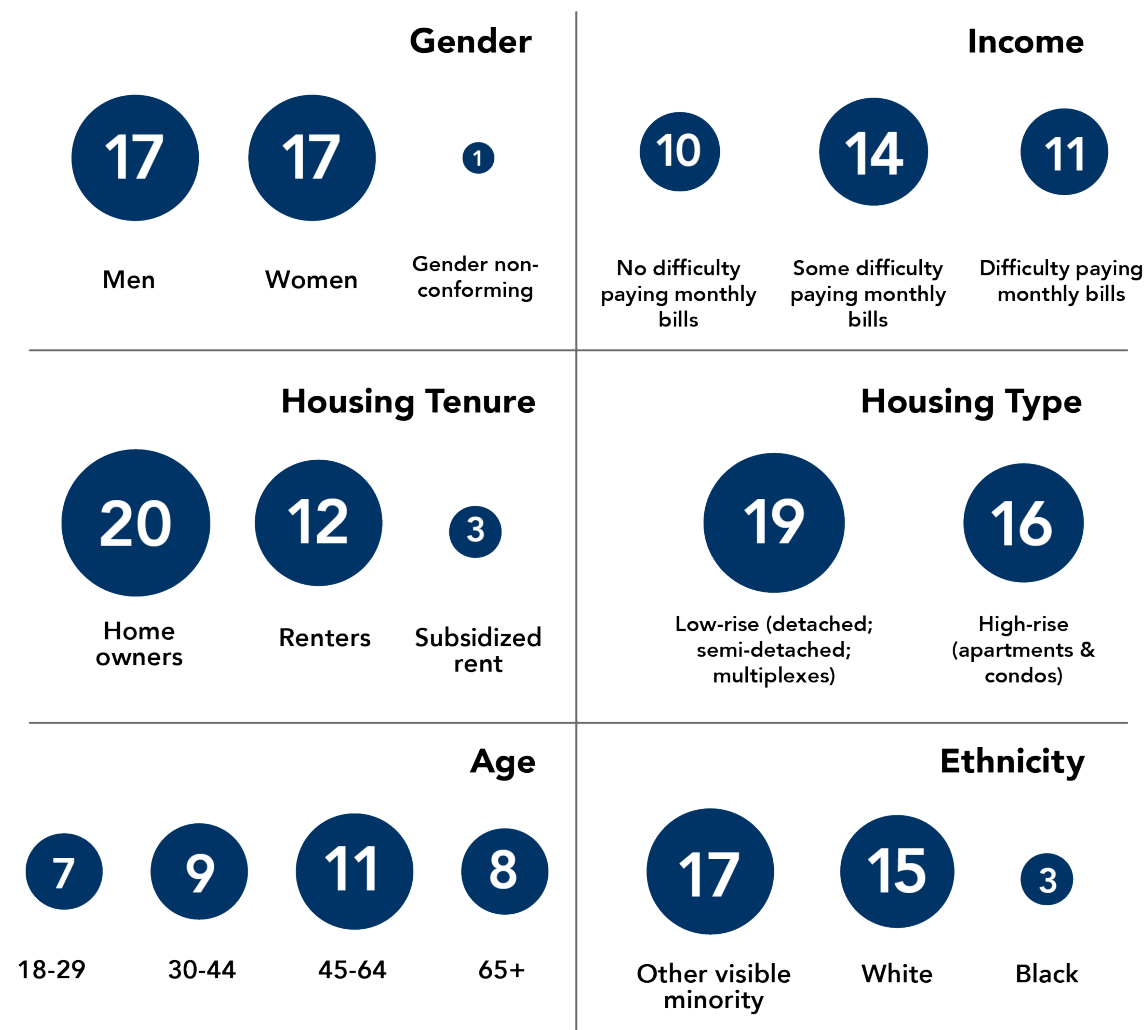
More than 300 people volunteered for the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRRPICA). Many of these volunteers had received a letter in the mail telling them about the panel and inviting them to volunteer. Some learned about the panel directly on the City of Toronto's website. Each volunteer indicated their interest in the panel by answering a few demographic questions in a questionnaire. The stratified civic lottery process ensured that members of the panel were fairly selected and broadly representative of Toronto's demographics. None of the volunteers in the pool self-identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, however. According to the 2021 Census, Indigenous people comprise 0.8% of Toronto's total population (22,925 persons of 2,794,356 persons) though independent research suggests that the number of Indigenous people living in the city is higher than enumerated by Statistics Canada.

The 35 members of the TRRPICA met in-person three times, in November and December 2024. Over 22 hours, panel members learned about the science behind climate change and what the City of Toronto is doing to reduce community-wide greenhouse gases and to adapt to climate change so that the city and its residents are resilient against extreme weather and its impacts. The panel members heard from and engaged with 13 subject matter expert presentations or moderated discussions. They spent time in small group discussion with eight City of Toronto staff members who work on the projects and programs the panel was considering. The members also spent a significant amount of time in conversation with each other as they participated in a series of facilitated discussions and deliberations that culminated in the Members' Report.



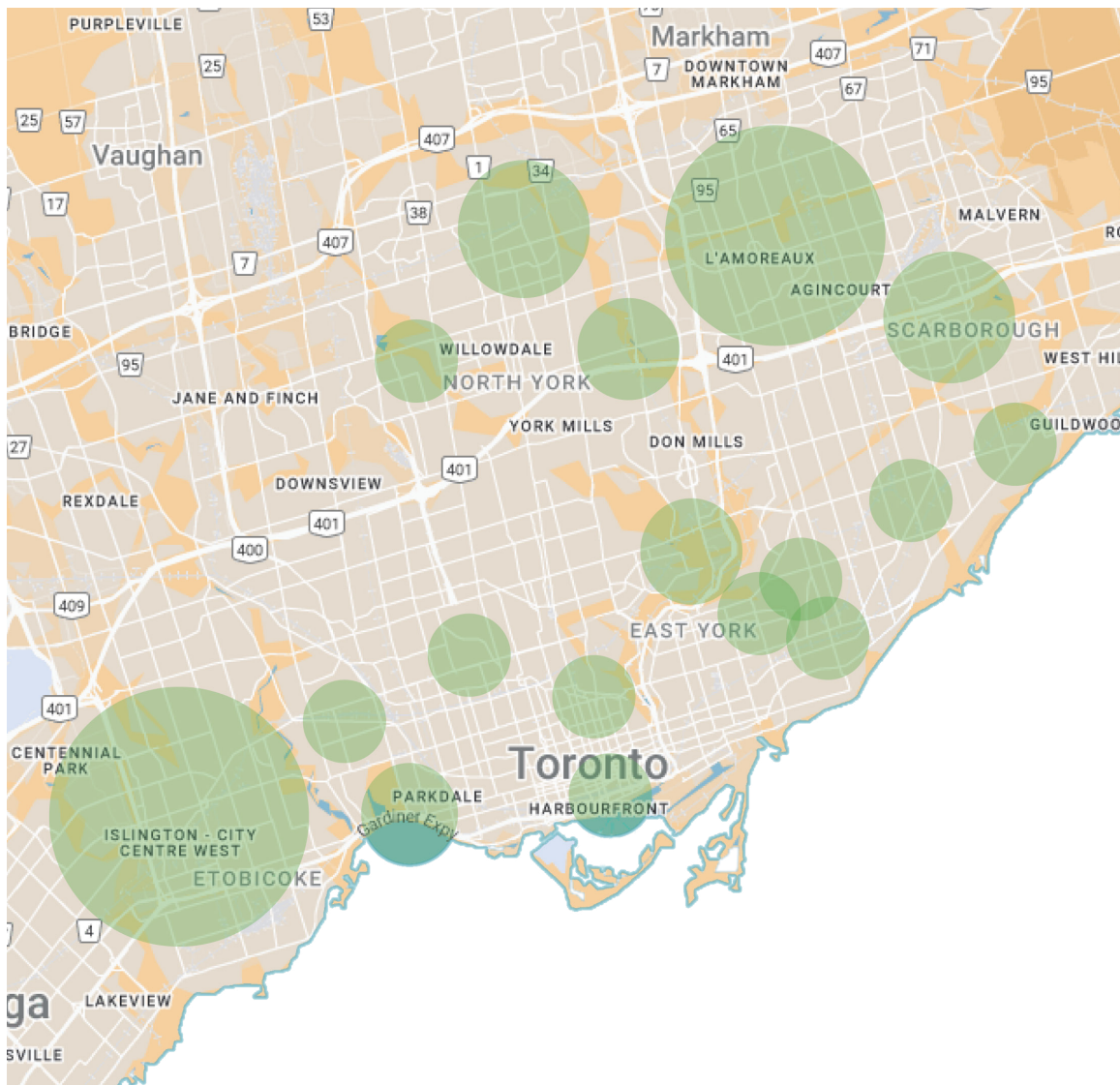
# Panel Members

The 35 residents of Toronto who volunteered to serve on the reference panel were randomly selected from a pool of more than 300 volunteers. The panel members roughly matched the socio-demographics of the city, residing in and representing downtown urban experiences as well as inner suburban experiences. They were also diverse in their housing tenure and type. Short profiles of each panel member are included in the Meet the Members section of this report. The 35 members of TRRPICA at-a-glance are:



# Map of Geographic Distribution of the Panel

In order to protect the privacy of panel members we have clustered residences together.









# Panel Program

The Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action met three times, in-person, in November and December 2024. The gathering was hosted by MASS LBP who also co-designed the program with the City of Toronto. During their 22 hours together the members heard from 13 subject matter experts. On their last morning, they were joined by eight City of Toronto staff members during their small-group discussions. The panel also spent time in conversation with each other as they engaged in a series of facilitated discussions that culminated in the Members' Report.

## **Session 1:**

**Saturday, November 16, 2024**

**Metro Hall, Toronto**

The opening session of the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRPPICA) began with a formal welcome and introduction from Jasmin Kay, a director of MASS LBP and the panel's moderator. Kay presented an orientation to the reference panel process, its mandate, tasks, and how they were going to go about their work drafting the Members' Report.

Following this introduction, each panel member introduced themselves to the room. Kay then welcomed the first guest speaker, Dr. Anabela Bonada, Managing Director, Climate Science, from the Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation at the University of Waterloo. Dr. Bonada provided an overview of the causes of climate change, and focused on the impacts residents of Toronto can expect, including more extreme heat, flooding, poor air quality, and extreme storms. Dr. Bonada then presented actions that can be taken at the individual and at the municipal level to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Panel members participated in a question and answer session after Dr. Bonada's presentation.

After the morning break, the panel heard from James Nowlan, Executive Director of Environment, Climate & Forestry (ECF) at the City of Toronto, who spoke about the role of ECF in coordinating the City of Toronto's sustainability goals across all Divisions. He spoke about the need to take action to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and of the broader benefits for the health and well-being of residents that accrue as a result of these actions. He also spoke about the steps that City staff take to move plans and policies forward to City Council, and he indicated that the work of the panel would help shape the reports the division takes to Council in 2025. Members had time to ask Nowlan questions before turning their attention to the next guest speaker.

Andrew Plunkett, Project Lead, Policy and Research at ECF, presented the City's Transform TO Net Zero strategy. His presentation traced the history of the City of Toronto's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2040. Plunkett's presentation also highlighted the top sources of GHG emissions in Toronto: buildings, transportation, and waste, and the interim targets for reducing emissions from each of those sectors by 2030, along with how the targets reflect the City's direct versus indirect influence over each sector. Finally, he presented guiding principles underlying the City's path to net zero, including to advance social equity, protect low-income residents, improve affordability particularly for vulnerable populations, enhance and strengthen the local economy, maintain and create good quality local



jobs, improve public health and create resilient communities and infrastructure. Panel members had a lively Q&A with Plunkett and Nowlan about the work of the Division.

Panel members then broke into small, facilitated discussion groups to address two questions: how climate change is affecting Toronto residents, and what barriers need to be addressed to ensure that all residents can participate and benefit from climate action. A plenary report-back from each group followed.

The final presentation of the day was a multi-member panel discussing how the City of Toronto is trying to prepare the city to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Stephanie Gower, Program Manager at ECF, provided an overview of the different partners and systems involved in effective climate resilience action, including communities, natural systems, infrastructure, the economy, and people.

Kristina Hausmanis, Green Streets Senior Project Manager for Transportation Services, focused on the challenges a built-up urban infrastructure presents for water quality, food insecurity, heat islands, and natural systems. She went on to highlight the opportunities Toronto's street system offers to address those challenges by implementing permeable surfaces, street trees, bioretention, and other elements that make up green infrastructure. She shared examples of green street infrastructure already in place across the city.

Rebecca Wallace, Project Manager for the Community Development Unit from the Social Development, Finance and Administration Division of the City, spoke about the support the unit provides to community groups and not-for-profits through partnerships and engagement with Indigenous, Black, and equity-deserving groups. She outlined some of the unit's key initiatives: the Community Coordination Plan, Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, the Keele Community Hub, Social Development Plans, Community Development Plans, and sectoral partnerships.

Megan Yeandle, Manager, Community Resiliency and Engagement with Toronto Emergency Management (TEM), shared TEM's role in helping communities plan for, mitigate, respond to, and recover from natural and human-made disasters. She highlighted the key role of public education in understanding and preparing for emergencies, and TEM's focus on enhancing neighbourhood capacity through grassroots action and network building.

An extensive question and answer period wrapped up this panel discussion. Following this, Kay shared next steps and asked the panel members to take the time prior to the next session to reflect on the climate impacts of some of their everyday actions. Kay adjourned the session at 4:00 p.m.

## **Session 2:**

### **Saturday, December 7, 2024**

#### **Metro Hall, Toronto**

After a three week break, the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRPPICA) returned to Metro Hall for its second and third sessions. The day started with a welcome and recap, and panel moderator Jasmin Kay thanked the members for all agreeing to extend the day's proceedings by an hour to accommodate a packed agenda. Members reported back on their homework, sharing observations of their own homes and reflecting

on their own living situations as well as conversations they had with friends and family about taking climate action.

Next, Kay welcomed four guest speakers into a conversation about equity and climate action. The moderated discussion explored the intersection of climate action, equity, and community engagement, honing in on the barriers and challenges to climate action that equity-deserving communities face and some methods to address them.

Muzamil Gadain, Project Lead at the Black Environmental Initiative, spoke about the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized communities and the importance of encouraging youth to pursue green careers through accessible programs like urban agriculture.

Aliénor Rougeot, Senior Program Manager at Environmental Defence Canada, discussed the role of youth in driving climate action and highlighted the value of hands-on activities, such as tree planting or building solar panels, in fostering trust and empowerment.

Emmay Mah, Executive Director of the Toronto Environmental Alliance, focused on the need for collective climate solutions and systemic change, as well as the role of community-led initiatives like emergency response protocols in building resilient neighbourhoods.

Andrea Bastien, Project Lead (Indigenous) for Environment, Climate & Forestry with the City of Toronto, provided insights on Indigenous climate leadership, including the importance of relational connections to the land and the resurgence of land-based practices like prescribed burns and stewardship.

This discussion was followed by a Q&A period and a morning break.

Following the break, members reviewed the Guiding Principles developed by the 2019 TransformTO Residents' Reference Panel. They provided feedback in plenary on their continued relevance, they suggested edits or proposed new principles to fill gaps. Each member then had the opportunity to vote on each of the 2019 Principles and two proposed additions. The results of this activity—Love it, Like it, Leave it—are included in this report.

After lunch, the panel members learned about many of the programs, policies, and supports the City of Toronto has developed and is developing to tackle climate change. Members heard from Rae-Anne Miller, Project Director of Building Emissions Performance Standards and Existing Buildings Unit in the Environment, Climate & Forestry Division, and Lindsay McCallum, Program Manager in the Policy and Research Unit in the Environment, Climate & Forestry Division. Members had time for Q&A with the speakers after each presentation.

Miller presented on City of Toronto programs and initiatives focused on reducing emissions from Toronto's existing building stock, the largest source of Toronto's emissions, stemming mainly from carbon-intensive energy (i.e. burning of fossil fuels such as 'natural' gas) used for space or water heating. She discussed the Net Zero Existing Buildings Strategy and the need to retrofit existing buildings to reduce GHG emissions, as well as supports and initiatives, planned and existing, aimed at helping building owners retrofit. Miller also introduced building emissions performance standards, a by-law in consideration that would reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from existing buildings in Toronto. Miller highlighted the co-benefits of these actions, such as energy savings, green jobs, increased resilience to extreme weather and improved air quality.



Next, McCallum shifted the focus to transportation, waste, and resilience. She highlighted efforts to reduce emissions from transportation, such as transitioning to electric vehicles, and waste diversion goals, including reducing single-use items. McCallum also outlined strategies to manage extreme heat and flooding, focusing on green infrastructure, emergency response, and long-term city planning.

Upon returning from the afternoon break, panel members broke out into small-group discussions where they brainstormed both general and specific ideas to address barriers to climate action. These barriers had been identified by the panel members in Session 1 during one of their small-group discussions. Following a plenary report-back of the members' ideas, Kay adjourned the day with a preview of the next day's agenda.

**Session 3:**  
**Sunday, December 8, 2024**  
**Metro Hall, Toronto**

Panel moderator Jasmin Kay welcomed members back on their final day together, and they began in small-group discussions, revisiting the ideas they had generated the day before. Kay asked the members to refine their long list of ideas to those that a) make climate action more inclusive, and b) contribute to mitigating climate change or to adapting to its negative effects. Kay then asked members to develop the remaining ideas into recommendations, prioritizing those that could be applied to the eight programs/services/policies that had been identified by City staff.

Staff from different City Divisions joined the small-group discussions. They included:

- Transportation Services
  - ◊ Mateen Mahboubi, Manager, Capital Projects and Programs
- Solid Waste Management Services
  - ◊ Alexander Christison, Project Lead
- Environment, Climate & Forestry
  - ◊ Lindsay McCallum, Program Manager, Policy & Research
  - ◊ Andrew Plunkett, Project Lead, Policy & Research
  - ◊ Kim Stemshorn, Senior Environmental Planner, Policy & Research
  - ◊ Stewart Dutfeld, Senior Project Manager, Existing Buildings
  - ◊ Sarah Rodrigues, Senior Project Manager, Building Emissions Performance Standards
  - ◊ Nav Noack, Project Lead, Building Emissions Performance Standards

Staff were on hand to answer questions from members about the different City initiatives and to help members understand the scope of the City's influence and levers relative to the recommendations they were developing. The members worked in their small groups until lunch.

After lunch, members continued to refine their recommendations and drafted the remaining sections of their report. Following the afternoon break, members read out a sampling of the recommendations and sections of the report they had drafted.

Following the read-out of the report sections, Rae-Anne Miller, Project Director of Building Emissions Performance Standards and Existing Buildings Unit in the Environment, Climate

& Forestry Division, delivered closing remarks. She thanked the members for sharing their time during the busy lead-up to the holidays, and she indicated that City staff were looking forward to reading their report and considering their recommendations in the new year. After a few questions and reflections from members, each member was invited to the front of the room and presented with a Certificate of Public Service to acknowledge their contribution to this conversation about how to make climate action more accessible and affordable for all Torontonians.

Kay adjourned the panel at 4:10 p.m.







# Members' Report of the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action







# Who We Are and Why We Volunteered

As the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRPPICA), we are a group of 35 ordinary residents who came together for three days because of our shared belief that climate change is an emergency and a serious threat to our existence.

We truly feel that as a group we represent what today's Toronto looks like and feels like, diverse in where we live and work, our ages, genders, income, and cultures. Our individual lives are connected by the residence we all share: the city of Toronto. We all care deeply about our communities, our city, and the people who live here.

We are all feeling the impact of climate change economically, physically, and psychologically, and we are deeply concerned for the health of this planet that sustains us, the animals that share it with us, and for future generations. We're seeing the impact all around us, in the quality of the air and water, and in the waste we produce.

Each of us believed it was a privilege to be part of this process, one that we shared with our friends and families who were interested and a little envious of the fact we were chosen to participate in this opportunity to learn what a democratic process looks like, how policies are made, and how city residents can be part of policymaking.

We learned from City staff, subject matter experts, environmental advocates, community organizers, and educators about the science behind climate change and the City's current attempts to mitigate and adapt to it.

We revisited and reinforced the principles from the 2019 Transform TO panel, and built on them. We are heartened by the fact that many of the initiatives highlighted by that panel have been acted on by the City, demonstrating their commitment to this issue. Like the previous panel, we also want to make a difference and have our voices heard.

We came to be inspired, and we were.

From the first day, we were blown away by the enthusiasm and engagement of all panel members, the commitment to consistently show up, be flexible, and respect differences of opinion and the ideas that we generated as a group. This process has left us feeling empowered, heard, and respected. And we were well fed!

We hope that what we bring forward will make a difference.



# Principles

The Principles in this report build on the Guiding Principles developed by the 2019 TransformTO Panel on Climate Action. Some of the original principles have been edited slightly to reflect current sensibilities and the first two principles below are new, developed by this panel.

## **Advance public awareness and education.**

When people have access to complete and accurate information, they are better able to use available resources to adapt and respond to climate-related issues. This means that people will be able to better navigate climate issues and have more confidence to take meaningful actions that align with their values.

## **Support adaptation efforts to reduce the impacts of climate change.**

Climate change is inevitable and we have to be ready. Access to the correct support at the right time will encourage a stronger economy and society because it will reduce recovery costs and time, personal and societal economic losses, and the disruption to peoples' lives. These adaptation efforts are a form of proactive insurance which will result in greater peace of mind and resilience.

## **Be practical, achievable, and build on current efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.**

The City needs to continue to put in place the necessary infrastructure, information, and policies, and also undertake steps that demonstrate measurable benefits and are cost-effective. This is important because it will result in political and public support, which is essential for the realization of the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy.

## **Strengthen our economy and protect and create local jobs.**

The City of Toronto should help facilitate a shift towards greater economic sustainability as an opportunity for a healthier environment. By investing in innovations that strengthen our economic sustainability, and training workers in climate-friendly technology, the City will develop an effective green workforce to ensure a healthier environment for ourselves, our children, and future generations.

## **Be fair and socially equitable.**

The costs and benefits of climate action in Toronto should not disproportionately affect any one community or group. The City of Toronto should enable all communities and groups, particularly those that are less-advantaged, across the city to access education that encourages residents to stay actively engaged in proposed climate solutions.

## **Encourage positive lifestyle changes.**

The City of Toronto should encourage positive lifestyle changes by creating awareness of, and incentives for, more sustainable behaviour. Incentives should address barriers that residents face to make positive lifestyle changes. Personal actions can affect climate change mitigation and resilience efforts, and help create stronger communities of responsible residents.

# How Climate Change is Affecting Torontonians

The members of the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action (TRRPICA) believe that climate change is affecting residents of this city in many different ways.

Climate change is affecting our access to reliable sources of affordable, healthy food. Extreme weather events will ultimately cause poor crop yields, reducing our supply of healthy food. As well, an unstable agricultural cycle can result in dehydrated soil and greater use of pesticides. The result will be higher food costs at the grocery store and potentially lower contributions to food banks. Increases in food costs affect the budgets for individuals and families.

Extreme weather and temperatures are damaging city roads, buildings, and other vital infrastructure we rely on. Heat waves and extreme temperatures result in forest fires in other parts of the province and country that contributes to poor air quality in Toronto. This affects people with asthma and increases fatalities among vulnerable people. Extreme weather, such as heavy rain, can cause flooding, potholes, and sinkholes leading to road closures. This obstructs traffic and makes public transportation less reliable and less attractive to commuters. Extreme heat events also lead to power outages which cause disruptions to business activity, impacting the workers' ability to earn wages, as well as access to emergency services. Extreme heat events also disrupt routines and increase stress, negatively impacting the physical and mental wellness of Torontonians.

Climate change is increasing living costs in Toronto due to higher prices on food and goods, rising utility bills from greater energy consumption, and elevated insurance premiums driven by extreme weather events like flooding. Lower-income residents face difficulties in adapting and managing unexpected expenses like property damage and lost wages. And preparing for extreme weather events requires contingency planning which many households struggle to afford. Resources should be allocated today to mitigation and adaptation efforts rather than costly recovery and rehabilitation after disaster strikes.

Climate change is negatively affecting our physical and mental health. Many health issues are linked to excessive heat including strokes, heart attacks, and heat exhaustion. Chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes can be exacerbated by extreme heat. Lower income residents are especially vulnerable as they may not have air conditioning, have less access to affordable, healthy food, and are more likely to have chronic illnesses. Many of us have become more isolated, which is negatively affecting our mental health. We are more vulnerable to anxiety and depression related to managing the stress caused by extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change. Climate change has and will continue to degrade our bodies and minds on every level—unless we do something about it.





# Recommendations

## Barrier 1: Lack of Information and Awareness

**The problem:** Many people don't have enough information about the current climate crisis or the solutions available to address it. Misinformation and climate change denial make it harder for people to understand the crisis and get factual information about it. Important programs and resources aren't always well promoted, and the information that is shared doesn't always connect with people from different cultural backgrounds. Language barriers and inadequate access to technology also make it harder for some communities to get the information they need, limiting their ability to take action.

### Recommendation 1

The City of Toronto's Strategic Public & Employee Communications and Live Green Toronto should leverage existing resources to implement an education and communication strategy about the City's programs and resources. This outreach should be designed to engage residents where they live and congregate, and to encourage them to prioritize participating in climate action initiatives. This will allow for increased engagement in and awareness of these initiatives, especially for marginalized populations.

Outreach efforts should be improved by:

- Targeting specific groups, such as: faith-based organizations, neighbourhood groups, senior centres, Indigenous communities, newcomer and ESL groups;
- Reaching people broadly, using: existing festivals and events, the TTC, public and city-run spaces, faith-based organizations, libraries, schools, community centres, and outside the downtown core;
- Paid advertising: TV, radio, billboards, social media including the use of influencers;
- Resident groups, such as: condo boards, residents associations, tenant associations, community associations;
- Translating key information in a diversity of languages to ensure that residents whose primary language is not English or French are included in the engagement efforts.

### Recommendation 2

In order to increase its visibility, Live Green Toronto should partner with public, private and community organizations to expand its reach and amplify existing community outreach efforts. This education and communication strategy should include a variety of avenues that target a wide range of residents with different needs:

- Creating a free digital TV station, running in public places like TTC and city buildings. This would increase transparency and provide coordinated info about programs;
- Creating a dedicated "Climate 311" phone line so people can have questions answered directly;
- Establishing physical "climate hubs" in civic centres where people can come and learn more about existing climate programs;
- Creating a more accessible online City of Toronto "climate hub", prominently featured on the website, where all information about initiatives are in one place and

- Includes a “Climate Chat Bot”;
- Create a “Climate Ambassador” program to mobilize resident leaders in public education efforts. This program could be similar to the Community Ambassador Program the City of Toronto established during the COVID-19 pandemic that mobilized trusted residents to increase vaccine awareness and education in their local communities.

### **Recommendation 3**

In order to enact Recommendations 1 and 2, The City of Toronto Environment, Climate & Forestry Division should create a ‘central climate operations’ role to better coordinate the cross-divisional climate action efforts among City of Toronto departments.

### **Recommendation 4**

Given their limited ability to influence public school curriculum, the City of Toronto should evaluate the effectiveness of existing Youth Climate Action Grants and other youth outreach programs to ensure every effort is being made to best reach young people.

### **Recommendation 5**

To ensure transparency and effective use of resources, Live Green Toronto should be collecting and publishing data about the uptake rate and participant demographics of their events and initiatives in order to evaluate the effectiveness of their outreach and engagement strategies. These strategies should be then adapted as necessary to improve stakeholder engagement.

### **Recommendation 6**

The design of the Carbon Label Awareness program should consider information sharing beyond a digital format to reach a broader audience and to disseminate information about climate data in neighbourhoods.

### **Recommendation 7**

The City of Toronto should use existing communication channels to reach all residents (e.g. vacant home tax form, utility bills) to:

- Communicate climate emergency messaging (we need urgent action);
- Share about the different programs, incentives, bulk buy-in and grants available for retrofit actions;
- Allow residents to indicate which emissions reduction and mitigation efforts they want to participate in.

## **Barrier 2: Affordability and Financial Constraints**

**The problem:** Many people see climate-friendly actions, like home retrofits or buying electric vehicles (EVs), as too expensive. Wealthier people are often the only ones who can afford to take these actions, meaning they are the ones who benefit most. There is also limited



awareness of subsidies or financial aid that could help reduce the cost of taking action. On top of that, the rising cost of living makes it harder for people to afford everyday expenses, and extra costs like recycling fees in condos only add to the financial burden.

### **Recommendation 8**

The City of Toronto should consider pairing grants with any proposed bulk-buy program of heat pumps, insulation and other renewable energy solutions. This would make the bulk-buy program available to low and middle income residents who otherwise would not be able to participate. This proposal aims to make the program more inclusive and further reduce emissions in the city.

### **Recommendation 9**

The City of Toronto should advocate for the federal and provincial government as well as private interests to invest in the City's charging infrastructure for a variety of electrified transportation (EVs, electric bikes, etc), with an emphasis on installation in underserved communities. The City should also increase monitoring of existing charging stations to ensure they are accessible to the public and in working order. This would incentivize the adoption of electrified transportation in the city.

### **Recommendation 10**

The City of Toronto should expand its online resources that direct residents to grants and programs from different levels of governments to include all grants and programs related to climate mitigation and adaptation. This one-stop shop should aim to simplify the application process and allow residents to more easily access the full range of help that's available to them.

## **Barrier 3: Time and Convenience**

**The problem:** People value convenience and are already busy with work and personal responsibilities, making it hard to prioritize climate action. Some actions, like taking transit or using cycling routes, aren't accessible or practical for people who live in areas where these options don't exist or aren't reliable. Weather conditions, like extreme heat or cold, also limit choices like cycling or using transit. In apartments and condos, recycling and green bin setups are often confusing or inconvenient, making it harder for residents to dispose of waste responsibly.

### **Recommendation 11**

The City of Toronto should expand public green space so Toronto residents do not have to travel far to access green space. This could include parks, community gardens, green roofs on City owned buildings, and vertical gardens where possible. This is important because it:

- Creates more community involvement for residents;
- Mitigates flooding (e.g. through more permeable surfaces) due to extreme weather-related events.
- Creates more shading for people and an environment that could also benefit animals
- Provides a space for workshops that could benefit the community;
- Helps the City reach its 40% tree canopy cover by 2050.

Increasing green space in turn can increase community-led initiatives to grow food. This could be both an adaptation and mitigation strategy.

- The City could provide the resources (e.g. seeds, mulch, dirt) to set up community-led gardens and educate residents on sustainable food production and involving community in food production.

### **Recommendation 12**

The City of Toronto should promote the use of reusable drinking containers by making water bottle refill stations more easily accessible (e.g. through an informational tool and map) and available in every part of the city. This would allow people to live more sustainably by reducing their use of plastic bottles and other single-use items, as well as providing increased access to clean drinking water. This is important because:

- It increases and promotes a healthier lifestyle;
- It promotes the culture of drinking water and may reduce how much bottled water residents purchase;
- Upgrades the drinking water infrastructure.

### **Recommendation 13**

The City of Toronto should advocate for businesses to adopt sustainable practices such as incorporating recycling and other green-initiative policies that make it more convenient and accessible for Toronto residents to make sustainable choices. This could include promotion of the circular economy plan, advocacy that encourages businesses to accept reusable containers or incorporate washing stations for reusable containers on their premises, or developing a sticker system that identifies businesses that accept returned containers to recycle and/or reuse.

The City should expand the reach of existing businesses that already provide this type of service with financial incentives and by promoting them to residents.

- Examples: Muuse and Suppli.

### **Recommendation 14**

The City of Toronto should broaden, enhance, and upgrade the existing system for compost and recycling collection. This benefits residents of Toronto who do not have access to composting and recycling facilities and further reduces methane gases released by landfills. Actions should include:

- Adopting an “Electric Compost Bin Bulk Buy-In” program where the City of Toronto could purchase electric compost bins for multi-unit residential buildings. This reduces the cost and effort associated with composting in buildings not currently offering green bin programs which increases convenience and accessibility;
- Increasing the frequency of pick-ups for recycling materials and expanding collection facilities (e.g. battery deposit locations) to make it easier for people to recycle materials;
- Improving the promotion of existing Community Environment Day programs and REmarket events.



## Recommendation 15

The City of Toronto should make it more feasible to utilize alternative modes of transportation by expanding the infrastructure for bikes and other micro-mobility vehicles. This would encourage Toronto residents to use emission-free methods of transportation which lowers GHG emissions. This would include:

- Making it more convenient for Toronto residents to use other forms of transportation by building the necessary infrastructure;
- Not only adding more bike lanes, but restructuring the design of bike lanes and roads in general, and changing the timing of the signal lights;
- Developing City regulations to ensure the safe use of micro-mobility vehicles such as e-bikes and e-scooters.

## Barrier 4: Individualism and Community Connection

**The problem:** People are often encouraged to take personal action on climate change instead of working together as a community. This can make individuals feel helpless, thinking, “What difference can I make?” Residents are also left out of important decision-making conversations, which makes them feel less motivated to get involved. Additionally, when people pay taxes or fees for climate initiatives, they may believe they’ve already done their part, leading to less personal engagement in climate action.

## Recommendation 16

The City of Toronto should strengthen its existing strategies and programs by using different platforms to encourage Torontonians from different demographics to connect with each other and community initiatives. This would improve community cohesion and inspire collective action that leverages a diversity of abilities and aspirations. For example (but not limited to):

- The City of Toronto should use a variety of social media platforms to reach all age groups, from youth (who are a priority demographic) to seniors (e.g. Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and more);
- The City of Toronto should meet marginalized communities where they’re at (e.g. retirement homes to reach seniors);
- The City of Toronto should partner with local school boards and post-secondary institutions to host engaging student events;
- The City of Toronto should restart its COVID-19 pandemic-era Community Ambassador program to reach residents in diverse communities;
- The City of Toronto should use physical media (e.g. posters, brochures, and pamphlets in community buildings like libraries);
- The City of Toronto should use AI or translation tools to generate material in different languages to reach new immigrants;

## Recommendation 17

The City of Toronto should continue to develop opportunities to nurture community engagement by partnering with community organizations and expanding existing programs beyond priority neighbourhoods.

- The City of Toronto should create training and learning events in existing community

- spaces such as community centres and libraries and town centres;
- The City should expand its Community Reduce & Reuse programs by partnering with community partners in places that do not currently provide this programming;
- The City of Toronto should host more community-centred public events like VegTOFest to model green and sustainable event planning centred around climate education.

### **Recommendation 18**

The City of Toronto should strengthen climate-related workplace volunteer opportunities by advocating and partnering with industry, BIAs, and businesses to take on volunteer opportunities (e.g. Live Green) and to expand the visibility of these roles within their own workforce. Participating businesses could be awarded a Live Green certified partner “badge”. The aim of this is to expand the responsibility for climate action into workplaces and the private sector.

### **Recommendation 19**

The City of Toronto should establish structures for community connection and resilience, such as through the creation of a “Climate Emergency Volunteer Network Program”, to ensure there is a point of contact in cases of climate emergencies, particularly for vulnerable populations, and to improve emergency preparedness.

## **Barrier 5: Distrust in Corporations and Institutions**

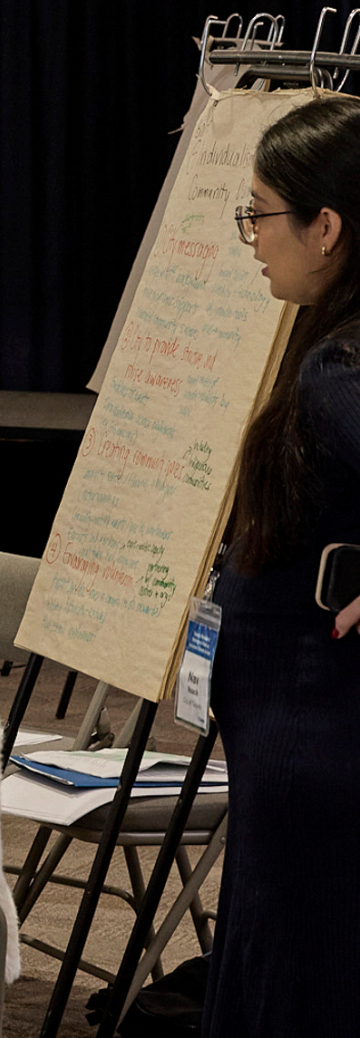
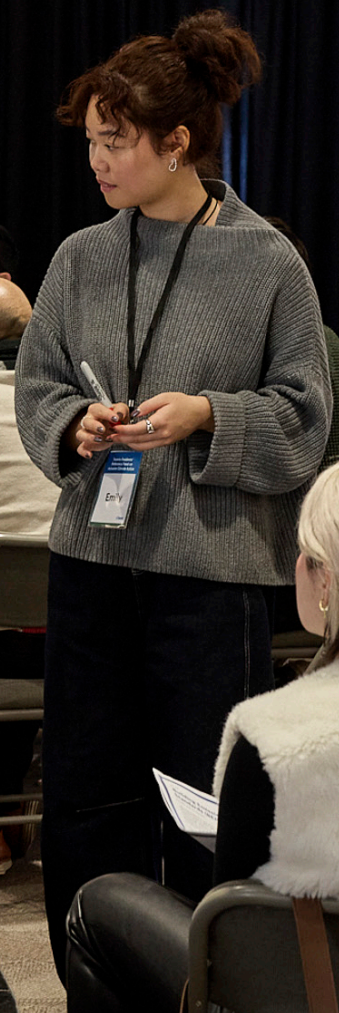
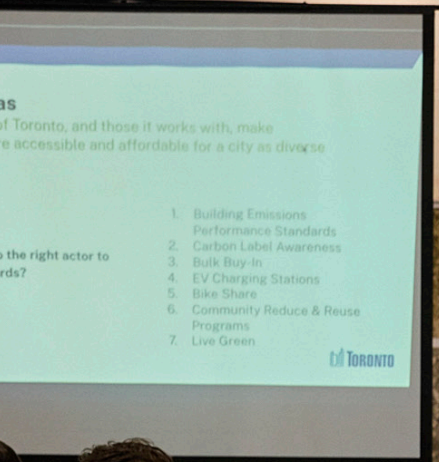
**The problem:** Greenwashing by corporations makes people feel exploited, as companies present their products as environmentally friendly without making real changes. A lack of alignment between different levels of governments highlights a lack of strategy and unity, and politicians are not seen by the public as reliable champions of climate action. The lack of clear leadership and decisive action hinders progress and leaves ordinary people feeling disillusioned.

### **Recommendation 20**

The City should develop and assign businesses with an “environmental impact score.” This score could be similar to the carbon label that is in development, but encompass an array of emission sources. The City should then publish the score on buildings, much like restaurants with City-issued health & safety ratings. This would provide a marketing incentive for businesses to implement climate-friendly strategies and adopt sustainable technologies, at a relatively low cost to the City. This would also empower consumers to put their money towards climate-friendly businesses. As part of this labelling program:

- The City should provide businesses and organizations that meet certain standards with a public confirmation of participation in the form of a decal or a plaque that describes their score: “A+. Visit this QR code to see what this rating means.”;
- The City should publish different business’ score in a searchable, online database on their website;
- The City should mandate that businesses using City space to advertise their products or services also include their score in these advertisements.







## Recommendation 21

In any proposed building emissions performance standards for existing buildings, the City should broaden the mandate of building emissions performance standards to include low-rise buildings. The City should then use that data to assess which low-rise buildings have higher emissions, and then prioritize providing retrofit grants/subsidies to those buildings that have higher emissions and need financial help to act. This would enable the City to expand its existing mitigation effort in a way that benefits the people who need it the most—aligning Toronto residents’ lived experiences with the City’s public claims that they engage underserved communities.

## Recommendation 22

The City should facilitate partnerships with businesses in communities where they wish to expand City programs like Sewing Repair Hubs. Businesses could support the City’s initiative by providing time or subsidized resources. For example, a local appliance store could support the City by providing a sewing machine for a Community Sewing Repair Hub in its neighbourhood. This would allow the partnering business to gain positive recognition and marketing, while simultaneously allowing the City to more easily expand the reach of its program.

## Barrier 6: Structural and Policy Barriers

**The problem:** Buildings, both old and new, are not designed with the City’s climate targets in mind. Limited and unreliable public transit, unsafe cycling routes, and a lack of walkable areas discourage people from using low-carbon transportation options. Renters have little control over the buildings they live in, making it difficult for them to make climate-friendly changes in their homes.

## Recommendation 23

The City of Toronto should make emergency kits available for all residents, including information and supplies in order to assist residents to adapt to climate-related events. The kits should be distributed free of charge to lower-income residents and otherwise available to purchase on a sliding scale depending on income.

## Recommendation 24

The City of Toronto should establish a permanent Pedestrian and Cycling Advisory committee including representatives from every geographic area and demographic group in the city. This committee should have the authority to advise and advocate to the City Council for the rights and safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

- The advisory committee would be accountable to city residents through regular reporting, and
- Provide a continuous feedback loop for resident input and to address accessibility barriers.

### **Recommendation 25**

The City of Toronto should ensure that publicly owned buildings conform to emissions reduction programs and design.

### **Recommendation 26**

The City of Toronto should expand its Navigation & Support Services program beyond large buildings, to help all types of building owners, operators and property managers use the City of Toronto's and external resources for accelerating the decarbonization of their buildings.

Programs should provide a channel for building residents to initiate the process, as well as building owners or managers.

Promotion of this program should also be expanded to increase awareness of its existence.

### **Recommendation 27**

The City of Toronto should expand its requirements to address indoor temperatures in leased residential housing to include a cooling requirement for multi-unit residential buildings. This should be developed in collaboration with residents, and address their safety, health, comfort and emission reductions.

Transparent reporting on building emissions and how they meet their temperature policy requirements should be shared publicly on a regular basis.

### **Recommendation 28**

The City of Toronto should work with others to expand recycling and composting programs to all buildings where they don't currently exist, in order to ensure all residents and businesses have access to full waste disposal and management options, regardless of where they are located.

### **Recommendation 29**

The City of Toronto should ensure sustainability criteria is included in accessibility assessments for City-owned and multi-unit residential buildings.

- Explore lighter bins for recycling;
- Explore alternatives for physical collection bins that are more accessible;
- Expand collection to more accessible community locations (e.g. batteries, electronics) including publicly owned buildings (e.g. libraries, City civic buildings);
- Building owners and condo associations can apply for community composting.







# Meet the Members

## Anila Abidi

I am an accounting student at Nipissing University currently living in Scarborough, where I've been for the past few years after moving from Toronto. I live here with my family. My studies have emphasized the importance of ethical and transparent financial practices, which I hope to apply to support responsible decision-making in the future. Outside of school, I enjoy reading, paintball, and painting, and am engaged in local community activities. I volunteered for the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action because I'm passionate about making a positive difference and believe in creating sustainable solutions that include all voices for a better future.

## Mercedes Caron

I live in North York, and I came to Canada 30 years ago. I have immigrated from Mexico, I am a mother of two children. I have worked as a teacher in Mexico, and now I work for the Ontario Ministry of Health. I have volunteered in events for United Way and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. I am volunteering for the panel because I believe it is very important as a citizen to commit to finding solutions to stop climate changes and enjoy sustainable development. Thank you for this opportunity.

## Susan Caron

I was born in England and my family emigrated to Canada in 1960. We lived in Vancouver and Haida Gwaii before settling in Toronto in 1966. After getting a library science degree at U of T, joined Toronto Public Library, ultimately becoming Director of Collections, and retired in 2021. I brought up my family in the Beaches then moved to

Adelaide and Sherbourne in 2016. This move brought home to me the inequitable access to green space and trees in Toronto, both of which are essential to the environment and our physical and mental health. I volunteered for the panel to promote a more proactive approach by the City in this and other climate-related issues.

## Gulam Chowdhury

I am a professional engineer, registered with Professional Engineers Ontario, and I work at Ontario Power Generation's Pickering site as an assistant technical engineer. I've been a resident of Toronto for the last 26 years, I have a loving family that includes my wife and a 20 month old daughter. I love this city and promote it at every opportunity.

## Xiaopeng Cui

I was born in China, immigrated with my wife to Toronto in 2011 to work as a management consultant. Our boy was born after we moved here, and he brought a lot of joy to our life. I finished my CPA designation in 2015 and I'm currently working for RBC in the tax reporting area. I love reading, thinking, music, and hiking. Being close to nature and indulging in music makes me refreshed and helps to expand my thoughts. I volunteered for the panel because it's a great opportunity to learn, and contribute to the city and communities. I would love to work with the panel, share my ideas, and make positive changes in Toronto.

## Cassandra Della Mora

I was born, raised, and continue to reside in Toronto, currently in the midtown area. I recently decided to leave a decade-long career in teaching in the hopes of creating a career that allows me to share my passion for protecting our planet. Right now, that

pursuit includes working for a non-profit focused on promoting plant-based eating in Toronto, being a community animator at one of the city's co-working spaces focused on supporting social innovations, and organizing events in the hopes of creating a community with sustainable living as a focus. As someone who recognizes the importance of intersectionality when it comes to finding sustainable solutions, I am very excited to be volunteering for this reference panel.

### **Michael Demeter**

Born in Montreal, I was raised as a child in Pembroke, lived my teenage years in West Nipissing, and moved to the Toronto area as an adult where I currently live. I have experienced life in the country, in the forest and in the city. As an elementary school teacher for over a decade now, I see how our youngest Canadians are faced with much more complex and challenging climate issues than ever before. I volunteered for this panel to help our future leaders create a world in which they can thrive for generations to come.

### **Daniela Ellero**

I have lived in the GTA my whole life. I was raised in Vaughan but, since the age I was allowed to take the subway by myself, I spent most of my weekends in Toronto strolling Queen West and Kensington Market. I attended university downtown and have always had a fondness for the cultural tapestry that is Toronto. I am now living and working as an interior designer in the city getting to further absorb the human aspect that informs spaces and places. I volunteered for the panel because I understand the significance of people's voices and am honoured to have the opportunity to share mine.

### **Cheryl Gajadhar**

I was born on the island of Trinidad and

immigrated to Toronto in 1979, and I have called Toronto home ever since. I am currently semi-retired/self-employed after having worked in the corporate world for over thirty years mostly in financial institutions. My husband and I have enjoyed living in our current home for over twenty years on the Danforth. It has the best of old neighbourhood charm combined with the conveniences of urban city life. I eagerly volunteered for this Panel as I see this as an opportunity to give back to a city that has molded every aspect of my life. I am also hoping that this opportunity would have a positive impact on the future of Toronto.

### **Ahmad Ghazi**

I've been living in Toronto for 28 years in the vibrant East York area. My life has been a blend of family, community, and a passion for making a difference. I've always been actively involved in local issues, particularly those affecting East York. I deeply care about preserving the character of our neighbourhood values during all those years. Before settling here, I lived in the United States for 14 years where I completed my education and earned a bachelor's degree in business administration at the University of Tennessee. Those years shaped my perspective, but Toronto has always been home to me. Now, as a parent, I find joy in watching my kids grow, study, and thrive in Toronto. My story is one of belonging, advocacy, and a commitment to the city of Toronto, where my roots run deep and the place I proudly call home.

### **Adewale Ibrahim**

I moved to Canada from Nigeria with my family seven years ago. I am married with three children, and we have been living in the eastern part of Toronto since we came to Canada. I have a background in investment banking and currently working as a community services worker. My current

career was prompted by my keen interest in serving humanity, including vulnerable groups and the community at large. I love playing soccer, exercising, and reading during my free time. My participation in this panel will not only present a valuable opportunity to give back to the society, but also allow me to positively contribute to the shaping of a community I call a home.

### **Stan Jachyra**

I was born in Poland with six brothers and three sisters and we lived in a one-bedroom wood house with no water and no washroom. I started working on my parents' farm at seven years old. Then I came to Canada in 1981. For most of my time in Canada I worked in the construction sector. Currently I am still working. I am also married with five children. I volunteered for the panel because I love Toronto and, like many others, I wonder what shapes and changes our city. I am particularly concerned by the cost of living here, and I volunteered for the panel with the hopes of playing an increased role in shaping Toronto and GTA for a better future. Thank you for this opportunity.

### **Nasser Kahlil**

I was born in Ethiopia. I fled the country in the 1970s when the military took over and started a "Red Terror" campaign against students and those who opposed it. Before coming to Canada, I lived in Egypt, where I attended university. I landed in Ottawa in 1985 and moved to Toronto the following year. I worked in sales for car dealerships. I was pushed into retirement when COVID-19 hit the auto industry hard. I live in North York. I am happy to see the city engage residents on its "Climate Action" plans. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of the endeavour to make the city a better place to live and thrive.

### **Xiaoshu (David) Li**

I was born and raised in China and came to Vancouver in 2015. I have lived in downtown Toronto since September 2019. I am currently an undergraduate student in the University of Toronto, studying sociology, anthropology, and psychology. I come from a large extended family with very close connections to my grandparents and my cousins. I enjoy handcrafting, hiking, and occasional reading during my spare time, and I am very interested in urban development, specifically regarding public transit, which is one of the reasons that I decided to sign up for the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action.

### **Sarah Lowes**

I'm an elementary teacher with 14 years of experience and a master's in environmental education from OISE at the University of Toronto. I was honored to receive the Susan Langley Award for contributions to sustainability education and serve as co-chair of the climate justice committee for ETFO Halton. I'm also a published author in this field. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time outdoors, exploring farmers' markets, dancing, and sharing good food and drinks with good company. I hope my experiences can contribute positively to some real climate action with the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel.

### **Paul Marshman**

I am a dwntowner. I moved from High Park to the St. Lawrence neighbourhood 30 years ago and have lived there happily ever since. I'm a retired journalist, unmarried, and I'm a nature lover; for 20 years I helped monitor peregrine falcon nests on downtown office buildings, aiding in the recovery of that threatened species. After retirement I wrote a travel blog for several years, but killed it



when I realized how serious the climate crisis was and how much travel was contributing to the problem. I now fly only rarely, and have stopped eating meat to reduce my carbon footprint. I'm happy for this opportunity to help Toronto find ways to reduce its emissions and hopefully make a difference.

#### **Adi Mhatre**

Born in Bombay, India, I've had the privilege of living and working globally, with stints in Geneva, Dubai, New York, and now Toronto, my home for 14 years. I want to contribute to its growth which is why I chose to be on this panel. I work in the hospitality industry, so understanding people's needs is a priority for me, and I am hoping to provide my advice from that perspective. In my spare time, I also enjoy dabbling in interior design and taking on renovation projects as a side gig. I realized with the cost of living going higher in Toronto, a side gig is a necessity to sustain a comfortable lifestyle.

#### **Karen Mullins**

I am a permanent resident from the United States. I have lived in the vibrant St. James Town community since right before our city shut down because of the Covid pandemic. Prior to that I lived in the Waterfront community. Prior to dealing with chronic illness and pain I was an online journalist. I have volunteered for most of my adult life. Currently I work with a group that feeds approximately 60 people dinner once a week and also with a group dealing with harm reduction.

#### **Simonas Navickas**

Originally from Lithuania, I relocated to Canada seven years ago and currently serve as a Technical Project Manager, leading a dedicated software development team. In my personal life, I live with my uncle's family, where I find support and help after my divorce.

Beyond my professional role, I'm passionate about outdoor activities like hiking and staying active through regular gym sessions. I also enjoy cooking, baking, and immersing myself in music, films, anime, and board games. I joined a volunteer panel to contribute to meaningful change. This involvement aligns with my pursuit of positive transformation in both my professional and personal life.

#### **Sanjay Pais**

I am a proud Canadian and I care deeply about our city, a place I call home for the last 22 years. I am a proud father of two amazing university-going daughters and two cats (Russian Blue). I love to travel and tinker with technology. Beyond my professional life, I enjoy mentoring engineering leaders as well as supporting those interested in pursuing a tech career. I care deeply about our environment and our legacy for future generations to come. Giving back to the community has always been important to me, and I am really excited and optimistic about this opportunity, the conversations ahead, and the potential impact it will have on our city and its residents.

#### **Jitesh Parikh**

I am the founder of Ventura Data Solutions, a company focused on sustainable data management solutions. Thanks to my studies at Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto, I have a strong background in sustainability leadership, and I like to work at the intersection of technology and environmental responsibility. I am also an area director for Toastmasters District 123, overseeing Area C-62 because I believe that empowering people to enhance their public speaking and leadership skills is important. I am committed to making a positive impact in everything I do.

### **Safia Parveen**

I was born in Pakistan, moved to the USA in 2000, and arrived in Canada in 2007. I am an internationally trained teacher with an MA and MEd, and also a professional interpreter in five languages. I'm active in my community as a peer support worker, Green Champion, and founder of the Thorncliffe Wellness Cafe Group. I've worked with the Toronto District School Board, community health organizations and the Afghan Women Organization, and received awards from the City of Toronto and my MPP for climate action, including organizing and leading events like Eco-Blitz and Family Eco-Fairs. I joined this panel to share my understanding of our responsibility to act on climate change to create a better future.

### **A. Paunescu**

I was born in Romania. I've been living in the Toronto West end for almost 20 years. I'm a creative person with a passion for aesthetics and beauty. I like to learn to do things on my own first like dying my hair, doing my nails, and painting the walls of my home. I'm currently working in the medical field. Nutrition and self-care are very important to me. I decided to volunteer for the panel to educate myself on the topic with valid, unbiased information, which is sometimes hard to come by. I hope to provide personal insight in the discussion and contribute ideas that will bring about a positive outcome.

### **Laura Rapeanu**

My name is Laura Rapeanu. I was born in Transylvania, the land of Dracula. Yes, Transylvania is a real place and it's in Romania, as a matter of fact Transylvania is to Romania what Ontario is to Canada: a province. I spent my formative years in Romania and for the last 40 years I called Canada my home. Professionally, I spent

most of my working years amongst people and planes, best job in the world! Being able to look at one of our planes flying in the sky and think that I contributed a little to make it fly has brought a lot of joy to me. Why do I care to volunteer my time for this panel? A better question will be how can I not be interested in what is literally the hottest topic that concerns us all. Here is a fun fact about me: wherever I go on vacation, I always feed the animals I encounter and actually seek, from elephants in Thailand to donkeys in Antigua and iguanas and coatis in Mexico.

### **Tania Ryndenko**

I am a first-generation Canadian-Ukrainian. I retired from the film industry where I worked as a costumer over a period of 35+ years. I'm a mother of one, grandmother of three, great-grandma of four! My interest and concern regarding recycling started with the Pollution Probe in the early 70s. Climate change has been a topic of importance since the Club of Rome published their first findings in 1972 and again in the 80s. I am looking forward to this session and would love to hear what we will be doing locally to help the planet.

### **Belina Sabarillo-Bush**

My name is Belina and I have lived in Toronto for 30 years. Originally from the Philippines, I worked as an accountant until 2020, when life took an unexpected turn. I was laid off and began caring for my ailing in-laws. My father-in-law passed away a couple of years ago, and my mother-in-law is now showing signs of dementia. This experience has made me more conscious of living a healthier lifestyle, which led me to discover a wellness company that has helped my family greatly. I'm excited to be part of this panel, as I hope to raise awareness about health, which aligns with climate change initiatives.







### **Blossom Sinclair**

My name is Blossom Sinclair, and I have lived in Canada since 1972. I have been part of the Toronto community for over 50 years and worked at Sunnybrook Hospital for 42 years as a surgical suite assistant and PSW, which was my first and only job that I truly enjoyed. I get along well with others and am known for being kind, caring, and respectful. I have two children who also work in management at Sunnybrook. I enjoy sewing, cooking, baking, and decorating. I volunteer at the Tybo Community Centre, assisting seniors with arts and crafts, and supporting activities like the Ride for Brain, track and field, and football. I am passionate about climate change and eager to learn how we can make meaningful changes for future generations.

### **Tara Sorenson**

I live in Scarborough, the city I was born and raised in! Following high school I entered the workforce; however, my longing for learning led me to pursue a post-secondary education at the University of Toronto. The journey began with a major in political science and a double minor in international development studies and psychology. Upon completing half of the program, I pivoted and went on to study in the management program. I graduated in 2020 with a specialist degree in management and accounting. I work for the federal government as a financial analyst with a focus on compliance. When time permits, I enjoy gardening and travelling. I volunteered for the panel because involvement is important to me and the catalyst to positive change – hopefully.

### **Behrad Sorousheh**

I live to experience. A current urban geography student at the University of Toronto, I also teach piano and yoga and

share energy through dance. I came to Toronto from Tehran, Iran, with my family at the age of four. I quickly fell in love with the sport culture, playing hockey and skiing any opportunity I could. As I grew older I fell in love with expressing my energy with others through concerts and festivals connecting with souls all over the continent. I love my home—not just Toronto, but this incredibly diverse planet. It breaks my heart that we, as a whole, live in a culture that rips apart our home and are close to completely negligent in taking care of, maintaining, and giving back love. I volunteered for this panel as I believe there is nothing more important than fixing our treatment of our world. I wanted to express my ideas while learning further from others. I was pleasantly surprised with how most everyone expressed concern for the well-being of our home and that instills hope within me.

### **Memona Syeda**

I was born in Pakistan, where I spent my teenage years before moving to Europe with my family. After getting married, I relocated to Canada, quickly growing fond of the beautiful architecture and embracing the cold weather. I began my career, but my life took a significant turn when my son was born with autism. Since then, I have dedicated myself to being a caregiver for him, my three beautiful daughters, and my mother-in-law. My hard-working husband has been a huge support throughout this journey, balancing his career while providing strength and encouragement to our family. Together, we navigate the joys and challenges of raising a special needs child while cherishing every moment with our daughters. This experience has shaped me into a resilient and loving individual, committed to creating a nurturing environment for my family.

### **Naomi Toljagic**

I live in Scarborough Village South West in a

suburban neighbourhood built circa 1950s. Little did I know before earning my three-year advanced diploma in architectural technology from Centennial College that my way of life of over 20 years has been compromised by car dependency. Miraculously, I found my current job as a millwork solutions CAD operator close to home so I can use public transit frequently. I volunteer with my local residents association as I appreciate a safe space where I can share my concerns about public safety, changes to the environment, and to be informed about municipal affairs.

### **Wayne Xue**

I was born in China, and I immigrated to Toronto in 2001. I have been living in Scarborough since 2011. I work as a building service engineer providing building mechanical system consulting services to the public in Ontario. I play volleyball and enjoy beach hiking with my children whenever I can. I volunteered for the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action because I am deeply concerned about climate change impacting humanity around the world and especially future generations, and I wrote a book called Causes of climate change and the solutions to challenges.

### **Ralph Zhang**

I am from Scarborough and I've embraced the city's natural beauty and vibrant culture during the more than 20 years I've lived here. I have a background in technology and finance, and have worked in the telecom and banking industries. As a lifelong learner, I like to explore topics such as emerging technologies, science, and economics to better understand the world around me. Recently, my interests have shifted to investment research, using this to gain insights in global economies, trends, and discoveries that benefit society.

I am passionate about ideas, policies, and technologies that promote a balance between nature and human activities.

### **Matias**

I was born in Spain, from a Spanish mother and an Argentinean father. After studying civil engineering in Madrid, I was hired by a Spanish company to help with the structural and geotechnical design of one of the many new subway projects happening right now. In the two years I have been here, I have grown quite fond of this city. So when I received the notice in my mail, I did not hesitate to join in as I felt it was a wonderful opportunity to give back something to Toronto, in something as crucial and important as climate change. I love travelling, and I hope my knowledge of other cities and countries can prove helpful in the incoming panel!

### **Name withheld**

I'm originally from Kingston, son of a Canadian WW2 veteran. I settled in Toronto in 1983 at age 23, hoping to form a band, working as a cook, and running kitchens at restaurants around the city. Over the years I moved into careers in construction and then sales for wholesale and retail businesses. I've lived in neighbourhoods across the city and have met people from all walks of life, and tried to be an involved citizen. Now on disability, I am still busking when I can and continue to follow my interest in robotics. I developed an after-school program related to science and robotics that hasn't yet recovered from damage suffered during Covid restrictions, but I have donated a lot of robots to neighbourhood kids in the meantime.







# Presenters

Thirteen experts generously gave their time and shared their knowledge with the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action. The Panel extends its sincerest thanks to each of them.

## **Andrea Bastien, Project Lead (Indigenous), Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

New to her role at the City of Toronto, Andrea Bastien, was able to bring her perspective as a member of the Indigenous Land Stewardship Circle (ILSC) and 440 Parkside Collective. She has been actively involved with Indigenous sovereignty and land restoration projects in the City of Toronto since moving from Vancouver in 2008. Andrea is currently completing her master's degree at York University in the Faculty of Education, Wülélham cohort.

## **Dr. Anabela Bonada, Managing Director, Climate Science, Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation, Faculty of Environment, University of Waterloo**

Dr. Bonada leads research that integrates science, risk assessment, policy and knowledge mobilization to understand and adapt to a changing climate. Dr. Bonada engages with scientists, government officials, and community stakeholders to implement practical solutions that address climate challenges, with a focus on wildfire and flooding protection strategies.

Dr. Bonada holds a Ph.D. in geography from the University of Guelph, where her research focused on the effect that climate change has on tree growth, which gave her insights on the repercussions of extreme events, such as drought and wildfire, on forest ecosystems. Furthermore, Dr. Bonada earned her B.Sc. in environmental science from the University of Waterloo and holds a diploma in ecosystem management from Fleming College. Dr. Bonada sits on the National Research Council of Canada (NRC)'s Resilient Residential Retrofit Advisory Committee. Additionally, Dr. Bonada is the Vice Chair on the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Professionals in Climate Change (CAPCC).

## **Muzamil Gadain, Projects Lead, Black Environmental Initiative**

Muzamil is dedicated to bringing all communities into environmental action, with a focus on empowering Black and Brown communities in Toronto. As the driving force behind initiatives like the Roots for Resilience program, he tackles social isolation, food insecurity, and fosters community resilience. His mission is to inspire the next generation to embrace sustainable, environmentally conscious lives and build a future where community and sustainability thrive together.

**Stephanie Gower, PhD, Program Manager & Climate Resilience Lead, Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

Stephanie Gower is a Program Manager and climate resilience lead in the City of Toronto's Environment and Climate Division. She leads research, analysis, and policy development projects to support, coordinate, and enhance climate resilience activity across the City and in the community. Stephanie has worked in the City's Public Health and Parks, Forestry and Recreation divisions and brings those experiences to her current work, which aims to clarify climate risks and support staff across the City to plan and prepare for climate changes now and in the future. She received her PhD in health studies from the University of Waterloo and holds an adjunct appointment at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health.

**Kristina Hausmanis, Senior Project Manager, Green Streets, Transportation Services, City of Toronto**

Kristina has spent over 18 years working in municipal government developing and implementing multidisciplinary programs at the City of Toronto. In her current position as the Green Streets Senior Project Manager for Transportation Services, she coordinates the implementation of green infrastructure into right-of-way projects. Kristina holds a bachelor of science in biology from McGill University and a master of environmental science from the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. She is also a member of the Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange as well as the current chair of the American Public Works Association's Sustainability and Resilience Committee.

**Emmay Mah, Executive Director, Toronto Environmental Alliance**

Emmay Mah joined the Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) as Executive Director in 2019. For the last 20 years, Emmay has worked in the non-profit sector locally and internationally, developing and managing programs focused on child rights, health, and the environment. She is passionate about working with local movements to build healthy, equitable and climate-friendly cities, and resilient communities. Emmay has worked with residents and community organizations to shape and advance Toronto's TransformTO Climate Strategy since its inception, and co-organized a successful, collaborative campaign to get Toronto to declare a climate emergency in 2019.

**Lindsay McCallum, PhD, Program Manager, Policy & Research, Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

Lindsay McCallum is a program manager in the Policy & Research Unit of the Environment, Climate & Forestry Division at the City of Toronto. Lindsay's team works on climate mitigation and is currently developing the next TransformTO Net Zero Action Plan (2026-2030). Lindsay holds a bachelor's degree from Western University, and a master's degree and Ph.D. from the University of Toronto. She has experience working in both the public and private sectors, and in her free time Lindsay enjoys travelling, yoga and going on adventures with her two young children.



**Rae-Anne Miller, P. ENG MBA, Project Director of Building Emissions Performance Standards and Existing Buildings Unit, Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

Rae-Anne is a dedicated leader at the forefront of sustainability at the City of Toronto. As the Project Director of Net Zero Buildings and Building Emission Performance Standards within the Environment and Climate Division, she spearheads a talented, diverse team. Together, they are instrumental in the city's ambitious mission to combat climate change. Through the strategic execution of TransformTO and the Net Zero Existing Buildings Strategy, Rae-Anne and her team are the driving force behind substantial emission reductions and energy conservation efforts. Their programs and initiatives reach every corner of the city, empowering all buildings to embrace a net zero future by 2040.

**James Nowlan, Executive Director, Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

James Nowlan is the Executive Director of Environment, Climate & Forestry at the City of Toronto, where he oversees the team responsible for the development of corporate environment and climate policies, such as TransformTO the City's strategy to be net zero by 2040, the Net Zero Existing Buildings Strategy, the Electric Vehicle Strategy, a renewed approach to climate resiliency and work on a Circular Economy Roadmap. The division also works on several innovative projects that support achieving City environment and climate goals and oversees a number of funding programs such as SolarTO and the Home Energy Loan Program. James joined the City in January of 2022 after more than 17 years in Ontario's public service, where he held progressively more responsible policy/program, management, and executive leadership positions in several Ontario ministries. James' work included many high-profile environmental and resource management initiatives including the establishment of the Greenbelt, renewable energy policy, Great Lakes protection, air quality, climate change and transportation and transit policies, programs and delivery.

**Andrew Plunkett, Project Lead, Environment, Climate & Forestry, City of Toronto**

Andrew Plunkett is a project lead in the Policy & Research Unit with the Environment, Climate & Forestry Division at the City of Toronto. As part of the Net Zero Team, he works on the development and implementation of the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, the City of Toronto's climate change strategy. He also oversees the City's external Climate Advisory Group, and the Climate Action and Resilience Research Fund, which coordinates climate research between the City and local academic partners. Prior to joining the City, Andrew worked in the academic and non-profit sectors in Canada, and internationally in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. He holds a master's in environmental studies (Planning) degree from York University, where his research focused on community-based sustainability planning.

**Aliénor Rougeot, Senior Program Manager, Environmental Defence Canada**

Aliénor (Allie) Rougeot is a senior program manager at Environmental Defence Canada. She advocates for an equitable energy transition away from fossil fuels. She previously co-founded the group Fridays for Future Toronto and has led numerous student climate strikes in that role,

while completing a degree in economics and public policy at the University of Toronto. She has been recognized by Corporate Knights as one of their 30 Under 30 Sustainability Leaders.

**Rebecca Wallace, Project Manager, Community Development Unit, Social Development, Finance & Administration, City of Toronto**

Rebecca Wallace is a community development practitioner who works for the City of Toronto's Community Development Unit. As a municipal Project Manager, Rebecca works with her dynamic team to enable the work of the Community Coordination Plan, a City-United Way partnership that collaborates with 350+ community-based organizations across the city, and the Toronto Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy, the City of Toronto's action plan for building partnerships and supporting community capacity building in Toronto's neighbourhoods so they can succeed and thrive. Rebecca's work is grounded in equity and anti-racism as she seeks to contribute to transformative change that will make Toronto a place for everyone. Rebecca has begun weaving climate justice into all areas of her work and is especially excited to ground herself in community and climate resilience efforts.

**Megan Yeandle, Manager, Community Resiliency and Engagement, Toronto Emergency Management, City of Toronto**

Megan is the Manager of the Community Resiliency and Engagement Unit for Toronto Emergency Management. Toronto Emergency Management coordinates the City of Toronto's emergency management activities with the goal of enhancing the City's collective ability to plan for, prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from city-wide disasters. Megan's unit concentrates on building community capacity and promoting community-based emergency planning and preparedness efforts, while building partnerships to support the City's emergency management ecosystem. Megan has worked in different positions across the City and before joining City has diverse experience working internationally in several roles that blend community engagement, human-centered design, user experience, and innovation and research.





**Contacts**  
Jordan 847-285-1768  
Emily 847-888-6862  
Mia 818-832-2817  
Lyle 416-575-1682  
Joe 847-864-5417  
Rita 815-402-1722  
Tia 416-575-5288

**Hours**  
10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.  
12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.



# Minority Reports

Members were encouraged to consider all points of view throughout the panel process. Discussions were lively and respectful throughout the proceedings, and while some minor differences in opinion remained, every member of the panel endorsed the recommendations in this final report. However, members also were given the opportunity to write a minority report in which they could highlight any points of agreement or disagreement, or include their own commentary.

## Cassandra Della Mora

During the Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action, I was struck by the omission of plant-based diets as a climate action strategy in our presentations, discussions, and recommendations.

I urge the City of Toronto to set an example to its citizens regarding the benefits of eating plant-based for our planet through strategies such as increasing plant-based food options during City activities, and perhaps even making it the default. I'm sure that if plant-based was the only option available during our time as participants in this panel, there would be no complaints so long as we were educated on why it's the most sustainable option.

Education on plant-based eating being a climate action should obviously be extended to the public as a whole. The City of Toronto may want to collaborate with local programs and non-profits already doing work to educate and encourage citizens to adopt plant-based diets. Research also highlights the power of leadership by example: politicians adopting low-carbon behaviors, such as plant-based eating, inspire public action.

Additionally, the food industry in Toronto should be encouraged to increase availability of plant-based options, especially seeing as the GTA has the second-largest food and beverage sector in Canada, with eating being a massive source of food emissions. In fact, food is the top source of direct food emissions in the GTA, of which meat and dairy account for approximately one-third (see CBEL report of GTA emission breakdowns).

Dietary changes towards a more plant-based diet also improve public health by reducing chronic diseases while addressing affordability; studies show plant-based diets can cut food costs for households in countries like Canada by up to one-third.

Toronto has made commitments under the C40 Good Food Cities Declaration and the Cool Food Pledge, yet there's a clear disconnect in addressing food-related emissions. Public support exists, with 94% of GTA residents favouring more plant-based options in public spaces. So let's make that a reality!

## Naomi Toljagic

During the panel presentations and discussions, I was a little disappointed that there was no mention of the Tree Campaign where the City offered free trees for residents with financial barriers and was aimed to increase the overall tree canopy. I think that maintaining the tree canopy and removing invasive plants should be a core principle and am submitting the following recommendations.

The City and its respective divisions must continue to enforce by-laws that are currently in effect to protect trees over 10cm in diameter and must include younger trees, hedges and other forms of vegetation (native and non-native so long as they don't cause harm). Trees are essential to human well-being as they improve air quality, minimize noise, reduce stormwater runoff, and enhance local biodiversity. Residents of low density neighbourhoods benefit from trees the most by providing privacy, shade, reducing heating and cooling costs, and increasing property values and the affordance of land for softscaping.

### Recommendations:

- The City of Toronto must maintain the existing tree canopy and expand to 40% by 2050.
- By-law officers shouldn't have to wait for a concerned resident but rather be mandated to investigate.
- The City of Toronto must spread awareness for a Tree Planting Campaign
- The City of Toronto must work in partnership with neighbourhoods that display unique characteristics that continue to make the city prosperous and a place to call home (e.g. Distillery District, Liberty Village, Trinity Bellwoods, Golden-Mile, Scarborough Guildwood).

# Love it, Like it, Leave it

The Toronto Residents' Reference Panel was asked to consider the Guiding Principles developed by the TransformTO Reference Panel on Climate Action that convened in 2019.

After a plenary discussion where two new principles were suggested, each panel member was asked to vote on the five principles developed in 2019 and on whether they wanted to add two new principles. They could assign one of three options to each of the seven principles under consideration:

- Love it (Wouldn't change a thing!);
- Like it (Useful but needs a bit of an update); or
- Leave it (Unfortunately, this is no longer useful guidance).

To be included in this report, 80% of the TRRPICA members (or a minimum of 28 members) had to vote to include the principle as is or with edits.

The results of these votes were:

1. Be practical, achievable, and lay the foundation for future greenhouse gas reductions. (8-23-3)
2. Strengthen our economy, protect and create local jobs. (4-25-3)
3. Be fair and socially equitable. (10-21-4)
4. Encourage significant lifestyle changes. (6-22-5)
5. Help make Toronto a climate action leader. (5-15-16)
6. NEW: Advance public awareness and education. (22-6-2)
7. NEW: Support adaptation to/preparation for the impacts of climate change. (34-4-0)







# Panel Development and Facilitation

The Toronto Residents' Reference Panel on Inclusive Climate Action was commissioned by the City of Toronto's Environment, Climate & Forestry Division.

MASS LBP designed and hosted the reference panel, collaborating with staff at the City of Toronto's Environment, Climate & Forestry Division.

MASS is Canada's recognized leader in the design of deliberative processes that bridge the distance between citizens, stakeholders, and government. For more than fifteen years, MASS has been designing and executing innovative deliberative processes that help governments develop more effective policies by working together with their partners and communities.

## Reference Panel Team

### **Moderator:**

Jasmin Kay

### **Facilitators:**

Lella Blumer

Shaun Botejue

Lonya Burton

Anasofia Florez

Emily Jin

Kayte McKnight

### **Civic Concierges:**

Lella Blumer

Emily Jin

To learn more about MASS LBP's work, please visit [masslbp.com](https://masslbp.com)

To follow developments on this project, please visit [TransformTO](https://transformto.org).

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