

Toronto Climate Action Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Extreme weather a stark reminder that Toronto's COVID-19 recovery must address the climate crisis

TORONTO - Recent extreme heat, drought and flooding in Toronto and southern Ontario is a strong reminder that governments must address the climate crisis in their COVID-19 recovery plans, say Toronto climate leaders in a joint statement endorsed by a network of more than 30 local climate groups.

"COVID-19 has revealed the widespread vulnerability of Toronto residents," said Lyn Adamson, Co-Chair of ClimateFast. "As political leaders plan for recovery, they must ensure that residents are also protected from the climate-related extreme weather events we know are coming."

In a submission to the Toronto Office of Recovery and Rebuild, members of the Toronto Climate Action Network (TCAN) urge Mayor John Tory and City Council to accelerate action to address the City-declared climate emergency as part of Toronto's COVID-19 recovery.

Public consultations on Toronto's COVID-19 recovery plan end today.

"To protect residents we need to build our resilience to survive both future pandemics and climate-related shocks," said Madelyn Webb, Director of Community Engagement at CREW Toronto (Community Resilience to Extreme Weather). "That means building a city where all have secure access to employment, food, housing and other community supports."

The TCAN submission stresses that the populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 are the same ones threatened most by extreme weather and other climate-related shocks.

"The COVID crisis has hurt people who have the fewest options to protect themselves, including those who are homeless or under-housed, people living in long-term care, and front-line service workers who lack the option of working or isolating at home," said Michael Polanyi, Climate Campaigner at Toronto Environmental Alliance. "In our city, this tends to be Black, Indigenous, racialized and low-income people, and the elderly."

In its submission, TCAN outlines specific actions the City of Toronto can take to launch a recovery process that addresses the climate crisis while also improving health, well-being and equity, and building resilience to future shocks.

Specific recommendations include:

- launching a low-carbon jobs strategy focused on training and hiring equity-seeking groups, including racialized youth
- ramping up energy efficiency retrofits of multi-residential buildings to reduce emissions, improve living conditions, and create new jobs
- expanding green space, tree cover, and green roofs, especially in neighbourhoods that have the least access to green space and are vulnerable to climate-related extreme weather
- expanding community gardens and community food programs in food insecure neighbourhoods
- providing safe transit options by ensuring accessible, equitably-available transit service, protected bike lanes, and BikeShare rentals across the city
- strengthening resilience and emergency preparedness by supporting neighbourhood hubs and resident networks that have been stepping up to respond to emergency needs.

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For more information or to arrange an interview:

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About the Toronto Climate Action Network (TCAN)

TCAN works to foster collaboration among diverse, action-oriented organizations working in Toronto to prevent climate breakdown, strengthen climate resilience, and advance climate justice. It has over thirty member organizations.

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