

MUNICIPAL CLIMATE ACTION -- A PEOPLE'S CHECKLIST

June 2023

This inventory of suggestions was prepared by a group of concerned residents in Ontario to help promote climate action by municipalities and residents. Please help yourself to any/all of these ideas and promote them far and wide.

(* signifies items available at minimal cost)

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A. MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE and ADMINISTRATION:

- 1) * Council to pass a climate emergency declaration.
- 2) * Establish a carbon budget for municipal operations and for the rest of the community as a whole.
- 3) Develop a municipal GHG (greenhouse gas) reduction strategy including a major community awareness initiative. This, along with other broad goals and visions (see below) should be included in municipal and county strategic plans and updated regularly.
- 4) * At the beginning of each year post a to-do list of climate actions and GHG reduction goals formulated by council for the coming year.
- 5) * Municipal staff to post a separate list with its to-do list of climate actions and GHG reduction goals for the coming year.
- 6) * Establish specific performance targets for annual GHG emission reductions by a) municipal administration, b) residents and c) ICI sectors (industrial, commercial & institutional).
- 7) * Frequent reporting to public by municipal staff and other stakeholders on progress made with above reductions.
- 8) * Encourage council members to join the Climate Caucus.
- 9) Investigate installation of onshore and offshore wind turbines , solar panels, geothermal and district energy infrastructure.
- 10) Create permanent, municipal and county-wide positions, namely full-time environmental and climate change officers. They will also work with the

- municipality and county on the establishment of climate change committees and with councils and staff and community groups to educate, advise, promote and support climate action initiatives.
- 11) Tier 1 & 2 municipal government levels to explore ways to bring economically sustainable (green) industry to town, that would provide good jobs and a stronger tax base and make it more affordable for everyone to become more involved in fighting climate change.
 - 12) Establish and fund a Climate Crisis Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives of all stakeholders including environmental groups.
 - 13) * Ensure that municipal council and staff are receptive and responsive to advisory committee proposals.
 - 14) * Apply to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Green Municipal Fund for funding of municipal climate change projects. The fund has over a billion dollars for green infrastructure and programs.
 - 15) * Display emergency climate action posters, with name of municipality, inside and outside of municipal buildings and other gathering places such as community centers and shopping malls.
 - 16) * Create a social media presence to publicize projects, targets and supports for individuals and organizations to reduce their GHG emissions in the community.
 - 17) Explore areas for rewilding and development of ecotourism potential within municipality.

Transportation

- 18) * Lower vehicle speed limits. Lower vehicle speed burns less gas. Burning 1 L gas produces 2.3 kg (5.2 lbs) of CO₂.
- 19) * Pass and enforce anti-idling by-law. 1 hour of idling produces 1.8 kg (4 lbs) of CO₂.
- 20) * Encourage establishment of electric car-sharing programs.
- 21) Install EV (electric vehicle) battery charging stations.
- 22) Provide incentives to residents to install EV battery chargers at homes, apartment buildings and businesses.
- 23) Replace municipal gas and diesel-powered vehicles and buses with battery operated ones.
- 24) * Apply for all available funds to replace gas-powered vehicles.
- 25) * Investigate private sector lease agreements that enable full fleet conversion more quickly.
- 26) Establish/increase local bus and transit service.
- 27) * Prioritize housing intensification projects around transit stops and transportation hubs to help reduce sprawl.
- 28) * Promote pedestrianization - active (people powered) transportation.
- 29) * Promote walking and jogging through posters around town and in other media.
- 30) Incentivize biking, ebikes and electric scooters to reduce driving of gas vehicles.
- 31) Increase number and length of bike lanes, multi-use and pedestrian pathways.
- 32) Establish pop-up used bicycle depots (with low or zero cost for sales and repairs) to help get residents to pedal more and drive less.
- 33) Establish a publicly owned bike share program.

- 34) Reduce and replace paved road, sidewalk and parking surfaces, where possible, with permeable and semi-permeable surface materials that absorb precipitation, and support greening.
- 35) To reduce vehicular travel, facilitate local farmers' markets selling local produce and products (support 100 mile diet).
- 36) Develop urban agriculture strategy including community gardens to support production of locally produced food.
- 37) Support the creation of hydroponic gardens to provide vegetables through four seasons to support production of locally produced food.

Buildings

- 38) * Establish green development standards.
- 39) * Institute green building standards that make use of best practices across the entire county.
- 40) * Establish requirements for energy upgrade of existing buildings within the municipality.
- 41) * Promote restoration or repurposing of buildings, garages, etc. for housing rather than replacement.
- 42) Tier 1 & 2 municipal government levels to find, endorse and even fund environmentally sustainable ways to heat buildings – both residential and commercial - including geothermal and cold weather heat pumps.
- 43) Retrofit public buildings to reduce energy use (insulation, lighting, low-flush toilets, solar panels, etc.).
- 44) Install solar panels and wind turbines on municipal land and roof tops.
- 45) Investigate use of geothermal heating/cooling systems for municipal buildings and housing.
- 46) Implement a sustainable procurement policy for upgrades of municipal buildings, offices, etc.
- 47) * Set timelines for banning gas installations (i.e., stoves, water heaters, fireplaces and furnaces) in new and renovated homes and businesses. Many Canadian municipalities have already banned new gas installations from 2025 onwards.
- 48) Support and publicize households that have eliminated carbon-based utilities, including those for heating, hot water and cooking.

Planting

- 49) Trees clean air, provide cooling and reduce urban heat island effect. Increase planting of hardy, native (indigenous) trees throughout municipality, including in parks and on boulevards and road allowances, along with understory plantings (shrubs, bushes, grasses, flowers, etc.).
- 50) Encourage and assist residents and ICI sector to regenerate barren, unused lands around buildings and plant indigenous trees, shrubs, tall grasses, etc. around their properties.
- 51) Surround municipal buildings with native landscaping.

- 52) * Eliminate by-laws which prevent rewilding or discourage tall growth of bushes, ground cover and wildflowers in outdoor gardens.
- 53) * Promote creation of pollinator gardens (e.g. tall grasses) on residents' properties. Plant pollinator gardens in parks, vacant lands and boulevards.
- 54) * Establish green corridors to augment pollination of trees and other flora by wind, insects, etc.
- 55) Design plantings and rewilding to provide wildlife habitat.
- 56) Create community gardens and victory gardens. Wherever possible they should include indigenous fruit trees and bushes, deciduous tree wind-breaks and shade areas for gardeners and their families, and for community picnics and exercise practices such as Qi Gong.
- 57) * Encourage elimination of lawns and lawnmowers, and replace them with perennial bushes, ground cover and wildflowers.
- 58) * Encourage planting of front and back yard vegetable/fruit beds and gardens, especially in front yards of properties where the back yards are very shady.

Parks and Natural Areas

- 59) Increase protection of ravines, marshes, wetlands, natural areas and other ESAs (environmentally sensitive areas).
- 60) Increase naturalization and rewilding of parks and open spaces.
- 61) Increase number and size of municipal parks.

Waste Diversion

- 62) * Develop a municipal waste reduction strategy.
- 63) * Develop strategy for reduction of food waste throughout the municipality.
- 64) * Eliminate municipal acquisition of single-use products, such as bottled water, straws, cutlery, bags, etc.
- 65) * Increase landfill tipping fees and bag tag fees to increase diversion.
- 66) Increase diversion of waste, recyclable and reusable materials from municipal landfills.
- 67) Establish material reuse drop-off centers.
- 68) Reduce material going to landfill even though collected in blue box and other recycling programs, by donating it to industry without cost if there is little or no current market value, or by paying industry to take and reuse it.
- 69) Require recycling and green bin collection at multi-unit residential buildings.
- 70) Sell subsidized composters (or donate them) for those who do not want to use green bins, and to facilitate composting on site.

B. PLANNING:

- 71) * Amend by-laws to incorporate green principles and practices.
- 72) * Planning staff to encourage clients (and public at large) to incorporate climate action steps (e.g. build smaller houses, install solar panels, electric charging stations) in all development proposals.

- 73) * Modify Official Plan and by-laws to incorporate climate change mitigation and adaptation, and build resilience.
- 74) * Incentivize environmentally-friendly behaviour, e.g. create parking reserved for bicycles and EVs.
- 75) * Create anti-sprawl rules to increase land conservation.
- 76) * Phase in a noise bylaw that would outlaw noisy, polluting, gas-powered lawnmowers and leaf blowers.
- 77) * Amend by-laws if needed to permit installation of solar panels and wind turbines on residential, ICI and school roof tops (wind is stronger several meters above ground) and in gardens.
- 78) * Amend by-laws if needed to permit urban farming (e.g., raise chickens and maintain beehives) on residential and ICI properties.

C. SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL and CLIMATE GROUPS:

- 79) Municipalities to partner with environmental and climate groups on sustainability-related projects.
- 80) Provide funding to help leverage these groups to build capacity.
- 81) * Provide meeting space in municipal buildings for climate groups.
- 82) * Municipal councils to convene periodic meetings with climate action leaders and their group members to discuss municipal progress and brainstorm.

D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

- 83) * Reach out and collaborate with Indigenous communities on climate initiatives.
- 84) Convene roundtable discussions with invited and interested stakeholders in developing and implementing strategic plans and their action plans, with methods of monitoring, assessing and reporting to the public on progress.
- 85) * Insert into tax and utility bills, as well as other municipal mailings, different lists of climate information and action steps that residents can follow.
- 86) Proactive engagement: send emails and arrange for messages in local media and social media, including flyers and supplements, promoting climate action and how to get involved.
- 87) * Distribute sustainability checklists and guidelines.
- 88) Set up information booths at all public events (e.g., farmers' markets, sporting events, festivals) to provide information on climate action.
- 89) To promote sustainable culture, help establish strategically located, certified (by public health) kitchens and community spaces for educational opportunities. Accessible community gardens, spread throughout the municipality when combined with certified kitchens, sustainable food and indoor space for shared meals and other essential services, can help rebuild resilient, caring and lifelong learning communities.
- 90) Create opportunities for the cooperative exchange of tools, equipment and tasks.
- 91) Send staff or pro bono climate advisors to homes upon request.
- 92) * Distribute climate emergency buttons with municipal logo free to the public.
- 93) * Request staff to wear municipal climate emergency buttons.

E. PROMOTE ENERGY and RESOURCE CONSERVATION:

- 94) * Promote more stringent building energy codes and requirements.
- 95) * Require energy audits of all residential and ICI properties. This could include tax incentives.
- 96) Require a household energy audit for all houses offered for resale.
- 97) Provide financial incentives (e.g., discounts on realty taxes) to encourage retrofiting of buildings (increased insulation, triple paned windows, etc.).
- 98) * Promote green energy retrofits.
- 99) Offer energy efficiency incentives to owners and tenants to reduce energy consumption.
- 100) * Promote use of caulking guns to reduce household air leaks which are a major cause of demand for heating and cooling.
- 101) Partner with utility agencies to provide tax breaks to residences that achieve an adequate level of energy efficiency.
- 102) * Provide advice for purchasing energy efficient appliances.
- 103) * Promote installation of solar panels and small wind turbines.
- 104) * Provide information on geothermal heating/cooling systems.
- 105) Supply residents with rain barrels.
- 106) * Advise residents to lower thermostats in cold weather and raise them in warm weather. Provide related data, i.e., amount of money saved for each degree of change in thermostat.
- 107) * Advise residents to turn off lights in rooms at home that are not in use.
- 108) Encourage elimination of asphalt, patio stones and hard surfaces to reduce runoff and replace them with permeable or semi-permeable ground cover (e.g. gravel or other surfaces) which increase penetration of surface water.
- 109) Offer kits to install outdoor clotheslines.
- 110) * Arrange bulk-buy opportunities for residents for such things as solar panels, small wind turbines, heat pumps and induction stoves.
- 111) * Create a registry for residents interested in signing up for information exchange and bulk-buy opportunities.
- 112) Encourage and support non-motorized sports and activities such as canoe, sail, kayak, stand-up paddle (SUP), swim, hike, bike, trail bike, walk, wind surf, kiteboarding, skate, downhill and cross-country ski, snowshoe, toboggan, etc.

F. SUPPLY CLIMATE-WISE CONSUMER ADVICE:

- 113) * Choose slow-shipping of ordered goods to allow for better transportation efficiency.
- 114) Reduce, repair, restore, reuse, regenerate and redistribute in addition to recycling.
- 115) Reduce waste by acquiring durable goods and clothing.
- 116) Provide residents with (online) individual carbon footprint calculators.
- 117) Replace gas lawnmowers with push mowers (for exercise) or electric ones.
- 118) Reduce the need for lawnmowers by moving from grass to plantings.

- 119) * Stop use of single-use products such as bottled water, coffee cups, straws, cutlery, bags, etc.
- 120) Install skylights and transoms that open to passively remove heat during warm weather.
- 121) Switch to electric or hybrid vehicles.
- 122) Use electric car-sharing arrangements rather than ownership.
- 123) Install ceiling fans to reduce use of air conditioning.
- 124) * On municipal webpage include list of county-wide thrift stores and hours, to encourage people to re-use and recycle.
- 125) Encourage people to shop locally, especially for food. Develop a county-wide webpage connected to municipal websites listing days/times of farmers markets, farms with produce stands, farms that sell eggs, honey, seedlings, alpaca poop fertilizer, etc., at their doors. Distribute flyers with this info and publish them online. When travelling it is difficult to remember roadside signs for these farms.
- 126) Switch to small, light-weight, electric vehicles.
- 127) Avoid airplane travel.
- 128) * Publish/circulate list of products that are climate destructive so that residents can avoid purchasing them.
- 129) Eat less meat, eggs and dairy products, and switch to plant-based diet. 70 billion land animals are killed world-wide each year for food. Cows produce large quantities of methane. These foods, especially those which are factory-farmed, are a big contributor to GHGs, pollution, etc. In addition, too much meat in diet can exacerbate several kinds of health problems.

G. PROMOTE CLIMATE ACTION BY ICI SECTORS (INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL, INSTITUTIONAL):

- 130) Offer energy efficiency incentives to owners and tenants of workspaces.
- 131) Encourage reduction of non-reusable packaging materials.
- 132) Encourage conversion of gas and diesel vehicle fleets to electric power.
- 133) Set timelines for the elimination of gas-powered taxis, including Uber and Lyft vehicles. For example, Vancouver and Victoria have mandated that all taxis must, at a minimum, be hybrids.
- 134) Promote installation of solar panels, wind turbines, heat pumps for heating/cooling, and geothermal heating/cooling systems.
- 135) Promote conversion of outdoor paved surfaces (e.g., parking lots) to permeable or semi-permeable materials.
- 136) Send staff or pro bono climate advisors to shops, businesses, offices and factories upon request.
- 137) Promote retrofit, restoration and repurposing of buildings, garages, etc. for alternate uses such as housing, rather than replacement.
- 138) Promote planting of trees, bushes, ground cover, pollinator gardens, etc. ICI buildings often have large setbacks and wide stretches of unused perimeter land which should be regenerated.
- 139) * Invite public to use spare land on-site for small-scale urban farming and community gardens.

- 140) * Discourage production and use of single-use products such as bottled water, straws, cutlery, bags, etc.

H. LIBRARIES and ART GALLERIES:

- 141) * Establish climate change and climate action sections in libraries.
 142) Establish seed lending programs.
 143) * Display climate emergency posters.
 144) Convene educational programs for residents about the climate crisis.
 145) Organize climate action events with speakers, expert panels, workshops, music and food. Topic examples - planting native gardens and trees, rewilding, energy efficiency upgrades and audits.
 146) Create opportunities for knowledge-sharing of ecological activities.
 147) Organize art shows featuring climate crisis and climate action themes.
 148) Sponsor climate film festivals.

I. SCHOOLS:

- 149) Establish climate action after-hour clubs, tree-planting groups and victory gardens.
 150) Integrate climate action into curriculum, including climate action courses, eco-training, special events, workshops, speakers, etc.
 151) Assign local and relevant climate action projects to students, and hold open houses to display projects. This will motivate students and educate/inspire the public.
 152) Train young people to become climate ambassadors and encourage them to speak out about the climate crisis and climate action, educate adults, and push for change.
 153) Increase plant-based diet in meals at school.
 154) Install solar panels, wind turbines, heat pumps and geothermal heating/cooling systems in/around school buildings.
 155) * Display climate emergency posters inside and outside of schools.

J. PROVINCIAL LAW and POLICY:

- 156) Wherever possible challenge and work around regressive laws, regulations and/or policies that undermine climate action, and advocate for change.
 157) * Advocate for more stringent energy provisions in applicable building codes.
 158) Change building codes to mandate elimination of fossil fuels in building heating, implement the use of carbon sparing construction materials, and raise the performance standards for building sealing, insulation and components.

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