

City of Toronto Climate Advisory Group (CAG)

Summary Notes

Meeting #2: May 22, 2026. 9:30am-12:30pm – Union Station, Montreal Boardroom, Zoom (hybrid).

Present

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

Delegates: Sandra Leutri (Lindsay Walker), Emily Smit (John Robinson)

Environment, Climate & Forestry [ECF]: Evan Artis, Megan MacLean, Robyn Connelly, Andrew Plunkett, Sarah Gingrich, Maeve McLeod, Ying Zhou, Yael Boyd, Alice Xu, Cecilia Fernandez, Bharat Joshi, Joel Arthurs

Barnes Management Group (BMG): David Buwalda (Facilitator), Nicholas Liznick
Presenters: Emily Smit (University of Toronto), Bharat Joshi (ECF)

Regrets: Chris Ballard, Lindsay Walker (delegate), John Robinson (delegate), Lidia Ferreira, Andria Babbington, Colin Guldimmann

Agenda

- Updates + Hot Topics:
 - Intergovernmental Update on Bill #98
- CAG Admin:
 - Member Feedback & Action Items from Q1 Meeting
- TransformTO:
 - Update on TransformTO Net Zero Progress Report
- Member Requested Topics:
 - Carbon Budget
 - Visionary Communities

Roundtable: Other Business & Member Announcements

Resources (**background information**)

- Read the 2026 Carbon Budget [here](#).
- Visionary Communities
 - Visit the Visionary Communities Website [here](#).

- Read the reference document on the Theory of Change [here](#).
- Read the reference document from the Local Environment Journal [here](#).

Updates + Hot Topics

Description: Bill 98 & The Toronto Green Standard (TGS)

Alice Xu, Director of Policy, Planning and Program Enablement, provided an update on Bill 98, provincial legislation that has completed the legislative process and is awaiting Royal Assent. The legislation may affect the City's ability to require certain Toronto Green Standard measures through the development approval process, while standards tied to authorities such as health, safety, accessibility, and protection of adjoining lands remain in place. Staff noted potential implications for building energy performance, greenhouse gas reduction targets, and electric vehicle charging requirements, while confirming that municipalities may continue to encourage higher performance standards through voluntary programs and incentives.

This item was also discussed at Toronto City Council through Item - 2026.DM41.2, which can be read [here](#).

Member Discussion

In discussion, it was noted that impacts to TGS was reported in Item - 2025.IE26.3 TransformTO Net Zero Strategy: Action Plan (2026-2030), which can be read [here](#). Future reporting on the impacts of Bill 98 would be led by City Planning as the manager of TGS. Broader implications, including increased framing of climate change as a risk to health, are being considered.

Outcomes/Next Steps:

- City Planning is leading the review of how this Bill may impact and shift City strategy.

CAG Admin

Description: Member Feedback & Action Items from Q1 Meeting

After review of the outcomes of the 2026 Members and Staff surveys and the CAG Q1 planning workshop (March 19), ECF have made several proposed administrative improvements, including:

- New internal processes and City-wide briefing sessions have been launched to ensure the CAG is integrated during early-stage design, development, evaluation, and accountability phases across various City divisions.
- Committing to clearer feedback loops, including reshaping meeting notes to be more thematic, explicitly highlighting upcoming action items and publicly reporting on outcomes.
- Transitioning from the previous inconsistent Working Groups structure to a more

flexible, online, ad-hoc meeting format to address emerging issues, time-sensitive initiatives and Member-led items.

- To indicate interest in bringing an item to the CAG, Members can use the new form on Medallia [here](#).

Outcomes/Next Steps:

- The effectiveness of this new engagement process and meeting rhythm will be evaluated when the group reconvenes in September.

TransformTO

Description: Update on TransformTO Net Zero Progress Report

Andrew Plunkett and Sarah Gingrich (ECF) provided an update on the Progress Report for the first four-year action plan (2022-2025) for the **TransformTO Net Zero Strategy**.

- Based on previous feedback from the Climate Advisory Group (CAG) and inspiration from jurisdictional scans of climate reports (Metro Vancouver, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia), in this report the City is intentionally shifting away from traditional long and dense documents toward a short, reader-friendly, and highly visual communication tool focused on graphics, photos, and narratives.
- The Progress Report is being led by the City's Communications Division. It covers key sectors such as buildings, energy, transportation, waste/circular economy, engagement, resilience, and carbon budgets. The report includes a two-page summary tracking table at the back with the status of each action from the 2022-2025 plan. A separate, detailed tracking table will be published online.
- The Progress Report is scheduled to be published during Toronto Climate Week. (Update: The Progress Report was published on June 5, World Environment Day, at toronto.ca/TransformTO.)

Member Discussion

CAG discussion focused on public dissemination, goal-setting, and transparency, including the following:

- Positive feedback on report design; suggestion to print hard copies for tables at events.
- Members emphasized the importance of maintaining ambitious climate targets to sustain momentum, while being transparent about areas where progress is falling short. Feedback supported an “active hope” approach that highlights meaningful progress and keeps people engaged, without obscuring missed or at-risk targets. Clear, honest communication about both achievements and remaining gaps was seen as essential to maintaining public trust.
- Members emphasized the importance of expanding the reach of climate communications through growing the newsletter subscriptions, while creating

clearer and more accessible pathways for public participation, including opportunities to share ideas and engage through regular town halls and webinars.

Outcomes/Next Steps:

- The Progress Report will be published on the City of Toronto webpage after June 1. It can be forwarded by members to their networks as desired.

Member Requested Topics

Description: Overview of the 2027 Carbon Budget Process

Bharat Joshi (Project Lead, Corporate Sustainability) and Yael Boyd (Project Lead, Climate Resilience Team) presented an overview of Toronto's 2027 Carbon Budget Process.

The Carbon Budget is the City's annual process for identifying, evaluating, and prioritizing actions that could help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support Toronto's net-zero goals. Despite its name, it is not a dedicated fund or separate budget; rather, it provides a framework for City divisions to bring forward climate-related proposals as part of the regular budget process.

The Carbon Budget works alongside the City's emissions inventory and emissions targets by helping identify, assess, and prioritize actions that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the annual budget process. While the emissions inventory tracks where emissions are coming from and whether they are increasing or decreasing over time, the Carbon Budget helps surface potential actions across City divisions that may contribute to closing the gap between current emissions levels and Toronto's net-zero targets.

The City is also beginning to explore how future versions of the process could incorporate climate resilience, adaptation, and equity considerations, evolving toward a broader climate budgeting approach.

Member Discussion

The question for discussion was: *What information should guide how the City spends money on climate adaptation?*

Discussion included the following themes:

- 1) **Reframing or renaming "Carbon Budget"**: Members strongly agreed the current "carbon budget" is misnamed—it functions more as a GHG reduction screening tool than a budget. Some members noted that the current Carbon Budget process differs from how the term "carbon budget" is commonly used in

climate policy, where it often refers to a defined emissions limit and a framework for tracking emissions against that limit over time.

Staff Response: Staff noted that this function is addressed through the City's emissions budget and sector-based emissions inventory, while the Carbon Budget process is focused on identifying and prioritizing actions that could help reduce emissions through the annual budget cycle.

2) Connecting the Carbon Budget to broader city-wide climate action

Members discussed opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the Carbon Budget process and climate action occurring across the wider community, including through partnerships with businesses, non-profit organizations, institutions, and community groups. Members highlighted the importance of identifying and supporting scalable climate solutions beyond those delivered directly by the City.

Staff Response: Staff noted that the Carbon Budget is one component of the City's broader climate accountability framework. While the Carbon Budget focuses on identifying and prioritizing actions through the municipal budget process, Toronto's sector-based emissions inventory and emissions budget track emissions and progress toward net-zero targets across the entire community, including residential, commercial, industrial, and transportation sectors.

3) Funding approaches for climate and resilience investments: Members noted that the Carbon Budget process may naturally favour projects with clear capital investments and near-term outcomes, creating challenges for preventative climate and resilience initiatives. Discussion focused on nature-based solutions such as tree planting, wetlands, and stormwater management, which can reduce future costs and damages from flooding, extreme heat, and severe weather but whose benefits often accrue over time and can be more difficult to quantify. Members suggested that future funding and evaluation approaches could place greater weight on long-term risk reduction, resilience, and avoided future costs.

4) Defining and Measuring Climate Resilience: Members discussed the challenges of defining and measuring climate resilience, noting that resilience outcomes can be difficult to assess consistently across different types of projects. Feedback highlighted the importance of establishing clearer criteria and evaluation approaches to help identify, prioritize, and compare resilience investments, while recognizing that both quantitative and qualitative information may be needed to assess long-term adaptation outcome.

Outcomes/Next Steps:

- Staff will continue refining the integration of climate resilience into the Carbon Budget process, including enhanced data collection from divisions and a jurisdictional review of how other municipalities define, evaluate, and prioritize resilience investments within budget frameworks.

- Staff are also working with the Resilience Team to develop a Climate Adaptation Action Plan for Council consideration next year. The plan is expected to help establish priorities, criteria, and approaches for assessing climate resilience actions and investments across the City

Member Requested Topic

Description: Visionary Communities Project

Emily Smit (University of Toronto) presented an overview of the Visionary Communities Project.

Visionary Communities is a community-university partnership working in Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) to explore how community-defined priorities can drive climate and sustainability outcomes. A core premise of the work is that people are often motivated by issues such as affordability, health, safety, housing, and belonging, and that climate outcomes are more durable when they are embedded within those priorities.

Relevance to ECF:

- **Start with what communities' care about.** Residents are more likely to engage when initiatives are connected to everyday concerns such as affordability, health, neighbourhood quality, and quality of life.
- **Build on existing community strengths.** The approach focuses on identifying and supporting work already happening in communities rather than creating new programs from scratch.
- **Move beyond consultation toward co-creation.** The project emphasizes relationship-building, local leadership, and community participation in shaping solutions.
- **Integrate equity throughout program design.** The work highlights the importance of ensuring communities most affected by social and environmental challenges have a meaningful role in decision-making.
- **Measure broader outcomes.** Success should include not only environmental benefits, but also community well-being, social connection, skills development, and local capacity building.

Member Discussion

The questions for discussion were: *We are interested in applying a light touch version of this approach to other communities in Toronto.*

- *Do you have any thoughts about how best to do this?*
- *Or possible communities that the City might partner with to test it?*

Members discussed opportunities to adapt and scale a lighter-touch version of the Visionary Communities approach in other Toronto neighbourhoods. Discussion focused on how to maintain the community-led nature of the model while recognizing that not all

communities have the same level of organizational capacity, resources, or established networks as the pilot area. Members suggested exploring partnerships with community ambassadors, grassroots leaders, and local organizations, as well as leveraging existing City resources and engagement networks to support implementation.

Members noted that the project provides a useful example of how community priorities can serve as a starting point for public engagement and program design, helping build stronger participation and more locally relevant outcomes. Discussion also highlighted the value of community-based leaders in identifying emerging issues and adapting to changing circumstances, given their experience navigating evolving social, political, and funding environments. Participants reflected on the project's future scenarios, noting that they are best understood as tools for exploring possible trends and choices rather than fixed or mutually exclusive futures. Members also observed that the approach builds on a long tradition of community-centred engagement in Toronto, including the extensive consultations that informed the development of the original TransformTO strategy.

Outcomes/Next Steps:

- The Visionary Communities team will be hosting a series of dedicated community workshops for each specific lever of change to explore how to put them into practice. The feedback collected from the CAG will directly shape what is explored in those upcoming sessions.

Roundtable: Other Business & Member Announcements

Description: Toronto Climate Week – June 1-7, 2026

- The municipal presence on the first day features several core elements:
 - **Keynote & Recruitment:** The Mayor will give opening remarks on day one, which will include launching recruitment for the **2026 Youth Climate Workforce Ambassadors Program**. This project is in collaboration with Skills for Change and the Toronto Community Benefits Network to focus on workforce and skills development.
 - **Progress Report Release:** The TransformTO Net Zero progress report will be shared and presented during the afternoon session.
- **Future CAG Involvement:** The team raised the idea of the Climate Advisory Group (CAG) potentially hosting its own session or event for next year's Toronto Climate Week.

Members Discussion

- **Youth Action Hubs:** The Youth Climate Lab is developing operational models for climate hubs to engage youth directly in localized education and municipal policy advocacy. Visit their website.
- **Montreal's Eco-Quartier Model:** Montreal's ward-based funding system as an effective localized blueprint. Details on how non-profits manage these

community-driven environmental service points can be found on the Montreal Eco-Quartier Model page [here](#).

- Local organizing spaces and partner resources were shared for ClimateFast, which can be read [here](#), and the Toronto Climate Action Network (TCAN) which can be read [here](#).
- A reference was shared for local architectural and community space planning initiatives at the YZD Doors Open 2026 Event Page. Access the reference [here](#).

Next Meeting: The next full CAG is scheduled for Tuesday, September 22, 2026, at Union Station and on Zoom (hybrid). Ad-hoc Topic-Specific meetings to be scheduled as required before the next meeting.

End Summary Notes