

Planning for COVID and Climate

Summary notes from

June 19th, 2020

A person riding on the back of a bicycle

Description automatically generated

Clean Air Partnership developed a series of webinars and online discussions on [**Working Together to Plan for COVID and Climate**](https://guides.co/c/working-together-to-plan-for-covid/) was via a collective effort, with Clean Air Council (30+municipalities in Ontario), we explored the connections and alignment opportunities between our COVID response and recovery and climate actions. In this webinar, we will summarize what we covered over the last month.

Emerging topics from our online discussion series were Green Space, Community Gardening and Urban Agriculture, Road Re-Allocation and Active Transportation, and Telecommuting. We developed this [Planning for COVID and Climate resources guide](https://guides.co/r/33e967f2556eb3c17412bff753c68b4e), providing existing guidelines from our network and additional resources.

Clean Air Partnership wants to emphasize the importance of ensuring that there is a team member who is part of the Municipal COVID Response and Recovery team who has been delegated the responsibility of ensuring the application of a Climate/Sustainability/Equality lens. Moreover, ensuring that whoever is designated on the team to support the team’s ability to apply that lens is supported via a collective crowdsourced effort to help their other team members to incorporate that Climate/Sustainability lens.

1. **Overview:**

Green Space

* Has your municipality done any analysis of the equitable access to green space across the community? If not yet, that would be important to undertake.
* Is equitable access to Green Space taken into consideration in identifying priority neighbourhoods?

Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture Plans

* Is there a staff person who has the Community Garden/Urban Agriculture Responsibilities?
* Has your municipality joined the [Food Communities Network](https://foodcommunities.ca/)?
* Has your municipality done a review of the equitable distribution of Community Gardens?
* Does your municipality have a Community Gardening Policy?
* Has your municipality developed an Urban Agriculture Plan?

Physical Distancing and Road Space Reallocations

* Identification of where physical distancing space is limited (anecdotally, community input, crowdsourcing a map/pinch points, street/sidewalk width analysis)
* [How to apply an equity lens to Active Transportation and COVID response re road space reallocation?](https://www.tcat.ca/resources/active-transportation-and-health-equity-in-markham-ontario/)
* Priorities for decision making: conversations within municipalities related to prioritization (physical distancing; more space for outdoor exercise; increasing access to outdoor space especially where green space is not as accessible; bringing people to businesses(ex. downtown); what is the most important considerations, for where and why?

Telecommuting

* Does your municipality have a telecommuting policy in place?
* If not, join a collective municipal effort regarding the development of Telecommuting Polices.
* Join the collective effort regarding identifying and addressing Telecommuting barriers and issues that often occur and how they can be addressed. CAP will be facilitating this effort.

**Municipal Update on telecommuting**:

Town of Whitby, City of Richmond Hill, York Region, Burlington

* Maintain Working from Home - As of result of COVID, municipalities are re-planning long-term/permanent forecast of buildings by looking to reduce space, anticipating percentage (50%) of the staff to use working space in future. From a climate perspective, this can have an impact on lowering the building footprint and reducing energy consumption.
* Reconfiguring Office Space - Similarly, there are discussions on reconfiguring space by allowing for social distancing. Developers are looking to expand their floor space for offices.
* Something to watch for is traffic flow and road capacity.

1. **Energy Efficiency Retrofits**

Energy Efficiency is a key to economic Recovery that implies job creation, that is, local—also, the opportunity to increase manufacturing.

Here are some resources on messaging:

* Energy Efficiency is a job creator as it is more labour intensive than other sectors.
* Work in the US estimates that 4.5 direct and immediate jobs are created for every $1 million invested in residential and commercial retrofits compared to 0.7 jobs in the oil and gas sector.
* These jobs cannot be outsourced and can’t be bought on amazon.
* They are directly linked to local economic development and job creation.
* These local jobs can provide employment in rural areas, small towns, as well as big cities.
* <https://www.efficiencycanada.org/covid-19-part-2-energy-efficiencys-role-in-canadas-economic-recovery/>
* More jobs are created as demand increased in the supply chain. Increased manufacturing of insulation, heat pumps, windows.
* Increased demand and local manufacturing will reduce costs for local consumers.
* In Canada, a study on the macroeconomic impacts of energy efficiency shows 16-30 jobs created per $1 million invested, taking into account all of these effects (note that these figures are net of any job losses due to things like lower energy demand).
* An aggressive efficiency scenario increases annual jobs by 175,000, on average, over 14 years.
* Energy Efficiency can also increase consumer spending because of new jobs and energy cost savings.
* The latest data available shows 2.8 million households in Canada spending over 6 percent of their income on energy costs. That includes Canadians below typical poverty lines as well as the working poor and seniors.
* Ensuring energy retrofit programs work for those experiencing energy poverty is key.
* Social housing is a no brainer. These projects can be advanced relatively quickly. The investments made will return in energy operating costs over time

1. **Shovel Worthy and Ready Projects**

* Opportunity to get municipal shovel worthy project on the radar of the federal government
* Surveying to collect these projects to bring them to the federal COVID recovery radar
* In need of more projects from municipalities to show the wealth of opportunities
* CAP can play a role in funnelling these projects to federal ministers and recovery staff.
* <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BQHD65H>

1. **Green/Equitable Recovery**

* [Climate Caucus Letter to PM](https://www.climatecaucus.ca/)– National Municipal Politicians Network on Advancing Climate Actions
* Ontario Climate Caucus Letter to Premier
* [Corporate Knights](https://www.corporateknights.com/channels/built-environment/recovering-stronger-building-low-carbon-future-green-renovation-wave-15875463/) Building Back Better
* [Resilient Recovery -](https://www.resilientrecovery.ca/)an initiative with a common message
* [Just Recovery Principles](https://climateactionnetwork.ca/2020/05/25/breaking-progressives-release-principles-for-a-just-recovery/) (endorse and an equity lens)
  + Climate Caucus Letter to PM
  + Ontario Climate Caucus Letter to Premier
  + Corporate Knights Building Back Better
  + Resilient Recovery
  + Just Recovery Principles (endorse and an equity lens)

1. **Additional Resources:**

* [**Climate Interactive: Green Equitable Stimulus Plans**](https://www.climateinteractive.org/ci-topics/green-equitable-stimulus-plans/)
* [**EU heads of government committed to “integrating … the green transition” in the region recovery plan**](https://www.enr.com/articles/49102-clean-energy-can-drive-post-covid-19-recovery-business-groups-say)
* [**COVID, Climate and the Clean Economy: Gigatrends Changing the World**](https://sloanreview.mit.edu/webinar-covid-climate-and-the-clean-economy/)
* [**Addressing Climate Change in a Post Pandemic World**](https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/addressing-climate-change-in-a-post-pandemic-world?cid=other-soc-lkn-mip-mck-oth---&sid=3254767929&linkId=86025535)[**McKinsey Consulting (April 2020)**](https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/sustainability/our-insights/addressing-climate-change-in-a-post-pandemic-world?cid=other-soc-lkn-mip-mck-oth---&sid=3254767929&linkId=86025535)
* [**Canada’s Clean Energy Sector Can Help Drive Economic Recovery from COVID**](https://www.forbes.com/sites/ankitmishra/2020/06/08/canadas-clean-energy-sector-can-help-drive-economic-recovery-from-covid-19/#538dbac521bd)
* [**CaGBC Recommendations for Canada’s post-COVID Economic Recovery**](https://cleanairpartnership.org/cac/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CaGBC_Green_Recovery_Strategy_EN3.pdf)

1. **MENTI Results**

Telecommuting:

1. Who is/was involved in the creation of the Remote Working policy?

* IT
* Human Resources
* Legal Department
* Finance
* Facilities

1. What issues have previously limited uptake/acceptance of remote working?

* Social Component
* Trust in employee productivity
* IT cost
* Evidence about how much face-to-face time is required for effective teams (e.g. is it 1 hr/week? 4 hrs/month? What is the required threshold?)

1. What are some of the supports that you think may be of value to better enable remote working to be part of your municipal climate action plan?

* Analysis of the energy implications of different amounts of uptake of remote working
* Evidence from other ON municipalities
* Income Taxes Offsets for home offices
* Technology (IT support, internet connection)
* Ergonomics
* Tools to help analyze a range of options - full remote working, part-time remote working (and for some or all staff)
* Connecting telecommuting to broader commuter GHG reduction plans - integration into transportation demand management initiatives

How can the COVID & Planning content being collected be of more value to you?

* Fact sheets/infographics/briefing notes to share with colleagues and Council
* A collaborative sharing platform like SharePoint or the idea of a Wordpress platform that is continuously updated

What other ideas come to mind re COVID/Climate Connection?

1. Telecommuting

* A group studying opportunities to grow telecommuting, including best practices, incentives, and practical solutions (e.g. childcare) both during and post-pandemic.
* Dependence on technology - broadband, wifi, equipment - for teleworking, tele-schooling., non-emergency medical appointments, even shopping. Access to technology has been critical for business continuity and has cross benefit of reducing emissions.

1. Air Quality

* Creating a community conversation about the impact of social distancing (especially reduced car travel) on air quality**.**
* Communication of importance of science

1. Local Food Supply & Security

* Local food and supply chain dependency has also come to light. Meat suppliers and processing plants are closing. There is an opportunity for households to transition to more vegetarian options and support community/ backyard gardening and local farms

1. Transportation systems

* How will transportation services look like?

1. **Discussion:**

* Communication materials/ maps on the relation of Green Space and populations at risk
* As part of the Ontario Climate Caucus network, a letter to the minister of municipal affairs was sent to discuss the Park Land Dedication Calculation. While the proposed amendment will reduce the green space allocations across municipalities, this will have an effect on the denser part of communities. This has an equity implication.
* The ramification of Bill 108 –Green Space allocation

1. **Next steps:**

* Creating Infographic & Council Brief note based on materials gathered so far on COVID & Climate
* Continue discussion via webinar