

# TORONTO'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRESS REPORT



**CITY COUNCIL MIDTERM REPORT  
TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE**



# CITY COUNCIL MIDTERM REPORT



Since Toronto elected a new City Council and a new mayor in the fall of 2014, Council has met 22 times and made major decisions that impact our land, air, water and health. TEA has been monitoring City Hall closely, calling on Councillors and the Mayor to follow through with the environmental commitments they made to voters back in 2014. As City Council reaches their midterm mark, we evaluated the key environmental decisions made by our local government in the last two years on four issue areas: climate change, transportation, toxics and waste.



## CLIMATE CHANGE

A low-carbon future for our city will help protect our health, strengthen our economy, and build resilient communities in the face of climate change and severe weather.

### WHAT TORONTO NEEDED:

**A fully funded climate action plan that gets us on the path for dramatically reducing our carbon emissions and building a resilient city.**

### WHAT WE GOT:

- X** Despite introducing a new short-term climate action plan in 2016, no new money was allocated for the 2017 budget to ramp up climate actions.
- X** No new funds in the 2017 budget to support climate resiliency efforts although it is an urgent issue because of extreme weather hazards.
- ⚠️** A pledge from Mayor Tory at the 2015 Paris Climate Change Conference to take action but no funding commitments.
- ✓** A short-term climate action plan introduced in 2016 that outlines key strategies to help achieve an emissions reduction target of 30% by 2020.
- ✓** A commitment to develop a new long-term climate action plan for May 2017 to help us meet an 80% reduction target by 2050.

### REAL ACTION REQUIRES CLIMATE FUNDING



Toronto is taking the right steps in developing new climate action plans to achieve our reduction targets and prepare for severe weather. But without adequate investments to implement these plans, we will fail to meet our targets. Council needs to dramatically ramp up funding for climate actions to deal with the growing impacts as well as take advantage of emerging opportunities.



# TRANSPORTATION

Toronto needs to be a safe, affordable, and easy city to take transit, bike, or walk to ensure we have clean air and a low-carbon future.

## WHAT TORONTO NEEDED:

**Serious investment in improving TTC services and keeping fares fair as well as building cycling and walking infrastructure.**

## WHAT WE GOT:

**X** Cuts to TTC services in 2017 as part of Council’s directive to cut all budgets by 2.6%.

**X** Two more years of TTC fare increases, making transit increasingly unaffordable.

**!** Lukewarm interest in 30 km slow zones and Complete Streets, coupled with high numbers of pedestrian and cyclist deaths, suggests we have a long way to go.

**!** Installation of the Bloor Street Bike lane and new investments in bike infrastructure, but the building timeframe is too slow and some key projects remain unfunded.

**✓** More money in the 2015 City Budget to begin bringing TTC service levels back to what they were in 2010.

**✓** Free TTC fares for children and consideration of a low-income metropass.

## MORE MUST BE DONE TO KEEP US MOVING SAFELY



We’ve seen bad news for most TTC riders who are facing higher fares and poorer service. The next two years look even worse thanks to TTC budget cuts and no new revenue tools dedicated to transit. With increased pressure to reduce the number of pedestrian and cyclist deaths, solutions to make streets safer for all users need serious consideration and the infrastructure built quickly to save lives and reduce congestion.



In early December 2014, the new Mayor of Toronto and 44 City Councillors met for the first time. Since then, City Council has met 22 times and voted on crucial environmental issues that affect our city. Decisions have also been made at Standing Committees and Boards.



# TOXICS

Our city should protect our residents and nature from pollution found in our air, land, and water and find solutions that support a greener economy.

## WHAT TORONTO NEEDED:

**Concrete policies and action plans to reduce and eliminate known toxic chemicals found in our air and water to protect our health and the environment.**

## WHAT WE GOT:

-  No financial or technical support offered to companies that wish to reduce or eliminate their use or releases of toxic chemicals.
-  'Polluter pays' debates in 2015-2016 have acknowledged the City's failure to charge companies millions of dollars in sewage treatment costs.
-  Support for a 2017 risk-based approach that identifies which companies must develop pollution prevention plans to protect Lake Ontario.
-  Commitment to identify new substances entering our sewers and polluting Lake Ontario and expand the list of chemicals managed through the Sewers Bylaw in 2017.
-  Toronto Public Health is taking action in 2016-2017 to manage cancer-causing chemicals found in Toronto's air like dry cleaning solvents and VOC emissions.

## MAKING PROGRESS ON POLLUTION POLICIES



We've seen some promising progress on toxics policy planning in the last two years and 2017 will be the crucial year for decision making. Toronto will need champions at City Hall to keep Council on track if we wish to see a measurable reduction in toxic chemicals. Since preventing pollution makes good business sense, we need to end the cycle of Council debates that wrongfully pit environment against business.

To find this report online, including a detailed list of the decisions made by Council and Committees referenced in this report, visit:

**[WWW.TORONTOENVIRONMENT.ORG/PROGRESS](http://WWW.TORONTOENVIRONMENT.ORG/PROGRESS)**



# WASTE

A zero waste Toronto will manage resources wisely to protect the environment, benefit the community and support a green, circular economy.

## WHAT TORONTO NEEDED:

**A serious plan to invest in 3Rs tools and outreach to get all residents and businesses to zero waste, with a focus on organics first.**

## WHAT WE GOT:

**X** Despite a promising new Waste Strategy, it's still aiming too low: the waste diversion target is stuck at 70% and the timeline to reach it has been pushed back to 2026.

**X** No clear plan to build more organics facilities to manage increased Green Bin usage in high-rise residential buildings and businesses.

**✓** After three years of work, a new Long Term Waste Strategy passed in 2016 with overwhelming public support for a zero waste goal.

**✓** Commitment to improve access and use of 3Rs services for all Toronto residents in next 5 years through education, enforcement and partnerships.

**✓** Consideration of a new City-wide policy that ensures all Toronto residents and businesses have access to the same diversion services in 2017.

## GREAT GOALS, BUT WASTING TOO MUCH TIME



Toronto's Waste Strategy has the potential to make the most of Toronto's 3Rs programs, but without ongoing pressure and leadership it won't be enough to meet our zero waste goals. There are some new projects underway to help high-rise buildings, but Council must show their commitment to zero waste by funding and passing new policies and enforcement programs that keep organics and recycling out of our landfill.

## FINAL THOUGHTS: TWO MORE YEARS TO GO

While we have seen some progress issues like toxics and waste, City Hall is still far from fulfilling their responsibilities on climate change and transportation. The good news is that fulfilling environmental responsibilities can also advance important social justice and economic goals that make for a better city and future. The longer City Council waits to act, the more opportunities we lose to build a greener city that also helps those in need and creates a green circular economy.

TEA will continue to be the environmental watchdog at City Hall to hold elected officials to their commitments, monitor the budgets needed to fund the work, challenge ideas that pose harm to our communities and the environment, and promote policies and programs that can build a greener city for all. With two more years to go, a lot can still happen.



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