

# CLIMATE SOLUTIONS THAT WORK: BRINGING COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND CLIMATE ACTION TOGETHER



While climate change is inevitable, climate justice is not. Now that each level of government has committed to curbing climate change and are beginning to invest billions of dollars, it's important that we turn our attention to climate justice. We need to ensure that social equity and community benefits are part of Ontario's and Toronto's climate action plans.

The Province of Ontario alone has committed to investing \$5-9 billion by 2020 through their climate action plan. These investments in climate actions are also an opportunity to create a number of important community benefits such as job creation, poverty reduction, and improvements to social housing and public health.

To explore how to leverage this unique opportunity, we began a cross-sectoral partnership between the CEE Centre for Young Black Professionals, Social Planning Toronto and the Toronto Environmental Alliance. With support from the Atkinson Foundation, we undertook a research study to identify best practices for leveraging climate actions to create a range of community benefits, most especially decent work.

The following best practices offer insights to community organizers on the conditions we need to foster in Toronto and Ontario to leverage the opportunities to create similar community benefits.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR LEVERAGING COMMUNITY BENEFITS FROM CLIMATE ACTIONS

**Seize the opportunity to implement building retrofits and weatherization programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while improve living conditions for families. Benefits can include:**

- Reducing energy costs for families
- Improving the quality and comfort of homes
- Improving health conditions inside of homes
- Providing training and employment opportunities for local community members
- Leveraging repair and retrofit efforts to maximize investment and increase efficiency

**Prioritize green projects that break the cycles of poverty by creating job opportunities for marginalized people. Types of projects can include:**

- Building retrofits (e.g. caulking windows, upgrading lighting, replacing boilers)
- Weatherization programs (e.g. white roofs, wall insulation, roof insulation, exterior repairs to building facades)
- Renewable energy projects (e.g. solar energy, lake water cooling)
- Green infrastructure projects (e.g. green roofs)

**Design programs with wrap around training and support for marginalized and racialized communities to access job opportunities in the green economy. Wrap around supports can include:**

- Assistance with finding housing
- Compensation for travel costs
- Educational components to help trainees complete their GEDs
- Training and educational support to help participants pursue certification
- Workshops focused on nutrition and wellbeing
- Financial planning classes
- Providing essential equipment for entering the workforce (hard hats, boots etc)
- Financial support for paying initial union dues

**Build a broad-based diverse coalition to guide the design and implementation of green programs. Strong coalitions have a diverse range of partners and allies including:**

- Local community organizers
- Neighbourhood associations
- Social service agencies
- Environmental groups
- Industry and employment partners
- Unions and labour groups
- Policy-focused organizations
- Local businesses
- Political champions and government leaders



**Partner with employers and unions who can help break down employment barriers in the green economy and help build long-term career pathways for marginalized communities. Employers and unions can support with program delivery to help ensure job placements for trainees and future long-term employment opportunities.**



**Connect with government leaders and political champions who can help foster support for programs and projects that invest in climate actions that leverage community benefits. Governments can implement a number of actions that support the work of green projects that produce community benefits, including:**

- Negotiating a High Roads Agreement or a Community Benefits Agreement
- Strengthening and expanding incentive programs for low-income homeowners to participate in retrofit and weatherization programs
- Partnering or providing long-term contract to organizations delivering workforce development training for disadvantaged workers
- Setting hiring targets for disadvantaged workers as part of government retrofit and construction projects
- Requiring utilities to invest in energy efficiency programs that create community benefits
- Removing employment barriers for civil service positions to provide greater access to disadvantaged workers



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