



TORONTO ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



MESSAGE FROM TEA'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Local action matters more than ever. In the context of profound social, economic, and political challenges, TEA has continued to work with our supporters and partners to build a Toronto that reflects our values and vision for the future.

In 2024, we celebrated some important wins. Our work with local collaborators to catalyze a shift from single-use disposable items to reusable alternatives resulted in the City of Toronto enacting new by-laws. We laid a foundation for more widespread adoption of reusables in our city, which will have a huge environmental benefit, and will help to grow an emergent green industry that is a core part of a circular economy.

As our city increasingly experienced the impacts of extreme weather, we continued to advocate for action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while building a more climate-resilient city. TEA's collaborative campaigns drove policy decisions at City Hall on heat safety, flood protection, and green infrastructure. In addition, our work with partners in St. James Town demonstrated the power of local, community-led responses to climate emergencies, including providing support to residents who are made the most vulnerable during extreme weather events.

In the lead up to the last municipal election, TEA worked with allies to launch the City for All platform: a powerful, collective call for bold policy action. The platform helped to shape a community-centered agenda at City Hall, resulting in progress on key policies to build a more equitable, affordable, accessible, and greener city.



With another municipal election on the horizon, TEA will continue to work with diverse movements and communities to bring our shared vision for Toronto to life. We know from many years of experience that we can catalyze positive change when we raise our voices together.

Thank you for being part of our community and movement for change.

Emmay Mah
Executive Director
Toronto Environmental Alliance

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We at the Toronto Environmental Alliance acknowledge the land we work and live on is Indigenous land. These are the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. This is also the traditional territory of the Chippewa, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Tkaronto is the Mohawk name for this place, meaning “where there are trees standing in the water”, and it is now commonly called Toronto.

We recognize that the lands upon which we work and live are covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties, signed by Alderville, Beausoleil, Curve Lake, Georgina Island, Hiawatha, Rama, and Scugog Island First Nations. We respectfully acknowledge the legal battles that these First Nations fought and won and that they are the stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters in perpetuity.

We recognize and celebrate the Indigenous history that is evident across this land, including where our office is located on Spadina Avenue. The name Spadina is taken from the Anishinaabemowin word ishpadinaa, (Ish-pah-dee-naa) meaning “high hill” or “going up the hill.”

As a settler organization, we have benefitted from colonial systems of extraction and land dispossession. We are responsible for supporting and showing solidarity with Indigenous people, and doing our part to protect the land and water, and fight against climate change, pollution, and waste.

This land acknowledgment represents our ongoing commitment to learn about the past and how to move forward in allyship with Indigenous peoples.



CAMPAIGNS AND ADVOCACY

CREATING A ZERO WASTE CITY AND A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

TEA continued to play a lead role in championing the shift towards zero waste and a circular economy. We work closely with environmental and community organizations in Toronto, and across the country, on a range of high impact waste issues.

TEA has opposed incineration for more than three decades. TEA is a founding member of the Canadian Zero Waste Coalition, which was established to share expertise and information on incinerators across the country and educate public officials and community organizers. When proposals to burn Toronto's garbage were raised at City Council in summer 2023, TEA once again highlighted the climate, health, and environmental justice impacts of sending waste to incinerators in other communities, so far preventing the City from pursuing incineration without deeper consideration of the facts and public opinion. TEA also joined allies in calling attention to the expansion of the Emerald incinerator in Brampton, which would make it the biggest in Canada and hungry for Toronto's

garbage to sustain operations. TEA continues to ramp up public education on the harms caused by incineration in the lead up to a review and update to the City's Long-Term Waste plan.

TEA studied and built relationships with multi-residential communities across the city through our Zero Waste High-Rise Project, alongside researchers at UofT. By talking with staff and residents, conducting site visits, and waste audits, we have identified key recommendations for policy-makers and building developers on building design and infrastructure to support waste reduction. We have also shared our expertise in waste management as a trainer and curriculum co-creator of Ontario's first Green Building Operators program for future building staff led by the Labour Education Centre. TEA shared best practices and simple actions like clearer signage, sharing shelves to promote reuse, and more accessible organics sorting, to reduce waste.

TEA worked with national and international experts to support a federal ban on single-use plastics, and to protect Toronto locally. TEA advocated for extensive federal regulations and celebrated the implementation in December 2023 of a ban on the distribution of single-use plastic shopping bags, takeout containers made of foam or black plastic, and plastic utensils. In response to aggressive opposition by the oil and plastic industry, which mounted a legal action against the federal ban, TEA stepped up our local efforts. We highlighted the local community and business support for the plastic ban. We successfully urged Council to investigate parallel municipal plastic bans as a backstop in case the federal ban is undermined.



SHIFTING BUSINESSES FROM SINGLE-USE ITEMS TO REUSABLES ACROSS TORONTO

We have achieved major milestones in our long-running work to shift from single-use, disposable items to zero-waste, reusable alternatives.

TEA convened [Reusable Toronto](#), an initiative to bring together local organizations, reuse champions, businesses, and community members. Since 2022, Reusable Toronto's members have collaborated to advance reuse as a solution in our city through positive changes in policy, business practices and local culture.

TEA and Reusable Toronto successfully advocated for our city to take a big step forward with new by-laws to reduce single-use items. We mobilized thousands of supporters to send messages to City Hall, and provided one-on-one training to community leaders to send personalized letters and speak to Council committees. As a result, Toronto Council unanimously passed two important new by-laws that will dramatically reduce millions of unwanted single-use items. As of March 2024 businesses were required to:

- Ask-first before giving out single-use accessories like utensils, condiment packets, and napkins
- Allow customers to bring their own clean cup or bag



The simple act of “asking first” will have a huge impact in a city as big as Toronto, adding up to almost 300,000 avoided disposable items per restaurant per year.

A multi-year community research collaboration with the UofT Trash Team has generated critical insights for shifting to reusables in Toronto. Since 2021, we have connected with small businesses about their experience and challenges with reducing single-use items and adopting reusable alternatives. In 2023, partnering with the Green Neighbours Network and eight research assistants, our project reached more than 600 restaurants across the city including Scarborough Centre, St Lawrence, Parkdale, Bloor West, North York and Etobicoke. Researchers used novel motivational interviewing techniques to gather information and identify next step plans for small business owners on adopting reusable foodware for dine-in and takeout. The findings demonstrated that small businesses are ready for a shift to zero waste. Read the reports [here](#).

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Toronto residents have increasingly felt the impacts of climate change in Toronto in recent years, which are acutely impacting our city's most vulnerable communities. Increasing rainfall and extreme heat are part of Toronto's reality now, but we still have the chance to make our city more livable and safe. TEA has successfully worked with community members and allies to push City Hall to take action on flood protection, improve our tree canopy and green infrastructure, and do more to keep residents safe during heat waves.

TEA launched the Toronto Heat Safety Coalition

with allies including ACORN, the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA), and Community Resilience to Extreme Weather (CREW) in 2024. This coalition of advocates, tenants, medical experts and lawyers has successfully kept the rising threat of extreme heat, and important steps the City can take to protect vulnerable residents, on the agenda at City Hall. The Coalition has called for a series of measures including implementing a maximum indoor temperature by-law that would limit indoor temperatures in rental units to 26°C. The coalition's advocacy also resulted in the City launching a pilot program to provide free portable air conditioners to seniors with low incomes and health-related needs for air conditioning.

TEA's long-time stormwater and flood

prevention work made an impact after the historic rainfall in July 2024 caused heavy flooding across the city. We called on the City to take urgent action, and to ensure that flood management solutions are equitable and fair. City Council passed a motion calling for incentive programs to green residential properties, and to assess opportunities to reduce stormwater runoff from large paved surfaces at industrial, commercial, and institutional sites. And in doing so, find ways to fund this without unfairly impacting residential water users.

TEA advocated for and won \$1M in new funding for tree planting, watering, and maintenance

in the 2024 City budget. These funds will go a long way in cooling our city with important green infrastructure, as well as absorbing flood water and carbon emissions, and making our public spaces greener and more beautiful.

TEA celebrated as City Council approved a new Carbon Budget

that sets absolute emissions limits for the City's 2025 and 2030 reduction goals, and helps integrate climate-based decision making throughout our city government. TEA has long been advocating with our allies for stronger climate accountability tools, and will continue to ensure these are applied in the City's critical planning and budgeting decisions.



TEA continued our long history of analyzing the City's Budget, and advocating for the City to fund climate action at the scale needed to achieve Toronto's climate goals. Chronic underfunding by other levels of government, and City Council's slow progress in bringing tools to generate new revenue, has severely impeded the City's ability to fully fund Toronto's climate strategy and other critical priorities. TEA and our allies called on our City Council, and the Provincial and Federal governments, to negotiate a new financial deal for Toronto and pressed the City to use its own revenue powers to address the critical revenue shortfall. TEA fought hard with TTCriders for a commercial parking levy to fund transit and climate action, and secured a

commitment to laying the groundwork for this important revenue tool.

TEA advocated for expanding, improving and protecting the Toronto Green Standard (TGS) to make new buildings greener. In the fall of 2023, TEA mounted a campaign to push back against the Provincial Government's Bill 23, which threatened the TGS and ushered in a host of destructive measures. Bill 23 was passed despite massive public opposition, but did not dismantle the TGS.

We also pushed for new policies to dramatically reduce emissions from our existing buildings, which generate more than half of Toronto's emissions. TEA collaborated with partners to call for green building policies that prioritize equity and affordability, and safeguard the health of residents, especially with increasing heat, flooding, and other extreme weather events.

In May 2024, TEA played a key role in organizing the Toronto Climate Action Network's Climate Action Summit. The Summit brought together climate organizations and activists from across the city. Speakers and workshops were hosted by local organizations from Scarborough and Etobicoke as well as by national and provincial organizations.

ST. JAMES TOWN HEAT WAVE PROJECT

In partnership with Community Resilience to Extreme Weather (CREW), we launched the St. James Town Heat Wave Project, with support from the Commission for Environmental Cooperation. St. James Town is one of the most densely-populated neighbourhoods in Canada, with 19 high-rise rental buildings. This project was a response to the fact that many older high-rise buildings were not designed to handle extended heat waves and their residents experience risks to their health and safety during a heat wave, power outage, or other emergency.

Built on CREW's neighbours-helping-neighbours approach, TEA and CREW collaborated with a core group of volunteers living in St. James Town high-rise

buildings. We co-developed a model for high-rise emergency preparedness that can be customized and scaled to other settings. We trained these volunteers to lead community outreach during a heat wave to check in on vulnerable neighbours in hot apartments, and arranged media training to help residents act as spokespeople for this issue. The volunteers developed preparedness plans for their buildings and reached hundreds of building residents through outreach on heat wave preparedness.

We produced a [short video](#) that highlighted the work of these incredible volunteers and their vision for helping their neighbourhood prepare for climate change. The volunteers established themselves as a group called the St. James Town Climate Action Crew, and continued to support one another and their neighbours during emergencies. We were delighted to present these volunteers with the 2023 Greener City for All Award.

TEA has continued to work with CREW to strengthen the response to extreme weather in high-rise buildings and engage local government and other stakeholders to support St. James Town and other communities to grow this important and urgent work.



POLICY AND CITY HALL



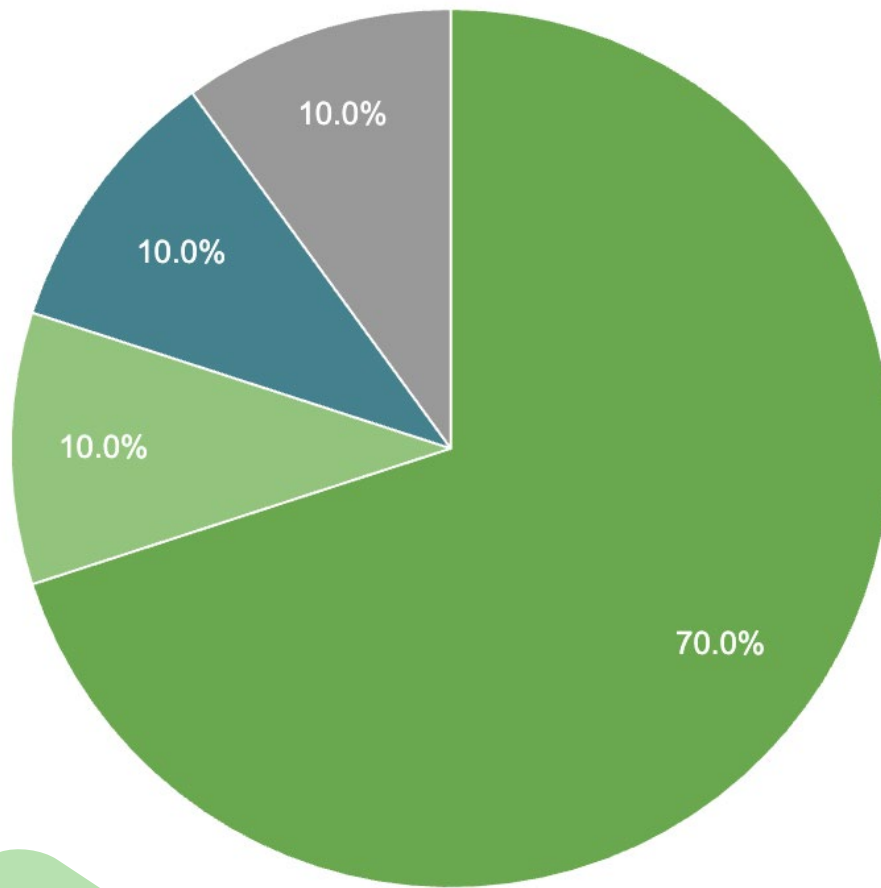
Toronto held a full municipal election in 2022, and a mayoral election in 2023. For both elections, TEA successfully kept critical environmental issues like climate action, climate resilience and zero-waste on the agenda. We analyzed candidates' platforms for environmental integrity and equity, informed the public on what commitments to look for, and convinced many successful candidates to adopt our demands.

We have continued to advance these demands through the current term, including regulations to reduce single-use items, a maximum heat by-law for renters, new rules to green existing buildings across the city, and flood safety measures. In the lead up to the 2022 election, TEA worked with Social Planning Toronto and community partners to develop the [City for All](#) platform, which mounted a powerful collective call for change that led to important progress on key policies that aim to build a greener, equitable, affordable and accessible city. This platform will serve as a foundation for collective calls to action in the upcoming 2026 municipal election.



FINANCIALS

TEA operates with a small, hardworking team and modest budget. Our main cost is our personnel, which includes campaigns, development, communications and finance staff. As an environmental organization, we spend very little on material items and maintain lean operating costs.



- Personnel (70%)
- Programming & Events (10%)
- Fundraising & Outreach (10%)
- Rent & Administration (10%)

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS, SPONSORS, AND FUNDERS

TEA relies on individual donations, grants and sponsorships to power our work of 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.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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

FOUNDATIONS AND GRANTMAKERS

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

The Atkinson Foundation
The Atmospheric Fund (TAF)
The Catherine Donnelly Foundation
The City of Toronto
Community Foundations of Canada
Commission for Environmental Cooperation

Echo Foundation
Temerty Foundation in memory of Melissa Temerty
Erica Shuttleworth Fund at Toronto Foundation
Taylor Irwin Family Fund at Toronto Foundation
Waisberg/Bellwood Charitable Fund at Toronto Foundation

SPONSORS

Thank you to our sponsors for their generous support of our 2023 & 2024 Greener City Celebration.

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