

IT'S TIME TO INVEST IN OUR ENVIRONMENT A GREEN ACTION AGENDA FOR TORONTO

TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE • JUNE 2014



IT'S TIME TO INVEST IN TORONTO

Dear Torontonians,

Imagine if you keep putting off investing in your child's education, home repairs and your retirement. Eventually, the repair bills will be huge and you won't have the money you need to send your child to university and retire. By putting off investing, you pretty well guarantee huge financial problems in the future.

Unfortunately, City Hall keeps putting off investing in our environment, even though these investments are key to a good quality of life and economic prosperity, now and in the future. Too many on City Council have justified doing nothing by claiming this will save us money.

If they took this approach to fixing a leaky roof, they would be called irresponsible. Everyone knows you don't save money by ignoring a leaky roof because the longer you wait, the more it damages your home and you, and the more you will eventually pay to repair the damage.

Our city and our environment are like leaky roofs. They need fixing, especially as our environment changes. We need to invest now if we want to avoid huge damage and costs in the future.

Not convinced? Think of the damage we suffered from last year's flood and the ice storm. Our city infrastructure is completely unprepared for the severe weather events climate catastrophe will bring. Think of the bad air we breathe. It kills over 1,300 Torontonians prematurely every year and sends 3,550 people to the hospital. A large part of this is due to a transportation system that creates traffic congestion and air pollution. The fact is we're paying the price every day for not investing in ourselves and a better environment.

What follows is the Toronto Environmental Alliance's Green Action Agenda, which we are asking all candidates to agree to. These priority actions must be taken over the next four years. They are the minimum investments we have to make to build a greener city for all, especially the children who will inherit it.

To help turn the Green Action Agenda into reality, we need your help. Step 1 is getting candidates running for municipal office to publicly state their support for our Green Action Agenda. When candidates knock on your door and when you see them at All Candidates' Meetings, ask them about TEA's Green Action Agenda. At the back of this document are questions based on Green Action Agenda. Ask candidates the questions you care most about. And then ask them to complete the TEA Green Action Agenda Questionnaire so that the public knows where they stand on our agenda.

With your help, we can elect a City Council that will invest in our environment and build a greener city for all.

Sincerely,

The TEA Team

PREPARE FOR SEVERE WEATHER

We need to start investing now to get our city ready for severe weather events, like floods and ice storms, that climate change will bring. Every year of inaction will only increase the costs we pay to deal with climate change.

Actions Council Must Take:

- **By February 2015, Council (1) provides the authority and funds necessary to properly enforce the city's tree bylaws by end of 2015 and (2) dedicates the funds required to double tree planting and maintenance (from 2014 levels) by the end of 2018, with a commitment to increase planting and maintenance by 25% every year.** Trees are nature's way of cleaning the air, absorbing water and cooling us. And they are beautiful. City Council made a decision to stop further improvements to our tree canopy in 2012. That bad decision came back to haunt us with the December icestorm. It's time the City invested again in our trees which do so much for us.
- **By April 2016, Council adopts a comprehensive, costed action plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and getting city infrastructure ready for more severe weather events that climate change will bring.** The July flood and December ice storm made it clear that Toronto is not ready for climate change. Lots of research has been done about what cities can do and are doing to get ready. We need a specific action plan that sets out exactly what City Hall must do to get our infrastructure ready. This plan will be Council's "to do" list and help Torontonians measure progress.



Photo by Helmfried Muller

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY

Every year about 1,300 people die prematurely in Toronto because of bad air quality. Another 3,550 end up in hospitals. Over 280 of the deaths are due to vehicle emissions.

Actions Council Must Take:

- **Stop any expansion of the Billy Bishop Airport.** Our waterfront is already polluted enough. The families that live there don't need more vehicle traffic and more planes in the skies above. We must reduce, not add to, the air pollution along our waterfront.
- **By 2016 have an air quality monitoring strategy in place. The strategy must include monitoring equipment to analyze highway and local community conditions,**

as well as a public information system.

By measuring local air quality residents, businesses and City staff can make informed decisions to manage pollution sources and protect health.

- **New technologies exist that allow for portable air monitoring and for posting these results online.** City Hall should give local neighbourhood groups the resources required to know their local quality.
- **Adopt the recommendations in Building a Toronto that Moves. We need to make it as easy as possible for people to keep their cars at home.** Building a Toronto that Moves includes 12 actions City Hall can take to help Torontonians cycle, walk and take public transit.



Photo by S. Wineland

IMPROVE THE TTC

We need to invest in affordable fares and better service. This will improve air quality, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and congestion as people keep their cars at home and use the more convenient TTC.

Actions Council Must Take:

- **Freeze fares for 4 years.** TTC riders pay almost three-quarters (73%) of the TTC's operating costs, a higher percentage than riders in any other comparable city in North America. Riders used to pay 60% of the costs, with the remaining 40% shared equally by the City and Province. For this to happen again, the

Province must help. But City Council must do its part and stop the constant fare increases, at least for the next 4 years. It's time people got rewarded, not penalized, for using the Better Way.

- **Improve TTC service levels annually.** Over the past 4 years TTC service has worsened as ridership has gone up faster than new service is added. We should be rewarding people who use the TTC, not dooming them to more crowded vehicles and less frequent service! It's time to turn this around and start improving TTC service across the city every year.



Photo by S. Wineland

DETOX TORONTO

We need to invest in actions that reduce the chemicals that surround us and harm our health. Thanks to Toronto's unique ChemTRAC Program, we know where and why harmful chemicals are posing environmental health risks. Now, Toronto needs to develop a plan to manage these toxic chemicals.

Actions Council Must Take:

- **By the end of 2015: Add chemicals of emerging concern (CECs) to the Sewers By-law.** Toronto has successfully reduced some chemicals that harm Lake Ontario, but our water continues to face new threats due to increasing amounts of pharmaceutical and product ingredients like triclosan and flame retardants. With emerging substances added to the by-law, Toronto Water will be required to monitor these substances and pollution prevention plans can be developed.
- **By the end of 2015: Have a toxics reduction strategy in place to phase-**
- **out at least two priority carcinogenic substances in Toronto.** These priority substances will be based on known health risks and market access to viable non-toxic alternatives. The City of Toronto is well positioned to develop a strategy based on the extensive research and chemical data collected by Toronto Public Health, Toronto Water, and the Environment & Energy Division.
- **In 2016: Economic Development and Culture improves business retention and competitiveness of Toronto companies by offering new services to help companies manage their operational wastes and climate change risks.** Operational wastes include energy, fuel, water, raw materials, and by-products like chemical emissions and solid waste. With assistance, Toronto companies can prevent pollution, improve transportation logistics, cut costs, increase revenues, manage risk and enhance their ability to compete in the new economy.



Photo by John Lundy

REDUCE WASTE

We need to cut Toronto's waste drastically by investing in waste diversion. Why? Because far too many materials that can be recycled and composted are being thrown away. Reducing waste will not only help the environment, it will help the economy because diversion creates 7 times more jobs than disposal. Surprisingly, some are still thinking about burning or combusting waste even though it's bad for the environment, extremely expensive and creates fewer jobs. It's time City Hall invested wisely in waste diversion to help the environment and create jobs.

Actions Council Must Take:

- **By September 2015, adopt a long term waste strategy that includes a 90% waste diversion target by 2020 and excludes any disposal option that combusts waste.** Municipalities across Ontario and Canada are doing better at waste diversion than Toronto. We've missed our current diversion target of 70% and are stuck at 53%. It's time Council committed to a new target of 90% by 2020. It's time Toronto had a plan that pushes us towards the waste free future many other cities are aiming at. And we must avoid locking Toronto into costly long term incineration contracts that will mean fewer resources and less funding for more effective waste diversion programs.
- **By Fall 2015, consider a city-wide policy that insures all Toronto residents and businesses have access to the same diversion services (eg. green bin and blue bin), no matter where they live or who provides the services.** Depending on where you live, work and shop you may or may not have access to the same recycling, green bin or composting services. Many residents still don't have good green bin service at home. Even, if you do have green bins at home, most people don't have them at work or in public spaces. It's time the City took a leadership role and required all Toronto residents and businesses to divert waste.
- **By February 2015, commit to a major green bin and recycling evaluation program for multi-residential buildings to review the effectiveness of the green bin roll out and recycling education ads.** Apartment and condo residents still don't have equal access to green bins and blue bins. While all buildings have blue bins, recycling rates at apartments are much lower than in houses - we need to understand the barriers. We also need to measure the impact of the 2013 green bin roll out. Toronto waste staff worked hard to double the number of buildings with green bins, but we don't know if they've had an impact.



Photo by S. Wineland

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES

TEA has prepared these questions based on the five crucial issues in our Green Action Agenda. We need as many candidates as possible to become advocates for these investments and we need your help to make it happen.

Prepare for Severe Weather and Climate Change

1. Will you commit by 2015 to setting aside the funds required to double tree planting and maintenance by 2018 (from 2014 levels), with an annual increase of 25% per year?
2. Will you commit to provide the authority and funds necessary to properly enforce the city's tree bylaws by end of 2015?
3. Will you commit to the city undertaking a comprehensive study of the estimated costs that climate change and severe weather events will bring over the next 20 years to City Hall, city residents and businesses?
4. Will you commit to adopting a comprehensive, costed plan by April 2016 for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and getting city infrastructure ready for climate change?

Improve Air Quality

5. Will you vote against any further attempt to expand commercial air service at Billy Bishop Airport?
6. Will you authorize city staff to work with local communities to develop a neighbourhood-based air quality monitoring system by 2016, and make neighbourhood air quality information available online?
7. Will you adopt the recommendations in Building a Toronto that Moves?

Improve the TTC

8. Will you commit to a fare freeze for the next 4 years?
9. Will you commit to increasing TTC service levels annually beyond the growth in ridership every year for the next 4 years?
10. Will you agree to using additional municipal revenue sources (eg. a new Private Vehicle Tax, an increased land transfer tax) to fund the TTC to improve service levels?
11. Will you support the Scarborough LRT and reallocate the property tax increase designated for the Scarborough Subway to pay for improved TTC service and a fare freeze?

Reduce Waste

12. Will you commit in 2015 to adopting a long term waste strategy that includes a 90% waste diversion rate by 2020?
13. Will you commit to not supporting any waste disposal option that combusts waste?
14. Will you commit to a city-wide policy by January 2016 that insures all Toronto residents and businesses have access to waste diversion services, including green bin and blue bin services, no matter where they live or who provides service?
15. In order to determine the best solutions for improving waste diversion, will you commit to supporting a major green bin and recycling evaluation program for multi-residential buildings to review the effectiveness of the green bin roll out and recycling education ads?

Detox Toronto

16. In order to protect Lake Ontario (our drinking water source) from emerging Chemicals of Concern that are being found in the Great Lakes, will you support the addition, in 2015, of new toxic chemicals to the list of "subject pollutants" and "parameters" enforced under Toronto's Sewers By-law?
17. As a way to prevent cancer and protect human health, will you support the development of a toxics reduction strategy in 2015 to phase out two cancer-causing substances that have been identified as a priority by Toronto Public Health?
18. Will you support the introduction of new Green Sector services, to be provided to Toronto businesses by the Economic Development & Culture Division, starting in 2016, that focus on reducing operational wastes like fuel, chemicals and solid waste?

What You Can Do

When candidates knock on your door and when you see them at All Candidate's Meetings, ask them the questions you care most about and let them know you support TEA's Green Action Agenda. Let us know what happens when you talk to your candidates. Send us an email at: election2014@torontoenvironment.org