

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Toronto Environmental Alliance acknowledges the land we work on, which has been a site of human activity for over 15,000 years. Toronto / Tkaronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Anishinaabe Mississaugas, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13, also known as the Toronto Purchase, with the Mississaugas of the Credit. As a settler organization, it is important to recognize that we benefit from colonial systems of extraction and land dispossession, and that environmental degradation, climate change, pollution and waste - which our work aims to prevent - are deeply connected to colonialism. To address the root causes of these issues, our environmental work must strive to disrupt colonialism and support Indigenous people.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As home to much of the world's population, cities have a special role to play in solving today's most formidable environmental and social challenges. Our TEA community is part of a growing movement of people in cities across the globe who are cross-pollinating innovative ideas and advocating for transformative change.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to severely and disproportionately impact many communities here in our city and around the world. It shaped how we advance environmental issues in tandem with other immediate and pressing needs.

This past year, TEA has worked with community partners on innovative projects that connect environmental issues with local priorities. We have supported teams of high-rise residents and staff to reduce waste in their buildings and collaborated with community hubs and grassroots groups to build climate leadership in diverse communities. We examined how vital learning from community pandemic responses can be applied to preparing for climate-related, extreme weather events.

While many solutions are being built from the ground up, our work highlights that our local

government must address the complex and interrelated social and environmental crises faced by our city. After years of advocacy by our community, City Council passed the first phase of Toronto's Single-Use Reduction Strategy and the new TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. While these are big wins, we must ensure the City delivers on its commitments. TEA will continue to push the City to invest and mobilize funds at the pace and scale needed, and call for environmental actions to contribute to critical priorities such as housing, transit, and green jobs.

TEA is building a groundswell of people who are taking action on issues that are profoundly impacting our city. We are advancing solutions that can be scaled across Toronto and in other cities. And we're able to do this, thanks to you, our community – our valued supporters, partners, and funders. Together, we are lighting a path to a greener city for all.

Sincerely,



Emmay Mah,
Executive Director
Toronto Environmental Alliance

CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY

Thanks to your support, we had many campaign and advocacy wins in 2021! We responded to urgent issues facing our city and helped to get Toronto back on track with its plans to tackle the climate crisis and growing plastic pollution and waste issues. We worked closely with allies, coalitions, communities and thousands of individual residents to hold our governments accountable and push for solutions that create a greener city for all.



CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Climate change is impacting cities faster than expected, with floods, heatwaves and storms becoming more frequent. Municipal governments like Toronto need to act fast to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and create a climate resilient and livable city for all. Your support helped TEA keep pushing for the bold, ambitious and equitable climate action our city needs.

INCREASING TORONTO'S CLIMATE AMBITION: A NEW NET ZERO STRATEGY

This year, Toronto made a significant step up in its climate ambition and passed a new climate plan - the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. This plan includes a more ambitious goal to achieve net zero emissions by 2040 and stronger actions to get there. This was made possible through our 2019 work with allies across Toronto to win a Climate Emergency Declaration at City Council, which included a commitment from the City to increase its climate targets and strengthen its climate plan.

We mobilized allies and supporters to make vital recommendations to strengthen the new climate plan, when it was released this year. The final climate plan includes key areas for accelerated action like greening buildings, creating low-carbon transportation and creating green jobs - actions that achieve multiple goals for our city.

Thanks to strong pressure from our community, including emails, phone calls and meetings, and critical motions from City Councilors, many of our recommendations were adopted in the Net Zero Strategy that was passed in December 2021. We pushed for higher targets, greater public transparency, tools to make sure Toronto stays on track to meet these ambitious targets, the formation of a Climate Advisory group centering the voices of equity-deserving groups, and accelerated action on greening buildings.



GREENING BUILDINGS

Buildings are the top source of emissions in Toronto and a key climate action area for cities. In 2021, we pushed for stronger action to reduce emissions from buildings as part of the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy. We also helped to strengthen two other city plans: the Toronto Green Standard regulations (which outline green standards for new buildings in areas like waste and energy) and the Net Zero Buildings Strategy (a strategy that is a part of Toronto's larger climate plan). Greening residential buildings is an opportunity to reduce emissions, create green jobs, and make housing more comfortable and safe for tenants during extreme weather like heatwaves. **Your support is helping us to advocate for a stronger and more holistic approach to reducing emissions from buildings.**

REDUCING FLOODING AND MAKING POLLUTERS PAY

In 2021, we continued our campaign for a fair stormwater charge for Toronto - a critical tool to reduce flooding, encourage green infrastructure, and make sure



the costs of extreme weather are more evenly distributed. A fair stormwater charge would mean that owners of large paved areas like parking lots will help pay for the costs of managing the stormwater runoff they create, instead of paying based on water usage which leads to some owners paying nothing at all. This policy tool also creates financial incentives to adopt climate-friendly solutions like green infrastructure that can help to reduce flooding. **After our campaign, which included hundreds of letters from Toronto residents, City Council voted to move ahead with a consultation on a stormwater charge.**

CREATING A ZERO WASTE CITY AND A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Single-use plastics pollute our environment, harm people's health, and cause havoc in our municipal waste system. In 2021, we continued to advocate for stronger regulations to hold companies accountable and transition away from single-use plastics towards non-toxic, sustainable alternatives. Your support helped us win new commitments from governments to address the plastics crisis, push back against false solutions like incineration, and advocate for solutions that are good for people and the environment.

LOCAL ACTION ON SINGLE-USE PLASTICS AND DISPOSABLE FOODWARE

After strong public support and record-breaking levels of public participation in consultations, the City of Toronto committed to act on single-use plastics and other disposable foodware in 2019. Though this action paused in 2020, the problem only got worse, as many people noticed more single-use items and packaging at home and in the

environment from more takeout and deliveries.

TEA and allies continued to push the City to move ahead, and in June 2021, Toronto City Council got back to work on local programs and regulations and passed the first phase of Toronto's new Single-Use and Takeaway Items Reduction Strategy! We won some improvements to the strategy thanks to our advocacy and letters of support from people like you, and started our campaign to promote reuse over single-use. **Our collective advocacy will be important to keep the City on track with the first voluntary phase of the strategy, and to keep momentum for phase two: mandatory regulations for businesses to reduce single-use foodware.**

ADVOCATING FOR CANADA-WIDE ACTION ON PLASTICS

In coalition with other environmental organizations, we continued to advocate for stronger action on plastics from the Federal government. We called for a more



comprehensive ban on harmful plastics, a greater focus on shifting to reuse, and a stronger stance against exporting plastic waste. **Our advocacy helped create some key wins: in 2021, the Federal government declared plastics as “toxic” and committed to moving ahead with a National Plastics Strategy that includes a ban on types of single-use plastics, including styrofoam.** In the year ahead, our advocacy will be critical to push the Federal government to go further and to support a local shift towards reusables.

ONTARIO’S BLUE BOX PROGRAM

In 2021, we continued to act as a watchdog on waste issues in Toronto and across Ontario. For many years, we’ve been monitoring and advocating for stronger Provincial waste regulations, including Extended Producer Responsibility regulations to make companies responsible for the waste they create. When the Ontario government released updated plans to overhaul the Blue Box program, we joined allies across Ontario to raise the alarm about the serious problems with the regulations - including weak recycling targets and loopholes that would let companies off the hook for managing types of

waste. We also outlined our concerns to City Council about how Ontario’s new recycling regulations could impact Toronto’s recycling system, and shared our recommendations for how Toronto can act to protect our local recycling success and keep local control of waste collection.

MONITORING DECISIONS AT CITY HALL

At City Hall, we continued to monitor decision-making and intervened when City Staff requested to send Toronto’s waste to incinerators in other Ontario communities, which burdens these communities with toxic pollution and undermines our waste reduction goals.

We won a motion requiring Staff to report to Council before being allowed to send waste for incineration.



A GREEN AND JUST RECOVERY

As the pandemic continued to deeply impact Toronto communities in 2021, we worked closely with other local organizations, community groups and individual people to advocate for a green and just recovery.

TORONTO'S COVID-19 RECOVERY AND RESPONSE

We mobilized thousands of people to send letters to the City's Office of Recovery and Rebuild sharing their perspectives and TEA's suggestions on how Toronto can build a more sustainable and livable city through its recovery plans. We also worked with local community hubs and organizations to document community-based emergency responses to the pandemic. Many community organizations transformed their physical spaces to respond to community needs (for example, by becoming hubs for emergency food programs), supported mutual aid networks and provided critical information on public health and income supports. **We published a report to highlight how community hubs responded to the pandemic emergency and apply this learning to our city's response to future emergencies like extreme weather.**

CITY OF TORONTO GOLF COURSE REVIEW: PARKLANDS FOR PUBLIC GOOD

Greenspace has been important for people's health and wellbeing during the pandemic - but access to greenspace isn't equal across Toronto. The pandemic sparked important conversations about public space, how it is used, and who has a say. When the operating leases for City of Toronto Golf Courses came up for renewal, we advocated alongside other local organizations and groups for a public consultation process to determine how these 150 hectares of City parkland could best benefit people and the environment. When the consultations were held in 2021, we continued to work with organizations and individuals to share ideas and perspectives on how these City lands can best serve community needs. **We won several new commitments from the City, including more environmentally-friendly golf course management practices, increased trail access and connection, natural area restoration, expansion of public off-season use, and expansion of Indigenous placekeeping opportunities.**



BUILDING SOLUTIONS: OUR COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS

Our projects with communities and researchers are helping to create long-lasting, equitable solutions that address some of the biggest environmental issues facing our city.



THE ZERO WASTE HIGH-RISE PROJECT

CREATING SUSTAINABLE VERTICAL COMMUNITIES

More than half of Toronto households live in multi-residential buildings. Finding solutions to the unique challenges of multi-residential communities is critical to addressing growing waste issues in our city and achieving our climate goals. **Our Zero Waste High-Rise Project - a partnership between TEA, researchers at the University of Toronto, and teams of residents and staff of more than a dozen multi-residential buildings - has helped to create solutions that can be scaled across the city.**

Multi-residential communities face challenges in reducing waste - particularly buildings with a single garbage chute - but they also have many assets, such as shared spaces, communities of people that can work together and the expertise of building staff. Over four years, we worked with high-rise communities to develop custom solutions to address their waste challenges and find ways to use their

community assets. The results have been incredible.

Buildings have drastically cut the amount of garbage they produce, improved recycling and composting, created sharing shelves and special waste collection, launched creative education campaigns and made waste collection more accessible. On top of this, they've built community, saved money and created greener and cleaner buildings.

In 2021, the final group of high-rise buildings completed their plans as part of the Zero Waste High-Rise Project. We also supported more than 50 buildings to take action, who joined an online program launched during the pandemic. The inspiring successes from this project are helping to create change in buildings across the province. We're sharing what we've learned to help shape municipal waste programs to scale these solutions to other buildings!





SOLUTIONS IN ACTION

WATCH THE VIDEO: https://www.torontoenvironment.org/highrise_video



Watch our video to hear the stories of high-rise communities that are demonstrating creative, community-led solutions to waste challenges in multi-residential buildings!

 **Watch Video**

COMMUNITY HUBS AND CLIMATE ACTION

ACCELERATING EQUITABLE, NEIGHBOURHOOD-LEVEL CLIMATE ACTION.

To address the climate crisis and create a greener city for all, we need strong city-wide climate policies and neighbourhood-level climate action. In many neighbourhoods, community hubs are important spaces to gather, connect with neighbours and organize around community issues. Climate is an issue that impacts many residents lives and where solutions can advance other community priorities.

That's why we launched our *Accelerating Climate Action Through Community Hubs* initiative in 2019: to build on the incredible work being done by community hubs and local residents and catalyze neighbourhood-level climate action.

Over the past two years, we partnered with two community hubs to further explore the role of community hubs in neighbourhood climate action: Parkdale

Activity-Recreation Centre (PARC) and the Unison Bathurst-Finch Hub. Together, we launched initiatives to explore green energy opportunities, develop a climate leadership training program, facilitate community conversation on climate justice and intersecting community priorities, and document community-based emergency response.

These initiatives have helped build knowledge on climate change, increased residents' capacity to lead climate initiatives, and supported new climate projects in hubs and surrounding communities. Our project learning has been shared with other hubs, other communities, and in recommendations to the City of Toronto to strengthen Toronto's climate action plan.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY HUB?

Community hubs are inclusive and trusted place-based or virtual spaces, which leverage local networks, respond to neighbourhood priorities, support the actions of residents, and grow grassroots leadership in order to build strong, resilient, and connected communities.



2021 HIGHLIGHTS:

GREENING COMMUNITY HUBS



Many hubs have green features such as community gardens and rainwater capture, and programs to reduce energy and waste. In 2021, we worked with community hub partners to promote green operations and explore adding solar panels to a hub roof.

MUTUAL AID AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE



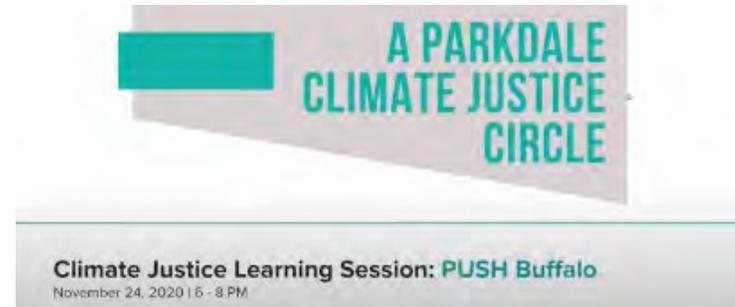
Community hubs have physical space and experience to organize and mobilize networks of people. We worked with community hubs to document and share the role of community-based responses to future emergencies - including climate-related emergencies.

GROWING RESIDENT LEADERSHIP



In 2021, we published a learning guide with the Centre for Connected Communities (C3) on community building, climate engagement and supporting resident leadership. This guide included the lessons learned through our work with community hubs.

PARKDALE CLIMATE JUSTICE CIRCLES



In February 2020, the first Parkdale Climate Justice Circle was convened to map resident concerns and connect climate justice to other community priorities. In 2021, we continued to partner to hold online climate justice learning sessions.

EXPLORE AND LEARN MORE:

torontoenvironment.org/community_hubs

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY

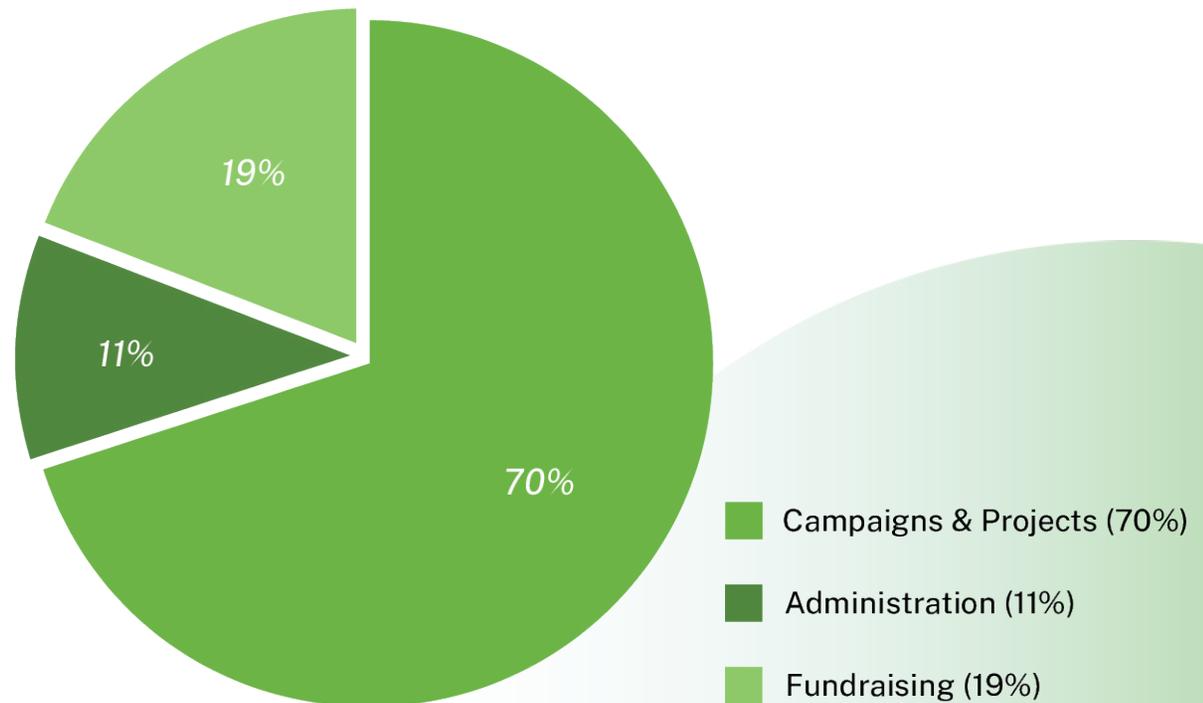
Thank you for the incredible ways YOU showed up to support a greener city for all in 2021. From donating, to signing petitions, to attending events, to supporting solutions in your local neighbourhoods, thank you for the many ways you support TEA's mission of building a greener city for all.



FINANCIALS

Many sources of funding power our work building a greener city for all. We are grateful for the support of thousands of individual donors across Toronto, grantmakers and foundations, and sponsors of our fundraising events. Your support allows us to be strong advocates at City Hall and to run innovative, solutions-focused projects.

HOW YOUR DONATIONS ARE SPENT



TEA spends approximately 70% on programs (including campaigns and advocacy, research and community-based projects), 19% on fundraising and 11% on administrative costs.

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANK YOU

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

Thank you to our community of donors who help make TEA's work possible, including our Greener City Champions - TEA's dedicated community on monthly donors.

FOUNDATIONS AND GRANTMAKERS

We are grateful to receive funding from foundations and grantmakers for our projects and initiatives.

*Atkinson Foundation
The Atmospheric Fund
The Ontario Trillium Foundation
Toronto Foundation*

SPONSORS

Thank you to the support of our many sponsors - including the sponsors of the 2021 Greener City Celebration.

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