

# **TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE**

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## **An Open Letter to Metro Area Mayors**

**In light of the serious health effects of Smog, and in response to the concerns of your constituents, the Toronto Environmental Alliance calls upon you to act locally to protect the air.**

**The following is a list actions that will allow you to reduce the Smog causing emissions that your government is responsible for, and promote similar actions in your communities. Adopting these actions will also allow you to point to the provincial government with a clean finger, and demand that they now do their part to clean the air.**

### **TARGET**

**Your municipalities will work to achieve a 75% reduction in Smog Episode days, concentrating on reducing NO<sub>x</sub> and VOCs emissions by at least 45% and Particulate Matter emissions by at least 25%, within its boundaries by 2005. The following prescribed actions are just a starting point and will represent your commitment to these targets.**

### **ACTIONS**

*(Measures that your municipal corporation can take to limit its own emissions.)*

#### **1. A "Smog Alert"**

Activated by your Department of Health, based on the Air Quality Index (AQI) approaching the "Poor Air" designation.

(This air is designated as "poor" by the MOEE at an AQI level of '50', and notice is sent to the Medical Officer of Health on the afternoon prior to a predicted smog episode)

**This “Alert” should include the following actions:**

- **Suspension of the City’s/Borough’s activities requiring gasoline powered Parks’ equipment on Smog Alert Days.**

(According to EPA documents in the United States, lawn mowers contribute 11.5 times more smog precursor emissions than a car. leaf blowers pollute 35 times more -- many Parks’ activities are already suspended on rainy days, so management concerns about labour practices should not be a problem)

- **Suspension of the City’s/Borough’s use of oil based paints, solvents, cleaners, etc. on Smog Alert Days.**

(What we describe as the “fumes” from these products are Volatile Organic Compounds - VOCs, and are a major smog precursor)

- **Suspension of street sweeping activities, at least until after dark on Smog Alert Days.**

(Street sweeping is a primary source of Fine Particulate Matter, that is the visible part of smog, and causes a great deal of damage when inhaled)

- **Suspension of pesticide spraying activities by the City/Borough on Smog Alert Days.**

(The toxic chemicals in pesticides attach themselves to the Fine Particulate Matter much like sulphates do, and are inhaled along with the particles -- pesticide spraying is already prohibited on windy or rainy days)

- **Suspension of re-fuelling activities for all municipal vehicles, at least until after dark, on Smog Alert Days.**

(Re-fuelling “fumes” are also VOCs and a major smog precursor)

- **Suspension of all non-essential vehicle use by the City/Borough on Smog Alert Days.**

(Vehicle emissions are the single largest source of smog precursor emissions in Metro Toronto)

- **Suspension of all road re-surfacing activities on Smog Alert Days.**

(Both the production and application of asphalt are major smog precursors -- this could certainly apply to municipal workers activities, but would have to be written into future paving contracts.)

- **Closing of the Municipal Employee Parking Garages on Smog Alert Days.**

(This would not prevent employees from driving to work, but it would simply show that your municipality is serious about setting an example for commuters -- employees would be given pre-notification, and reminded on the afternoon prior to a Smog Alert)

- **Turning down all municipal air conditioning units on Smog Alert Days and promoting casual dress to compensate for the slight increase in indoor temperature.**

(This will reduce peak load electricity demand from coal fired electrical generators like the Lakeview Generating Station in Mississauga)

2. **A “Green Fleet” Program for the Municipal vehicle fleet.**

- **Adopting a “Green Fleet” target of reducing smog causing pollutants from your municipality’s own fleet by 50% by 2005, through the purchase of an increased number of cleaner fuel vehicles, reduction of fleet numbers, driver training programs, and vehicle replacement with non-car transportation modes. It is essential that you specifically target your diesel fleet vehicles in this endeavour.**

3. **An Employee “Automobile Trip Reduction Program”**

- **Increasing telecommuting options and variable work hours where applicable, as well as employee run transportation programs to reduce car use for the employees’ commute.**

(Telecommuting and car use reduction programs have already been started in some municipalities)

- **Revise employee parking policies -- non-essential parking becomes pay for use.**

(The City/Borough ‘lead by example’ in the fight for healthy air, by charging employees for parking and using the revenues for clean-air activities (all essential vehicles, work vehicles and vehicles of disabled employees would still park for free)

**4. Monitoring Programs:**

- A plan to monitor the economic benefits of these clean air actions. These actions won't cost your municipality anything. In many cases tax-payers money will be saved as a result of these suggestions.
- The commissioning of a program to monitor emissions reductions that accrue as the result of these initiatives, and to identify other actions that will facilitate your meeting reduction targets.

**5. Promote your City's/Borough's Smog Plan and Challenge The Community to Follow Your Lead**

- A Public Communications Program, promoting what your municipality is doing itself and outlining voluntary smog reduction actions that other organizations and the public are being asked to undertake.

(Showing your constituents the municipality's "Clean Hands" is essential to getting them to voluntarily change their own practices -- the big smog reduction benefits will come from getting the people of your municipality to act)

**6. An Emergency Smog Plan for the whole municipality which is focussed on what health precautions to take and what activities not to undertake on smog days.**

(This has a tremendous ability to focus peoples minds on the problem when it is visible to them in the skies above -- this would be both a health warning and a prescription for voluntary action - vehicle use, solvent use, pesticide use, etc. this should include notifying day cares and other children's facilities of the increased risk to children.)