

Ecology Ottawa

Annual Report

2020



ECO OSY OTEAWA

working to make Ottawa the green capital of Canada

How do we do this?

- By collaborating with like-minded people and groups who share a green vision for the city
- By supporting community-led and community-based action on environmental issues
- By engaging with all levels of government to ensure the environment and the impact of climate change are on everyone's agenda
- By building a movement of engaged volunteers and supporters who share common values around protecting the natural environment and promoting sustainability in our built environment.





Our supporters 2020

Ecology Ottawa's work is driven and inspired by the **102,216 supporters**, **2,473 volunteers**, **9,624 donors and 374 members of our Protectors' Circle** who share our environmental vision for this city.

We also thank the following institutional donors for their support in 2020: Alva Foundation; Canada Summer Jobs; Environment and Climate Change Canada's Climate Action and Awareness Fund; Five B. Family Foundation; Nature Canada; Ontario Trillium Foundation; Ottawa Community Foundation; Ottawa Sustainability Fund; PLT Canada; Succession; Sustainable Eastern Ontario; The Echo Foundation; The Gosling Foundation; The Trottier Family Foundation; UNAC Green Corps.

As always, our activities and events were made possible through contributions from local businesses and organizations: Architects DCA; Camino; Dominion City Brewing Co.; Forest Therapy Ottawa; Indigenous Clean Energy; Lumos Clean Energy Advisors; Maya Hum; Ottawa River Psychology Group; SmartNet Alliance; Strawberry Blonde Bakery; Uniting for Children and Youth; Thyme & Again; Wine Not Experience. A special thanks for your support in what was a very difficult year for the business community.

Finally, to the partner organizations who shared in campaigns and activities, and the individuals who contributed to making our live and remote events a success in 2020, we offer our sincere appreciation.

A message from our Executive Director

As we all know, **2020 was a year when everything changed**. The rapid spread of COVID-19 had devastating effects on lives all over the world, and Ottawa was by no means exempt. Families were transformed and upended, and the fabric of our city has been forever altered.

Through it all, I was struck by **three hard lessons from this pandemic**. Each of them relates to our ongoing work to make Ottawa the green capital of Canada.

First, science and expertise matter. Whether it's with public health or the climate, we need to put a premium on evidence-based policy. For thorny problems, this is the only real way to a safe and healthy outcome for everyone.

Second, prevention is better than the cure. The Covid lockdowns weren't easy, but they were essential to staving off a runaway crisis. When I think of challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss, it's clear that early and ambitious measures are much more valuable than last-ditch fixes.

Third, we are more powerful and resilient than we had realized. Covid taught us that personal choices and collective action could protect our community. In some ways, 2020 is remarkable for the stories that weren't told: the collapse of our health system, or the disruption of our food supply. We managed to avoid the worst because of solidarity and resolve. And through it all — even at a safe physical distance — we continued to build a more vibrant Ottawa.

I'm happy to turn the page on 2020, but I hope we'll remember this experience for our post-pandemic future. If we apply what has been learned, we will have the means and the will to make Ottawa a greener city in the years to come.

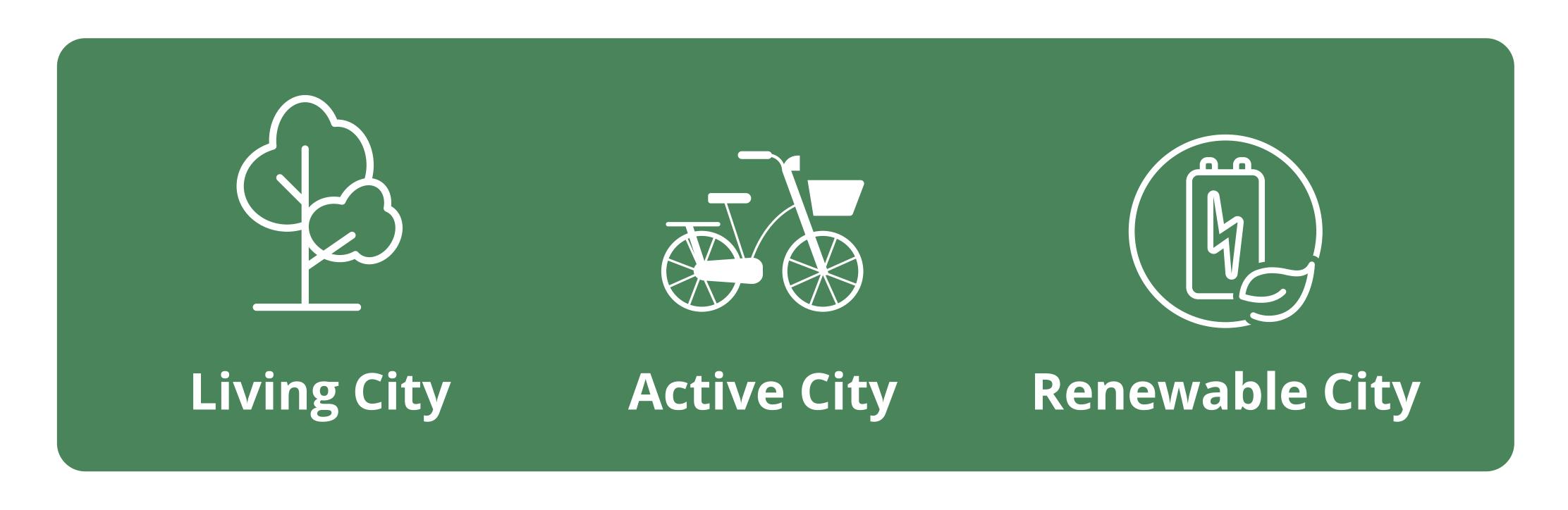


Robb Barnes, Ecology Ottawa Executive Director

Ecology Ottawa at work in 2020

Our Three Pillars

Ecology Ottawa frames its work around the three following pillars. While the programs within these pillars can change or evolve, the pillars themselves reflect the issues of interest to the volunteers, community groups, partner organizations and engaged individuals who are core to the success of our work.



Living City



Our Living City program looks at the environmental, social, health and political aspects of maintaining and improving a healthy tree canopy, water sources, water management practices, parks and common lands for the benefit of the entire community.

Programs

- Tree Campaign
- Biodiversity Campaign

Tree Campaign

While Covid put a dent on in-person tree giveaways for 2020, Ecology Ottawa continued to press for action on tree protection and promotion at the policy level. In 2020, we launched renewed efforts to monitor implementation of the City of Ottawa's Urban Forest Management Plan, and pushed council to move faster and further on implementing its ambitious tree plan for the city.



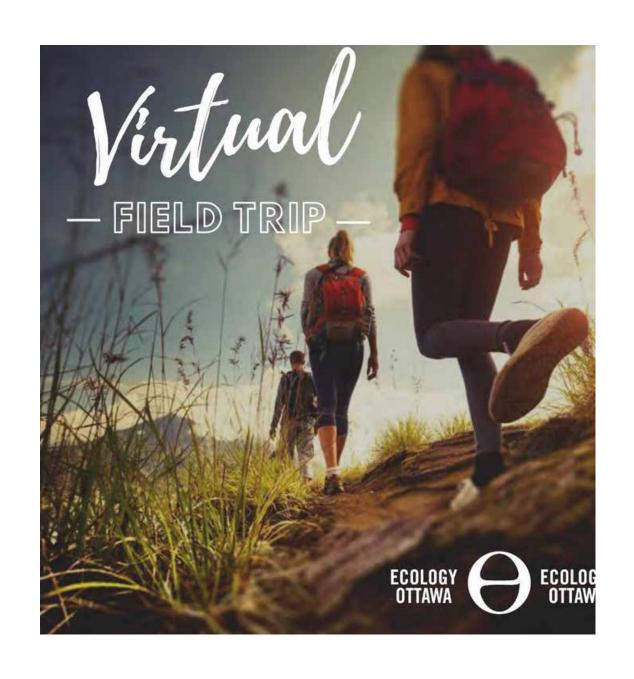
As part of this effort, we launched a new petition to protect Ottawa's tree canopy. One particular area of focus was on establishing and maintaining a 40% tree canopy cover by neighbourhood. This is the level of canopy cover new studies suggest will be essential to cooling our city as climate change makes heat waves — and the urban heat island effect — more frequent and severe in the coming years.

Living City



Biodiversity Campaign

2020 marked the launch of a **Biodiversity** campaign focused on the urgent issue of urban nature. We know that cities are on the front lines of the worldwide biodiversity crisis, as these are the sites where humans and the natural world too often come into conflict.



With the Covid lockdown in full effect, we pivoted towards a large-scale citizen science initiative. Using the free iNaturalist app, we asked Ecology Ottawa supporters to step outside and monitor nearby nature. Citizen-led observations and reporting helps the broader community understand the state of local biodiversity, all while encouraging Ottawans to enjoy and learn about the world outside our doors.



This initiative was paired with an advocacy effort to get the City of Ottawa to become a biodiversity champion — through better nature monitoring and stronger policy.

Active City



Our Active City program includes initiatives that help make streets, sidewalks and pathways safe and accessible for all—especially pedestrians, cyclists and transit users.

Programs

- Safe Streets, Healthy Streets
- Vision Zero
- Breathe Easy

Safe Streets Healthy Streets

In March 2020, we launched **Safe Streets, Healthy Streets**, an initiative to see underused streets or street lanes repurposed for use by pedestrians and cyclists. It was conceived in response to Covid stay-at-home measures and the need for increased access for people to safe outdoor spaces. This built on our early campaigns promoting Complete Streets and active transportation, to maximize all forms of sustainable mobility options in the city. The NCC and individual councillors stepped up, leading to actions like dedicated bike lanes on Bank Street Bridge over the canal, removing cars along stretches of Byron Avenue and Bank Street (in Centretown), and seeing most of Queen Elizabeth Driveway closed to cars for a significant portion of the year. These were important steps in a year that needed options for people to enjoy fresh air, exercise and the ability to socialize in physically-distanced ways.

Vision Zero

2020 saw continued advocacy on the **Vision Zero** file — that is, a plan to eliminate severe injury and death on Ottawa's streets. Ecology Ottawa supporters signed the Vision Zero petition, and engaged volunteers participated in the city's Road Safety Action Plan Community Working Group, hosted by the City of Ottawa.

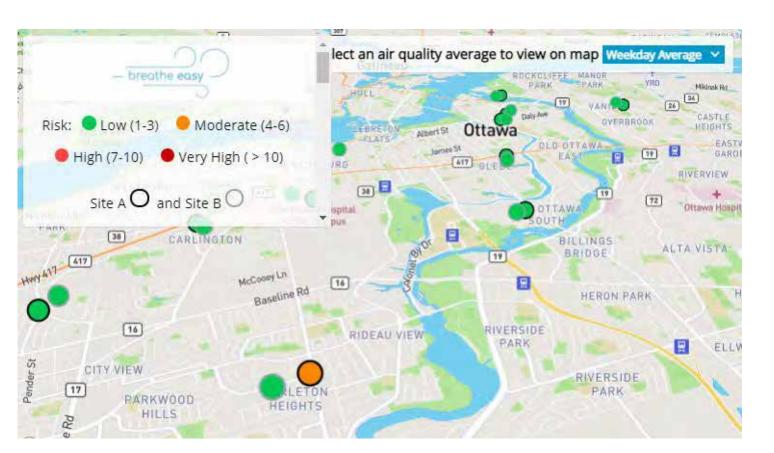
Active City



Breathe Easy

In 2020, Ecology Ottawa launched 'Breathe Easy,' an advocacy and citizen science campaign focused on monitoring and improving air quality in Ottawa. Breathing clean air is vital to our physical health, but is a growing challenge with the rise of pollutants in our atmosphere. Air pollution is one of the most significant environmental challenges impacting public health, and one of the most avoidable causes of death and disease globally.

Over the year, Ecology Ottawa's volunteers collected air quality data from 40 sites across Ottawa, measuring particulate matter, ozone and nitrogen dioxide. Over 150 volunteers trained to use devices for air quality monitoring across Ottawa, while five more were involved in the data management, analysis and mapping effort. The campaign was Ottawa's largest community-led science project. It led to a public map as well as a report on how the city can take action to improve air quality through better planning and policy.



Screenshot from the 'Breathe Easy' online map

Dreathe easy

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Cub
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A 'Breathe Easy' volunteer gets ready to collect emissions data.

Renewable City



Our Renewable City program focuses on climate action, green jobs and renewable energy transition. This is the campaign that targets local action on the climate crisis, and fosters the community collaborations needed to drive change.

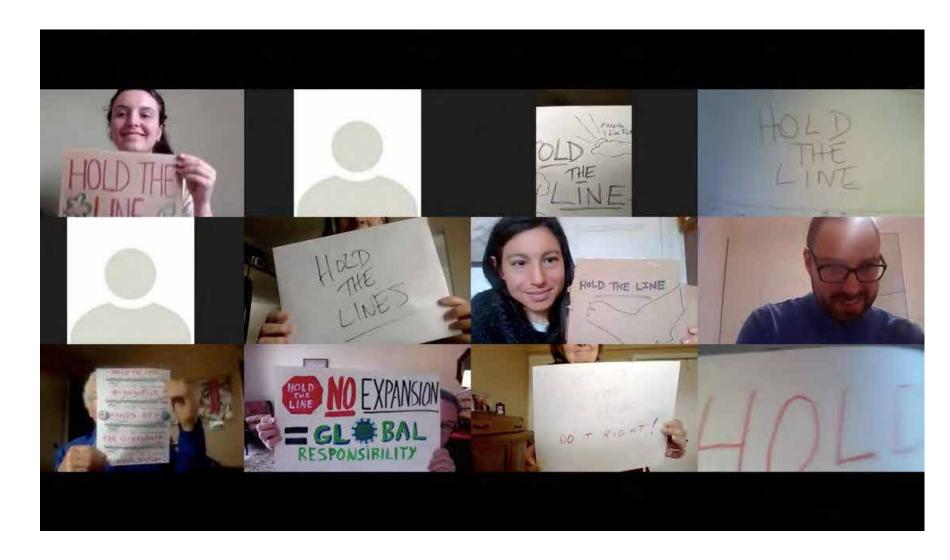
Programs

- Hold the Line Campaign
- Action Plan for 15-Minute
 Neighbourhoods
- Urban Climate Alliance
- People's Official Plan
- Ottawa Energy Collective

Hold the Line Campaign

2020 marked a major decision point on whether Ottawa would expand its urban boundary. Ecology Ottawa joined community groups and concerned residents from across the city to demand that council "**hold the line**" on urban sprawl by voting no on a massive proposed urban boundary expansion.

This campaign marked a watershed moment for discussions on urban sprawl in Ottawa and its negative impacts on climate, greenspace, local nature and sustainable mobility. While city hall eventually voted to expand the boundary, the campaign brought on thousands of new supporters and laid the groundwork for future action on the city's new Official Plan. Right before the vote, Ecology Ottawa hosted the largest online rally in the city's history, with over 500 participants.



Participants in the Hold the Line rally show their homemade signs and banners

Renewable City



Action Plan for 15-Minute Neighbourhoods

After council voted to expand Ottawa's urban boundary, Ecology Ottawa responded with a campaign that targets the root causes of urban sprawl: namely, our city's built form. This campaign is anchored in the growing literature about the importance of urban form to a city's climate performance. In short, its message is that we can build a better Ottawa while taking ambitious action against the climate crisis.

The Action Plan for 15-Minute Neighbourhoods is anchored around three pillars that Ecology Ottawa is pushing as part of the development of the city's new Official Plan in late 2021:

- More density;
- More vibrant communities, with an emphasis on mixed-use development; and
- More transportation choices, with an emphasis on lessening car-dependency.

NEEDED: An ambitious vision for climate action in the city

Ottawa ... used to build **15-minute neighbourhoods** as a matter of course. Bustling, pedestrian-centric streets were integrated along with corner stores and local businesses in many of Ottawa's older neighbourhoods ... But they've seen wear and tear. Corner stores disappeared along with the streetcars, and parking lots still haunt some otherwise walkable corners.

It's time to marry the best of the past with forward-looking design citywide ... By enhancing urban density, reducing car-dependency and encouraging mixed-use patterns of development, Ottawa can make headway in the fight against sprawl; reduce transportation emissions; preserve precious green space; and make our transit system more viable. With the right mix of policies and investments, we can create bustling, walkable, bikeable neighbourhoods connected by world-class public transportation. In other words, we can tackle the climate crisis through building a more connected city.

[Text excerpted from an opinion piece co-written by Dr. Robin Mazumber, guest speaker at the Eco Gala, and Robb Barnes. Published in the *Ottawa Citizen*, 27 November 2020.]

As part of this campaign, Ecology Ottawa launched a series of public consultations on neighbourhood design, launched a community petition, and mobilized citizen engagement around the city's new Official Plan process.

Renewable City



Ecology Ottawa's work has always involved deep collaboration with community partners. In 2020, we took part in a number of collaborations focused on climate change.

People's Official Plan

The People's Official Plan group is a network of more than 15 Ottawaarea groups working to ensure that the new Official Plan, and related master plans, embed strong action on climate and social issues. Throughout the year, this group produced detailed analyses of key planning issues while holding public fora and producing digital communications to deepen community engagement.



A graphic of community concerns heard through a People's Official Plan townhall.

Urban Climate Alliance

The Urban Climate Alliance is a network of four Ontario-based municipal environmental organizations working to take climate action at the city level. Other members include Environment Hamilton, Citizens Environment Alliance and Toronto Environmental Alliance. Throughout the year, this group exchanged information, held Ontario-wide virtual town halls and produced a series of analyses and reports on city-wide climate action in Ontario. Most of the focus was on climate finance and climate accountability, and on providing useful tools for other climate-focused groups to use in their cities.

Ottawa Energy Collective

In 2020, Ecology Ottawa continued involvement with Ottawa Energy Collective, a multi-organizational collaborative working to eliminate emissions from Ottawa's buildings. Through this partnership, we engaged the City of Ottawa and other institutional partners (e.g. Hydro Ottawa, Carleton University) on energy transition.

Eco Gala 2020: Celebrating remotely

The annual fall **Eco Gala** is Ecology Ottawa's signature networking event for people, organizations and businesses interested in and working on environmental and social justice issues in the city and environs. Like so many organizations in 2020, Ecology Ottawa had to rethink how best to proceed. Our Covid challenge: How to celebrate and inspire our common community of interested and engaged people? How to give them the opportunity to meet and chat remotely with likeminded individuals?

Our staff and volunteer team rose to these challenges, by keeping the elements of previous Eco Galas — a catered meal, inspiring and informative speakers, musical interludes, a silent auction featuring local goods and services, and a chance to mingle with other attendees — but adapting them to the current digital reality. Auction items were posted online well in advance, giving people lots of time to consider and bid without competing Gala distractions.

Keynote speaker Dr. Robin Mazumder is an environmental neuroscientist who studies how the social and physical environments in which we live influence how people feel and function.



Eco Gala 2020: Celebrating remotely

Probably the biggest challenge was how to arrange meet & mingle opportunities. After the speeches, attendees were invited to join subject-specific chat rooms where they could learn about and discuss wine, composting, permaculture, healthy homes and environmental leadership in politics. Following these moderated discussions, people could join an open forum to continue their conversations. Combined, these provided a well-received innovation to the remote Gala experience.

Congratulations to the team. Really impressed. I thoroughly enjoyed the speakers, the good food, and the discussions ... and ended up with a bike tune-up as well. I look forward to seeing our community at an in-person gala again ... but seeing everyone adapt to the situation (and having some of the benefits of remote delivery) was uplifting.

Stefan Reinecke, Ecology Ottawa Board member

Council Watch: Our volunteers in action

Not everyone would consider regular monitoring of the verbal and written musings of and about City Hall engaging. Fortunately for Ecology Ottawa, we have an active team of volunteer "watchers" who attend the meetings of the full City Council and five standing committees that look at environmental protection, water and waste management, planning, transportation and transit. Council Watch is a volunteer-driven program designed to inform Ottawa residents of environmentally significant decisions at City Hall through systematic and strategic attendance at city meetings. Through regular blogposts, our multi-generational team aims both to provide information to the public and help hold municipal representatives accountable on needed environmental action.

A graphic from the 'Don't Cut Out the Core' initiative, aimed at securing city-wide representation on council committees



Financial Summary

	2019	2020		2019	2020
ASSETS			REVENUES & EXPENDITURES		
CURRENT Cash Accounts receivable Prepaid expenses	\$ 316,579 138,231 6,891 \$ 461,701	\$ 331,147 252,329 2,391 \$ 585,867	REVENUES Grants Donations Contracted works Events Other	\$ 377,126 114,694 76,702 28,134 6,765	\$ 96,698 139,515 113,080 36,194 4,339
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS			Government Support	111,145
CURRENT LIABILITIES Accounts payable & accruals Deferred contributions UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	\$ 20,618 51,760 \$ 72,318 \$ 389,323	\$ 47,380 28,036 \$ 75,416 \$ 510,451	Events & action 5,416 Community partnerships Community outreach	\$ 603,421 \$ 58,487 51,054 31,139 82,724 306,136	\$ 500,971 \$ 40,512 16,187 236 35,431 287,477
	\$ 461,701	\$ 585,867		\$ 530,136	\$ 379,843

	2019	2020		2019	2020
REVENUES			EXPENDITURES		
Grants Donations Contracted works Events Other Government Support	62.6% 19.0% 12.7% 4.7% 1.0%	22.6%	Program support Events & actions Community partnerships Community outreach Staffing	11.0% 9.6% 5.9% 15.6% 57.7%	10.7% 4.3% 0.1% 9.3% 75.7%



STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jen Auten, Elizabeth Bernstein*, Pam Foster, Katia Gianneschi, Katie Gibbs, Charles Hodgson*, Maureen Hollingworth, Dale Marshall, Stefan Reinecke*, Graham Saul.

*These members also serve on Ecology Ottawa's Board of Directors

STAFF

Robb Barnes, Executive Director
Mike Beauregard, Director of Development
Ty Brunet, Outreach Coordinator
Emilie Grenier, Climate Change Campaign
Organizer
Olivia Hine, Outreach Coordinator
Ginette Hupé, Living City Organizer

Autumn Jordan, Outreach Coordinator
Ciara McKay, Outreach Coordinator
Erik Pervin, Director of Operations
Isaac Smith, Outreach Coordinator
Velta Tomsons, Living City Program Manager

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers have always been the lifeblood of Ecology Ottawa's operations and advocacy & outreach activities. Although Covid shaped how we worked in 2020, it did not change our need and appreciation for the numerous people who generously donated their time and skills to helping make our programs happen.



Ecology Ottawa is registered in Ontario, Canada as a not-for-profit organization, #1715290

To contact: Ecology Ottawa

430-1 Nicholas Street

Ottawa, Ontario

K1N 7B7

613-860-5353

info@ecologyottawa.ca

Find www.ecologyottawa.ca
Us @ # @ecologyottawa



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