



Youth Perspectives on Regina's Energy Future

SUMMARY REPORT

FEBRUARY 2020



Background

In 2018, the City of Regina passed a motion committing to ensure that Regina runs on 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050. Running a city completely on renewables helps create jobs, improve human health and protect the climate. But the city didn't pass this motion alone. Residents from all walks of life – business leaders, renewable energy advocates, teachers, students, academics, health professionals and others – worked with councillors and the mayor and celebrated their commitment. Now, local residents are keen to work with the city to achieve that 100 per cent renewable energy target and to create a sustainable, resilient future for all.

On November 30, 2019, approximately 70 people came together for a youth forum to share ideas on Regina's energy future. The forum's goal was to hear from people under 35 about our priorities, visions and values in order to help define a sustainable future for our community and to inform efforts by the City of Regina and others to run the city on 100 per cent renewable energy by 2050.

The youth forum was organized by EnviroCollective, the David Suzuki Foundation, the Regina Public Interest Research Group, Fridays for Future Regina, Mother Earth Justice Advocates and Regina Blue Dot Movement.

Process

To understand how we can get to the 100 per cent renewable target, participants heard from community members and local researchers about climate change and the role of greenhouse gas emissions, city planning and the tools that cities have to support energy transitions, Indigenous perspectives, and the importance of equality when planning how to reduce emissions. Presentations emphasized inclusion, urgency of action and the importance of working from evidence. Then, participants under 35 participated in an energizing "bold ideas" visioning exercise. From there, small groups worked together to shape the ideas that youth most wanted translated into action and discussed the values that should guide our community's transition to 100 per cent renewable energy.



Key messages from the forum

Roles and responsibilities

Youth are demanding that decision-makers implement energy-transition plans in response to the changing climate and to the needs of our plant and animal relatives. Since March 2019, young people have been striking from school every Friday in Regina to make it clear: these transition plans are urgently needed and should be grounded in science and the wisdom of nature. While everyone needs to be involved in realizing these solutions, the priorities should be informed by the needs and ideas of youth, Indigenous Peoples and those most affected. Without an explicit equity focus, any carbon-reduction strategies could worsen existing inequalities.

Working together is essential

There is a clear desire and willingness to find solutions for Regina's energy transition. Honesty, relationship building, mentorship, leadership and education are necessary to bring everyone together to implement solutions. Learning from one another was seen as essential. We should be curious and seek out new information and perspectives as opportunities to grow and learn. Innovation, creativity and inclusion should be guiding ideas. Regina should learn from other cities and communities and share our own innovations with them as well.

Meaningful participation

Regina residents, particularly youth, have specific and detailed ideas about how Regina and its residents can and need to change to lead by example and to live better with nature. This forum was a first step at creating a space for youth to learn about climate science, share ideas for reducing emissions and craft visions for Regina. But youth want these conversations to continue in the wider community – and more specifically, between youth and decision-makers. We are encouraged by the interest shown by some city staff and councillors in continuing these conversations.

Ensuring Indigenous involvement

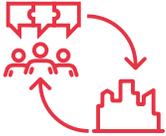
It is essential to ensure that Indigenous perspectives, needs, governance and rights are respected when implementing the 100 per cent renewable Regina motion. Truth and reconciliation require everyone working together. Specifically, residents and decision-makers should take the opportunity to educate themselves, prioritize meeting with Indigenous communities in ways that respect protocols, recognize the validity of Indigenous governance, engage in respectful and open communication and simply ask – ask questions, ask communities to participate. Treat every unknown as an opportunity for growth and learning. If we lead with respect and openness, we will strengthen all our communities.

Outcomes

and recommended actions

Priority action areas

Youth at the forum generated 32 “bold idea” proposals in support of Regina becoming a 100 per cent renewable, sustainable, healthy and happy city. In looking at the content of all 32 ideas, eight priority areas for action become clear:



Civic engagement and knowledge mobilization to strengthen targets



Complete communities: land-use, active transportation and transit



Zero waste, composting and recycling



Food systems and urban agriculture



A just transition: equity, building safe and inclusive communities



Incentivizing, investing and financing the sustainable economy



Civil disobedience



Renewable energy and energy efficiency

A vision for Regina’s energy transition: youth proposals

From the 32 proposals generated by youth, seven ideas were prioritized through a peer rating process. These ideas received the highest ratings from participating youth and were discussed in detail in small groups that included youth and adult supporters. After refining, these five proposals received the highest support:



1. Complete communities: create mixed-use, healthy, walkable neighbourhoods *everywhere* in the city

The city should be designed to be healthy, with everything we need within a reasonable distance, prioritizing existing neighbourhoods.

Specifically, we need to ensure everyone has access to healthy, nourishing food and eliminate food deserts (neighbourhoods with limited access to healthy food due to long distances to the nearest grocery store); create more walking/biking/rolling paths with essential resources nearby to make Regina truly accessible to residents of all mobilities; focus on density by engaging in better neighbourhood planning, rezoning and development; and work to deliver free transit.



2. 2050 is too late: we should be a renewable city by 2030 or 2040

While the goal of being 100 per cent renewable by 2050 is an important step, participants discussed that the urgency of this transition plan requires more ambitious action.

Specific priority actions included citywide strikes to push the deadline to 2030 and creation of a working group within the City of Regina that has high community membership, keeping the city accountable to the 100 per cent renewable motion.



3. Transition the city to a zero-waste community

Participants were clear, detailed and passionate about wanting a mandatory City of Regina composting program and a rigorous and innovative multi-stream waste management plan.

City of Regina waste management programs are in place but are moving too slowly. Pilot projects are a good start but can also delay action. Instead, participants support immediately phasing in a citywide compost system, including compost stations at all waste facilities, curbside pickup together with waste and recycling, and mandatory compost bins. The multi-stream waste management plan should put a price on garbage and give credits and incentives to people with very low garbage production. Ban single-use plastics and non-recyclable items from fast food places. Shift the burden of packaging onto companies by taxing and fining large companies that use single-use plastic. Grocery stores should require reusable and refillable packaging.



4. Ensure dedicated community spaces for community voices

Regina needs safe spaces where people can come together as a community, feel heard and find solace and healing.

These spaces should be dedicated to raising people's voices. Prioritize parks, green space and community gardens that bring people together. Participants wanted to see education, sharing of food and stories and bringing in speakers to help people understand one another and our challenges ahead. Create mentorship opportunities and expand the network and community of active youth. The City of Regina and community institutions should follow the Positive Space Network training program by UR Pride, with visible identifiers to show people on front lines have done the training.



5. Subsidize solar panels for all households and convert wastewater treatment plant to produce biofuel for all vehicles

Decentralize energy production through local utilities companies and projects; for example, allowing communities to generate their own power through micro-gridding (a small-scale, local power station or grid that can operate on its own or work with other small systems). Consider other solutions for solar programs by subsidizing solar panels through private companies. Look to Edmonton, Saskatoon and Toronto as model cities for ways to get rid of our waste by turning it into biofuel. Reach for zero greenhouse gas emissions and zero waste.

What values should inform Regina's energy transition?

Youth first

Inclusive

**Love/
compassion**

**Education
beyond schools**

Transparency

Respect for all

**Curiosity
before
judgement**

**Innovation/
creativity**

**Human
health**

**Learning
by doing**

**Ecological
wisdom**

**Community
engagement**

Urgency

**Leading by
example and
taking action**

**The 3 Ds:
decarbonization
decolonization
democratization**

**Interconnected
world view:
humans are
a part of
nature**

Opportunities and next steps

Representatives from the City of Regina have demonstrated their desire to listen to residents and engage with youth. For example, Carole Tink, the City of Regina's director of technology and digital innovation, and a member of the city's diversity and inclusion committee, attended the forum. Further, some city councillors have also expressed interest in attending other forums, dialogues and exchanges. The interest from the City of Regina to continue the conversation is promising.

Young people have been striking from school every Friday in Regina to make it clear: ambitious goals like Regina's 100 per cent renewable motion are urgently needed. This report outlines the priorities, values and ideas that youth believe should inform this plan and proposes next steps that council can take. Council and residents have a unique opportunity to collaborate to shape our energy future if we lead by example, embrace compassion and curiosity, and ensure inclusion, equity and transparency.

To do this, continued spaces to foster connections between residents and decision-makers are needed, including dedicated spaces for youth, Indigenous Peoples and residents who will be most affected by the transition.

Specifically, opportunities to shape the implementation of Regina's 100 per cent renewable motion should involve collaboration with participants from this forum to respond to these priorities, values and ideas, and to build on them.

To get involved with engaging community members and decision-makers about the urgent need for a sustainable future, contact EnviroCollective, envirocollective2018@gmail.com, and connect with facebook.com/FridaysForFutureRegina.

Forum organizing partners



