

City of Toronto

Climate Advisory Group (CAG)

Summary Notes

Meeting #1: March 19, 2026

9:30am-12:30pm – Union Station, Montreal Boardroom, Zoom (hybrid)

Present

Members

Andria Babbington, Chris Ballard, Edmund (Ed) Ho, Hannah Permaul Flores, How-Sen Chong, Jack Zhou, Jeff Ranson, Jenn Vetter, Jenna Bentley, John Robinson, Lanrick Bennett, Jr., Lidia Ferreira, Lyn Adamson (Co-Chair), Maggie Chang (Co-Chair), Maria Constantinou, Marine Sanchez, Michela Reinink, Miha Isik, Richard Carlson, Rosemarie Powell, Shivani Chotalia, Tyjana Connolly, Zamani Ra

Regrets

Lindsay Walker, Joseph Ogilvie, Colin Guldemann, Chris Warren

City of Toronto Staff

Alice Xu, Robyn Connelly, Megan MacLean, Evan Artis, Jamie MacDonald

Facilitators

(BMG): David Buwalda, Fiona Douglas

Meeting Agenda

- 1) Welcome to a new term of the CAG; January 1, 2026 – December 31, 2028**
 - a) Welcome from the Facilitator and agenda setting
 - b) Remarks from the Co-Chairs

- 2) Review of the CAG Mandate and 2025 end of term survey results**
 - a) [Terms of Reference for the Climate Advisory Group](#)

- 3) Structured discussion – CAG Workplan 2026**
 - a) Focus Area 1: *At what stages of City policy or program development should the CAG provide advice to have the greatest impact? What worked in the past? Where do you think opportunities for input and engagement were missed?*
 - b) Focus Area 2: *What strategies could the CAG help advance and strengthen climate outreach and engagement under Action 16 of the TransformTO Net Zero Action Plan?*

- 4) Next Steps and Other Business**



1. Remarks from the Co-Chairs

Description

- CAG Co-Chairs opened the session with remarks reflecting on the previous term and planning for the second term of the CAG.
- Members participated in introductions and an ice-breaker activity.
- Members welcomed five new members:
 - Edmund (Ed) Ho, Hannah Flores, Michela Reinink, Miha Isik, Tyjana Connolly

Outcomes/Next Steps

- none

2. Review of the CAG mandate and Member/Staff survey results

Description:

- A presentation by staff and the facilitator was provided with reference to the CAG structure, Terms of Reference, flow of input to City staff in relation to Toronto City Council and recent survey results, with opportunity for clarifying questions.
- ECF provided a brief context for the structured discussion with an example of an idea for a new ad-hoc approach to working group meetings.

Presentation Notes:

Note: The following notes are a high-level summary of discussion points and identified actions related to the presentation.

- The CAG is a key component of the TransformTO Accountability and Management Framework. Its role is to provide advice and peer review from diverse sectors to inform the implementation of the Net-Zero Strategy.
- The CAG is one of three tables under the TransformTO Accountability and Management Framework. The other two (the Joint TransformTO Implementation Committee and the Climate Leadership Table) are composed of City staff and labor unions, making the CAG the primary vehicle for external public and sectoral expertise.
 - Question: Can staff share the list of who the members are for the other tables?
- The mandate emphasizes a "two-way" information flow; not just the City presenting to the group, but the group mobilizing their respective sectors to help Toronto reach its 2040 targets.



- It was clarified that the CAG does not report directly to Toronto City Council. Advice is given to the Executive Director of the Environment, Climate & Forestry Division who is responsible for absorbing feedback and reporting to Committee.
- The Terms of Reference remain unchanged from 2023. Key points highlighted included:
 - Members can send a delegate up to two times per year with prior notice.
 - Missing more than three meetings a year triggers a review of membership status.
- A point was raised regarding the mandate from the Terms of Reference. While the text focuses on implementation, a member noted that effective advice often requires getting involved in program design earlier in the process, rather than just reacting to finished plans. There was a recurring view that advice is frequently provided after key decisions have already been shaped, limiting the group's ability to contribute to policy direction.
- Staff presented the results of a survey conducted in February with members and City staff to explore perspectives, experiences and recommendations for the CAG.
- There was a noted lack of clarity regarding the outcomes of the CAG's input; Members often felt they provided feedback but didn't always see where it landed. In particular, there was uncertainty around how advice is transmitted through staff to decision-makers, whether it is modified or filtered, and under what conditions it is accepted or not advanced.
- City staff reported they weren't always sure at what stage of a project they should bring items to the CAG for the most impact.
- An emerging trend in the discussion was that the group should not only provide advice on implementing existing plans but should be engaged earlier in the design of programs. It was discussed that current processes often bring items forward at a stage where they are already substantially developed or effectively decided. There was a strong view that earlier involvement should occur at the ideation and problem-definition stage, not only during review of proposed plans.

Outcomes

- Staff introduced a suggestion to move toward an "ad hoc" working group model. This would involve the City hosting topic-specific sessions on items that may be of interest to all members, and not specific to ongoing Working Groups. At each session, all members would be invited to join - but the sessions would not be mandatory. Each topic-specific discussion will feed into reporting at the quarterly full CAG meetings.

Responses & Action Items

- Staff to review Working Group framework and processes and provide



recommendations.

- List of Joint TransformTO Implementation Committee Member Organization / Divisions:
 - CUPE Local 416
 - IBEW Local 353
 - Toronto & York Region Labour Council
 - UA Local 46
 - Environment, Climate & Forestry
 - Fleet Services Division
 - CREM
 - People & Equity

- Canadian Union of Public Employees
- CUPE Local 79
- List of TransformTO Climate Leadership Table – Divisions / Agencies Represented:
 - Accounting Services
 - Children's Services
 - City Manager's Office
 - City Planning
 - Communications
 - Corporate Real Estate Management
 - Deputy City Manager's Office - Corporate Services
 - Deputy City Manager's Office - Infrastructure Services
 - Economic Development & Culture
 - Engineering & Construction Services
 - Environment, Climate & Forestry
 - Financial Planning
 - Fleet Services
 - Housing Secretariat
 - Indigenous Affairs Office
 - Legal Services
 - Municipal Licensing & Standards
 - Parks & Recreation
 - People & Equity
 - Policy, Planning, Finance & Administration
 - Purchasing & Materials Management
 - Seniors Services & Long-Term Care
 - Social Development, Finance & Administration
 - Solid Waste Management Services
 - Technology Services
 - Toronto Building
 - Toronto Emergency Management
 - Toronto Fire Services
 - Toronto Paramedic Services
 - Toronto Public Health
 - Toronto Shelter & Support Services
 - Toronto Water
 - Transit Expansion Office
 - Transportation Services
 - CreateTO
 - The Atmospheric Fund
 - Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
 - Toronto Community Housing
 - Toronto Hydro
 - Toronto Parking Authority
 - Toronto Public Library
 - Toronto Transit Commission



3. Structured discussion – CAG Workplan 2026

Discussion Focus Area 1: *At what stages of City policy or program development should the CAG provide advice to have the greatest impact? What worked in the past? Where do you think opportunities for input and engagement were missed?*

Discussion Focus Area 2: *What strategies could the CAG help advance and strengthen climate outreach and engagement under Action 16 of the TransformTO Net Zero Action Plan?*

Description: The discussion was facilitated in two parts. For each discussion, Members and present City staff were asked to take 4~5 minutes to individually brainstorm answers to the three provided questions. Following this, small groups (in-person and online) were formed to share and discuss their responses, and develop a compiled list. Each group took turns to share their lists while the facilitator recorded each groups' points onto chart paper.

The following notes are an overview of the discussions held and are not a full representation of ideas, or suggestions, as detailed by any contributors.

Discussion/Notes: The notes from the structured discussion are presented in two ways: Chart Notes and Discussion Notes. The chart notes are a record of the notes charted by the facilitator during the meeting. Responses are recorded verbatim where possible, with minimal re-phrasing for clarity. The discussion notes are summaries of topics discussed in small groups, the Zoom chat, and from the recorded transcript of the discussion.

Focus Area One

Prompt Questions:

- At what stages of City policy or program development should the CAG provide advice to have the greatest impact?
- What worked in the past?
- Where do you think opportunities for input and engagement were missed?

Chart Notes (verbatim comment):

- Share policy/plan early with regular check-ins.
- Input before was mainly guided by the City; would like to see more community input into City policy and programs.
- CAG members have lots of expertise and can help lead discussion at meetings. We need a triggering process to get us involved.
- Example of the workshop at Canoe Landing where many City representatives attended, and that broke down a lot of silos and generated great ideas and discussion.
- There are City influencers, e.g. the Mayor, who can use their platforms to share



widely, quickly. We need to find out to reach them.

- We need more time and clarity to understand the budget process (esp. for TransformTO).
- Canoe Landing workshop was a better balance of staff to CAG member interaction.
- Transparency and feedback: We could have a formal reporting avenue that includes KPIs. This would provide a stronger feedback loop.
- We have limited time and scope to work on detailed design elements of a policy.
- We have varied expertise, onboarding new info for some takes time.
- Possible Structure to CAG:
 - Technical
 - Stakeholder
 - Market
 - Policy
- It helps when we know the timelines well in advance.
- Mobilize: figure out a way to use the CAG to share messages. Eg: co-write a letter
- There is an ongoing tension between advocacy and policy for CAG members.
- We could have special “ask me anything sessions”
- Question: Will there be a 5 year interim goal, previous to the 2040 Net Zero goal?
- Question: What exactly are our constraints?

Discussion Summary:

The following summarized points were raised during the Focus Area One sharing session:

- There was a strong consensus that the group is most effective when consulted at the scoping and design stages of policy. Participants felt that providing feedback only on finished plans limits their ability to provide input that that may impact the actual direction of programs and policy.
- A recommendation was made to engage the group at two critical points: first, during the initial design to help set the scope, and second, at the evaluation stage to help define success metrics and performance indicators.
- Rather than one-off presentations, participants suggested a process of ongoing check-ins to ensure that advice is being integrated as a policy or program moves through different stages of development. Members emphasized the importance of continuity throughout the policy lifecycle. This includes structured check-ins and explicit tracking of how input evolves over time, rather than one-time consultations.
- To address the rigid nature of fixed Working Groups, it was suggested that the group move toward a more fluid, topic-driven model. This would allow those with specific expertise to join topic-specific sessions when staff is ready to present an initiative (at any stage).
- Members noted that there is a need for members to inform one another on



different sectors—such as buildings versus transportation—so that everyone has a baseline of technical knowledge before providing advice.

- Members highlighted the importance of identifying where input was missed in the past, particularly regarding the City’s carbon budget and how it aligns with annual financial budget priorities. There was interest in earlier visibility into budget development and the opportunity to inform priorities before they are set.
- A major point of discussion was the current weakness in feedback loops. Members requested a formal mechanism to show how their advice was absorbed by staff or specifically why it was not included in final reports or policy. Members highlighted the need for a more formal and transparent feedback mechanism, including clear reporting on how input was incorporated, modified, or not adopted. There was interest in establishing traceability between CAG recommendations and final policy outcomes, including acknowledgement of constraints where applicable.
- Staff were encouraged to be more transparent about the legal, financial, or political constraints they face early in a process. This helps the CAG to provide advice that is realistic and actionable.
- Members expressed a desire for greater agency in shaping CAG meeting agendas and initiating topics.. Members suggested that the group should be able to trigger discussions on specific topics or present their own professional expertise to City staff.
- There was a call for the group to be able to submit formal reports or letters that include dissenting views or non-consensus feedback. It was argued that showing a range of community reactions is more useful to the City than attempting to force a single, artificial consensus.
- There was interest in clarifying the boundaries of the group’s role and exploring ways to more effectively communicate a range of perspectives, including non-consensus views where appropriate.

Focus Area Two

Prompt Questions

- What strategies could the CAG help advance and strengthen climate outreach and engagement under Action 16 of the TransformTO Net Zero Action Plan?
- What would ideal outcomes be?
- How can the CAG work together on this?

Chart Notes (verbatim comment):

- Reframe, refine, language we use to help a broad audience understand.
- CAG offers design support to hubs
- Ask ourselves: Are we asking the CAG the right questions (using their expertise)?
- Focus on affordability.
- “Community” is stretched thin. We can find how to support on the ground.
- Identify who can do what to support: Which organizations, individuals to approach.
- There are opportunities for community immersion. Instead of only communicating to people, let people communicate to the City.



- TEA has an example of a multi-year process over 4 communities (time and resource heavy).
- Understand community priorities, e.g. mapping.
- Talk to neighbourhoods and bring their info forward.
- Place-based solutions.
- Ask: how is language a barrier (incl. in translation).
- Define terms especially 'community'.
- Make sure we are working towards something together.

- Need supports for excluded communities.
- Flag what is fundamental about Net Zero Strategy not all the details.
- Consider what equity means at different levels Eg. homeowners' programs.
- Focus on the equity lens at all programmatic levels (not afterwards).
- Question: is a community event technically grounded? (How do we have events that inform as well as engage).

Discussion Summary:

- There was a strong emphasis on the language used in City documents. Participants recommended removing jargon and ensuring that terms like "climate action" are translated accurately and meaningfully into other languages to avoid confusion or cultural misalignment.
- A recommendation was made to shift from passive communication from the City, such as pamphlets and brochures, toward "community immersion." This includes hands-on activities like art and nature-based workshops, tree tours, or sustainability site visits that allow residents to experience the benefits of climate action firsthand.
- Members discussed the need to map community priorities neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood. This would help align climate goals with immediate local needs such as housing affordability, public health, and food security.
- Participants noted that for many residents, climate change is not a top-of-mind issue due to more pressing life-threatening or economic needs. Therefore, outreach should lead with the tangible benefits of climate action, such as improved health and lower costs.
- A major point of discussion was the need for the City to provide more than just financial grants to community members. It was suggested that the City provide direct support and administrative resources to help small, grassroots groups that may lack the technical capacity to navigate complex grant application processes.
- Members highlighted the importance of engaging youth leaders who can act as a bridge between policy language and their communities. These leaders often have the language skills to speak to policy while maintaining the cultural connections needed for intergenerational work.
- It was recommended that every City program, even those that are highly technical, utilize an equity lens. This ensures that programs like retrofits do not inadvertently exclude marginalized residents who may not be homeowners or have the capital to participate.
- Members identified a need to leverage the professional networks of its members. Members have deep connections into industry, finance, and innovation sectors that could be better utilized to bring broader sectors into the climate conversation.
- There was a suggestion to identify and empower "influencers" within specific communities or neighborhoods to help convey the message of the Net-Zero strategy further than standard City communications can reach.
- A final point addressed the internal culture of the group, suggesting that members must drop preconceived notions about different sectors and organizations to work effectively toward a common goal with positive intent.



Recommendations:

The following is a high-level summary of recommendations from both Focus Areas:

- Staff and members recommended moving toward an ad hoc or "Ask Me Anything" (AMA) model instead of fixed Working Groups. This is intended to allow for more fluidity, prevent siloing, and better utilize specific member expertise when a topic arises.
- Members requested a formal process to provide input on meeting agendas and discussion questions. The goal is to ensure meetings aren't entirely staff-driven and reflect the group's current priorities. Establish a formal mechanism (e.g., a specific threshold of members requesting a topic) to bring new issues to the table.
- Members suggested to reserve 20–30 minutes in future meetings for members to present their own professional expertise or community-led initiatives.
- Ensure the group is engaged at the scoping stage (before policy is fully "baked") and the evaluation stage (defining KPIs and measurable variables for success).
- Create a clearer feedback loops documents or reporting mechanisms.
- Suggestion to be more explicit about City constraints early in the process. This prevents members from spending energy on recommendations that are technically or politically unfeasible.
- When the group cannot reach an agreement, the final report to the City should formally include "dissenting views" or non-consensus feedback to give City Council a realistic picture of community tensions and diverse perspectives.
- Members suggest that a high-priority item is reviewing all public-facing TransformTO documents to remove jargon.
- Conduct a "priority mapping" exercise on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis. The intent is to align climate goals with immediate, local needs, such as housing affordability, public health and food security.
- Shift from passive communication toward "community immersion" to help residents experience the benefits of climate action firsthand.
- Explore how the City can provide support and administrative resources—not just funding—to small community and grassroots groups.

Major Staff - Identified Areas of Action (*listed post-meeting*)

1. Internal Engagement Process/Flow - Review and make recommendations for staff guidelines to intersect with CAG including the following considerations:
 - Topic
 - Objective
 - Timeline
 - Stage of initiative



- Input required
 - Technical expertise needed
 - Detail on how feedback will be considered and reported on (feedback loop)
2. Working Groups – review and make recommendations for new process of topic-specific meetings and discussions.
 3. CAG-led Initiatives & Updates Process - Review and make recommendations for formalized process for CAG to bring items forward.
 - Explore potential for ad-hoc knowledge-exchange meetings
 4. Feedback Loops
 - Review and share meeting summary and resources, and post publicly.
 - Explore formal mechanisms for ensuring CAG input outcomes are shared.
 5. Respond to Questions Raised in the Meeting:
 - Can staff share the list of who the members are for the other tables [Accountability & Management Framework]?
 - Listed in Section 1 above
 - Will there be a 5 year interim goal, previous to the 2040 Net Zero goal?
 - At this time, there is not a plan for an interim goal. However, staff report annually on progress as part of TransformTO.

4. Next Steps and Other Business

Description: brief review of next steps and preview of 2026 meeting dates

Discussion/Notes:

- Proposed 2026 Meeting Dates
 - Q2: Friday, May 22, 2026 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
 - Q3: Tuesday, September 22, 2026 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
 - Q4: Tuesday, November 24, 2026 9:30 AM – 2:00 PM (incl. lunch)
- Members announcements
 - N/A

End Summary Notes

