



**COMMUNITY CONVERSATION REPORT**  
***Climate Action for a Healthy, Equitable, and Prosperous Toronto***



**A Contribution to TransformTO by the People's Climate Movement**

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## Introduction

The People's Climate Movement Canada (PCM), came together on May 14<sup>th</sup> to contribute to building the City's climate change vision by hosting our own Community Conversation event as part of Transform TO's public consultations.

The PCM is a volunteer-powered group of concerned citizens, who are working together to achieve urgent local and global climate action. We originally came together to organize the People's Climate March in Toronto in September 2014, and formed a collaborative movement that seeks to ensure an equitable and sustainable future. Ever since, we have met regularly as a group to develop and support local, national and international initiatives to tackle climate change in an effective, meaningful and just manner.

The PCM membership is very diverse and is comprised of people from different cultural and professional backgrounds, ages and neighbourhoods. Our members are extremely active in their communities and participate in a wide range of local groups and initiatives.

As residents of Toronto, we believe that all our actions matter and that we each have a role to play in addressing climate change. We applaud the City's efforts to work to transform Toronto into a healthy, prosperous and equitable city, and we look forward working with the City staff, Councillors and other champions to root this transformative change deep within Toronto's communities.

The PCM members who have contributed to this report live in the following **Wards: 13, 19, 27, 28, 31, 32, 40 and 42.**



## Part One: Our Vision

Participants began the workshop with a visioning exercise. They were asked to respond to the following question:

*Imagine that we have succeeded. By working together, community leaders, local organizations, corporations and residents have created a prosperous, healthy and equitable Toronto that has low greenhouse gas emissions. Describe what that future Toronto in 2050 looks like to you?*

Our vision of the future of Toronto is best summed up by looking at Toronto from three unique but equally valid vantage points. The first vantage point is people. To view the future we need to have an understanding of the people who live there, as well as the communities they create through their relationships, and the culture created through the interaction of those communities. The second vantage point is place. Where do these people live, and how do they live there? How has the city landscape - the look of the city - changed? Why has it changed in this way, and how is this a better more likable and livable place? The third vantage point is systems. How does the city work? Who has power and how are decisions being made? What is the basis for those decisions and how do they change the way in which Toronto becomes a healthier, more prosperous and equitable city?

### **Toronto as its *People***

Torontonians of 2050 are empowered, connected and engaged. Their need for happiness, education, wellness and other basic needs have been met, allowing them to prosper and share their full capacity with their families and communities. The city has grown bonds around its diversity, embracing its stature as the world's most diverse city.

New paradigms in education allow for children to hold on to their youthful imagination and creative problem solving spirits. Children are encouraged to be themselves and explore their own unique talents. In doing so, children grow up to be innovative and entrepreneurial adults, who trust in their own intuition and feel empowered to carve out their own path. The result? A world that is adaptive to change and accepting of a diversity of ideas and ways of being.

When people in the Toronto of the future work, they can see its value in a local tangible way. The challenges created by ignoring waste that goes into landfill, long commutes and consumer cultures are recognized, connected to, and addressed in the way people make decisions. The circular economy is an expectation, along with a zero-waste mindset. As new immigrants come to the city, local people help new arrivals to acclimate to the choices of our community culture, while also enabling a two-way flow so that the ideas and concepts brought by immigrants' previous lifestyles and experiences enrich us.

Finally, by 2050, we have no low-income neighbourhoods. Overall, we are consuming less, and thus our previous never-ending need to accumulate more and more wealth is now unnecessary and obsolete. We are able to see the value of quality time – with others and with nature – as opposed to measuring it based on how much money we are making. Life is much more simple and people are able to enjoy the simplicity of it.

Being a Torontonionian in 2050 means being an active and engaged community member – feeling valued, heard and cared for and contributing to making Toronto a welcome place for all.

## Toronto as a Space



So what does Toronto look like as a space in 2050? Well it is much more green to start off. Green roofs, green walls and other green spaces are enjoyed by all, and we have created “pollinator friendly spaces” to help our bee friends. The city produces a great deal food, meeting more of its food needs than at present. Urban gardens are an incredibly common sight – in school yards, retirement homes, on the grounds of places of worship, and converted brownfields. Lastly, we plant fruit trees and berry bushes in public places, also leveraging

the pre-existing, non-profit infrastructures in our city for harvesting those valuable fruits.

Our living spaces have also changed. Community common spaces are attractive and well kept. They are the central hubs for each community and they feature art, gathering and green spaces, and reflect the character the community which they are in. These community hubs and kitchens are places for learning and building understanding for sustainable actions among community residents.

By addressing the challenges which have separated us from one other, such as individualized transportation and lack of common spaces, we can develop solutions that bring us together. Readily available common places, as well as accessible and affordable transportation systems, are a good example of city structures with this power to unite.

## Toronto as a Model City

In 2050, communities play a crucial role in city decision making. Decisions are made in the area of architecture, manufacturing, water security, energy production, transportation, home heating and cooling and more. For example, communities maximize their energy production - learning

about solar co-ops and other energy decentralization from the city. This paradigm of the community as decision maker, and the city as supportive “guidance counselor,” is repeated for each aspect of sustainability including transportation, bike lanes, LRT, charging stations, buildings etc.

The City further works with local experts who are able to serve as advocates for communities. As an example, local experts can help to maximize the efficiency of land use by engaging their communities in decision-making. Their knowledge and local expertise are critical for the successful implementation of any new initiative. By enhancing the community in this way, climate adaptability is developed, making the city more resilient to climate change. This buildup of community autonomy also empowers the city to efficiently solve problems because so many local problems can be handled locally without their intervention.

Finally, there is a much stronger rural-urban alliance. Urban neighbourhoods own farms jointly with rural neighbourhoods and that – because we will all be putting in fewer hours at urban jobs – many urban workers will be able to put in a few weeks every year on the farm and be adequately compensated for it. Jobs like producing food and caring for each other will be valued. Worker-owners would be less subject to exploitation and the object would not be profit, but food for the collective owners, grown in a sustainable fashion.

In sum, the Toronto of the future is based on connected social structures. It is a place where people can live happy, healthy and productive lives, and feel at peace knowing that their children will too!



## Part Two: How to Achieve Our Vision

In this exercise, participants were divided into pairs and circulated around the room to provide input on 5 categories outlined by the city: *Energy, Green Spaces, Buildings, Transportation and Behaviour Change*.

The ideas from the City's earlier consultations were posted and input from participants both expanded on these ideas as well as added new ideas.

### ***Energy***

#### **1. Provide financial support for energy efficiency projects**

- Labour legislation – shorter hours of work resulting in time for people to work on local energy efficiency projects
- Credit Unions
- Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement and other trade agreements must not impede our ability to do so.

#### **2. Install more renewable energy (geothermal, solar, deep lake water cooling)**

- Local co-ops for district heating/cooling via renewables
- Repurpose drinking water network to include cooling (already being done)
- Building regulations to include active/passive solar heat capacity
- Maximize use of public and commercial space for renewable energy installation e.g. grocery store roofs, parking lots
- All public buildings should be carbon-neutral by 2030, including schools, colleges and universities
- Develop more people-powered energy e.g. bicycle powered gyms
- Set target for % of jobs in renewable energy sector
- More R&D in NEW alternative energy- it is everywhere!

#### **3. Install more district energy systems**

- Neighbourhood owned/decentralized
- Community hubs

#### **4. Switch from natural gas and car gasoline to electricity**

- Electric car co-ops
- Battery swapping
- Light rail
- Funding to help low income people/households to participate
- Funding to build public transit infrastructure that is electric

**Additional suggestions:**

- Ultimately, with energy, we need to use less and not see technology as the saviour. The efficiency paradox states that the easier things are, the more we use it.



## ***Green Spaces***

### **1. Plant more trees**

- Including “Natural Infrastructure” (e.g. trees) in discussions around “Infrastructure Spending” and educating everyone on the benefits
- Plant berry bushes and fruit trees
- Plant more climate-resilient trees as carbon sinks, especially in lower-income neighbourhoods
- Educate public re: investing in trees

### **2. Support urban agriculture/food production (allocated space, educate)**

- Teach Canning of local goods
- Ensure everything that’s built has a minimum amount of green space
- All schools have gardens that support meal programs or let students take produce home
- City-organized community potlucks
- Community food gardens
- Joint urban-rural co-ops

### **3. Naturalize unused areas (hydro corridors, brownfields, lawns)**

- Provide for pollinators - e.g. expand pollinator-friendly gardens in public spaces
- Permeable streets

### **4. Create more green spaces/parks**

- Designated safe zones in situations of environmental disasters (floods, heat waves)
- Green spaces for shared marketplaces



- Youth employment program focused on developing urban green space
- More programs for newcomers to experience nature
- Green roofs
- More free public events in green spaces
- Improve park permitting process for holding outdoor events, less bureaucratic and costly

## Buildings

### 1. Strengthen/enhance green building standards for new construction

- Invest in R&D
- All new buildings must have gold LEED status
  - Both LEED construction and operation
- All buildings must have a community garden, especially schools
- There must be a law to build green/sustainable buildings
- Incentivize all new and existing buildings to have a renewable energy source especially solar panels on roofs

### 2. Require energy retrofits to existing buildings

- Make sure this is accessible
- Energy audits/inventory reports of cities

### 3. Provide information/incentives for less energy use in our homes and offices

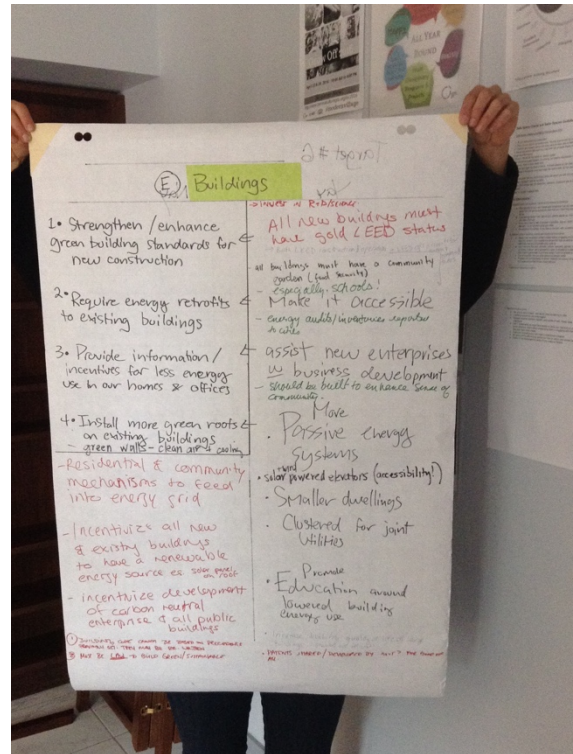
- Assist new enterprises that promote energy efficiency with business development
- Should be built to enhance a sense of community
- Promote education around decreased energy use

### 4. Install more green roofs on existing buildings

- More passive energy systems needed overall
- Green walls for clean air and cooling

### Additional suggestions:

- Residential and community mechanisms to feed into energy grid
- Incentivize development of carbon neutral enterprise and all public buildings
- Building code cannot be based on precedents previously set. They must be re-written
- Smaller dwellings that are clustered for allow for joint utilities
- Increase livability, quality of life of large buildings
- Patents shared/developed by government



## ***Transportation***

### **1. Improve transit accessibility, affordability, reliability**

- Make driving harder/less easy/make public transit easier, then let people choose
- Electrify all public transit e.g. move the Pearson UP Express off diesel

### **2. Implement road tolls**

- Tax things that are bad for people to pay for it

### **3. Invest more in cycling and pedestrian infrastructure**

- Cycling programs - safe routes, group ride
- Winter cycling (covered bike lanes)
- Bikes lanes connecting inner city with suburbs
- Shareable electric bikes



### **4. Build complete, compact walkable communities**

- Things to see on the walk (beauty/inspiring) \*Seattle makes developers pay 1% to local artists for work to make look nicer
- Research more walkable/runnable sidewalks that could also be porous etc. to promote activity and health (as opposed to concrete)

#### **Additional suggestions:**

- Research mixed zoning
- Encourage working from home (to reduce commuter traffic congestion)
- Parking lots have electrical charging stations powered by renewable energy
- Encourage/find electric car share programs - in bad weather or late at night, sometimes you need door to door rides

## ***Behaviour Change***

### **1. Provide resources and incentives for community networks**

- Train community leaders on reflective listening principles
  - Use behaviour change literature in all city behavioural programs
- Encourage city dwellers to go to rural/nature areas to understand/learn in person

### **2. Support stronger and sharing economies**

- Must be taught these values from a very early age – if you have always seen/thought negative things like war- that’s what you expect!

### 3. Support carbon pricing i.e. carbon tax/polluter pays

### 4. Increase environmental education, awareness and research

- Training program for urban agriculture skills for youth from low-income neighbourhoods
  - Employment at urban farms – also applicable for green spaces
- School program on outdoor education including Indigenous teachings
- Adopt a mindfulness-based perspective on civic engagement
  - The relationship between self and community
- Encourage entrepreneurship at early age (“entrepreneurship” = someone who starts something new)
  - Nurture creative problem solving and resourcefulness!

#### Additional suggestions:

- Tax on all products that can’t be composted or recycled e.g. plastic coffee cup tops
- Green bins and recycling mandatory at all apartments and commercial properties
- More public forums – reintroduce as community norm
- Grow a culture around sustainability and be proud
- Empowering empathetic communication
- Enhance empathy as a positive societal value

#### Arts & Culture

- Fund local/community arts and culture
- Reinstate arts/culture program in public school system
- Community spaces for cultural production and free/affordable space for artists

#### Other ideas to achieve our vision

- City report back to the community on annual basis based on targets set, through creative community engagement strategy
- Mentorship program for Toronto with Vancouver’s Greenest City team
- Create jobs, training and a livable wage
- No non-compete laws. Existing non-compete laws should be repealed



## Part Three: Communications

In part three, the group discussed the City's climate change communication strategy. In light of Toronto's diverse communities, the following recommendations were made:

- Communications should be made available in multiple languages
- In-person approach is most effective
  - Real time conversations e.g. high school student animators, speakers panels, home and school, community ambassadors
- Host fun events
- Try a similar concept to garbage calendar for community events
- News media – should have daily “public good” report as we currently have business reports (as per CRTC requirements for balance). Needs to be on main news stations
- Educate people on their own political voice
- TTC Ads
- Listen to people
- Fund community arts projects
- Run an environmental campaign using city-wide art projects
- Run competitions for sustainability projects - winners get funded
  - By age groups (i.e. include school kids)
  - Community judging - NOT venture capitalists
  - OR: seek participants who will bring their own ideas and who will themselves decide by consensus which projects should get priority/funding, then manage the project(s) themselves (with support from city staff); de-emphasizes competition in favour of co-operation. For example, several participants might work together on a project.



### ***Catchy Slogans for a Campaign!***

- **Toronto, Earth (*big positive reaction to this one*)**
- Toronto, we are listening
- Let us empower you. Toronto is our/your city.
- Think globally. Act locally.
- World class city
- Reimagine Toronto! / Redesign Toronto!
- The Seventh Generation City - *Think Forward*

- The Future is Now
- Living City
- City of Communities
- Building/Creating...  
the breathable / edible / walkable / resilient City
- Toronto 2.0
- Toronto - let's be the future now
- Toronto, the centre of the universe
- Toronto leads
- Toronto rocks!... and shines and grows green
- Toronto - Trees in the Water (original Indigenous name)
- The gathering / meeting place
- Toronto - Centered in Sustainability / Diversity
- Toronto - the diverse sustainability lab
- You have the power to change your city / Act on your power to change your city

-END-

***Special thanks to Larry for hosting our visioning workshop!***