



Climate Action in the TDSB

To: Committee of the Whole

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Strategic Directions

- Transform Student Learning
- Create a Culture for Student and Staff Well-Being
- Build Strong Relationships and Partnerships Within School Communities to Support Student Learning and Well-Being
- Allocate Human and Financial Resources Strategically to Support Student Needs

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

- a) The Director develop a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG);
- b) The Director present a report in the fall of 2020 to share the plan.

Context

At its December 12, 2019 meeting, the Board of Trustees endorsed the City of Toronto's climate emergency declaration and asked the Director to report back on the TDSB's actions to address climate change, in terms of both climate literacy and facility operations.

Around the world, including in Toronto, youth are rallying behind the message of the young Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg:

We all have a choice. We can create transformational action that will safeguard the living conditions for future generations. Or we can continue with our business as usual and fail... We must change almost everything in our current societies. The bigger your carbon footprint, the bigger your moral duty. The bigger your platform, the bigger your responsibility.

As an organization dedicated to preparing young people for their future, the TDSB has an obligation to respond to the escalating climate crisis with leadership and action.

Fortunately, the TDSB is not at the starting point. It has been engaged in climate action for 20 years. During this time, it has steadily reduced the energy intensity of its buildings by 25% as shown in Appendix A, spearheaded the EcoSchools movement spreading across Canada, and established numerous programs and partnerships to support and expand education for sustainability.

Twenty Years of Climate Action

This report provides an overview of two decades of work that the TDSB has done to tackle climate change and become more sustainable, both as an institution and as an educator.

As detailed in Appendix B, the overview is organized into four main sections:

- Part I looks at the TDSB's institutional context and initiatives that have supported climate action, including policies, targeted funding, consultation and youth engagement.
- Part II provides an overview of some of the key partnerships that support environmental action in schools.
- Part III addresses TDSB educational initiatives that support climate action, including EcoSchools, outdoor education, teacher education, and active, safe and sustainable transportation.
- Part IV addresses on-the-ground actions operations has taken related to school grounds, energy use in buildings, renewable energy, waste management and purchasing.

Accelerating GHG Reductions

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we have until about 2030 to shift to a low-carbon economy in order to minimize widespread catastrophic global climate impacts on health, food security, livelihoods, water supply, human security and economic wellbeing.

For this reason, the TDSB's Joint Management-Labour Environment Committee (JMLEC) and its Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee (ESCAC) are advocating for more aggressive action to reduce the TDSB's greenhouse gas emissions, particularly from its buildings since it is a major property owner with a significant carbon footprint.

JMLEC and ESCAC are calling for the TDSB to develop a plan that includes interim targets to reduce GHGs with the goal of becoming net-zero by 2050. They also point out that the TDSB's 2019 [Energy Conservation and Demand Management Plan](#) calls for a 1% reduction in GHG annually for five years, which is not any more ambitious than what has been achieved over the last twenty years.

Staff agree that more work is required to reduce the TDSB's GHG emissions, and that more ambitious targets and interim goals are needed.

Given the magnitude of the effort required, the first step is to build internal capacity, particularly from an engineering and analytical point of view, to take on this significant undertaking. Until an appropriate technical team is in place to tackle the challenge, detailed planning and specific goal-setting are premature.

Action Plan and Associated Timeline

Over the coming months, staff will assemble a technical team, under the direction of the Senior Manager of Sustainability, who will put more emphasis on reducing the TDSB's greenhouse gas emission particularly from its very large building portfolio. Balanced with this approach will be a continuing effort to address the TDSB's \$3.8 billion backlog of major repairs. Once the team is in place, staff will be in a position to report to Board on its plan to reduce GHG emissions over the long term, along with interim targets.

Resource Implications

It is anticipated that the new technical team will be made up of seven existing staff, four from the Utilities Group and three from Design.

Communications Considerations

Not applicable at this time.

Board Policy and Procedure Reference(s)

- Policy P028 – The Environment

Appendices

- Appendix A: TDSB Building Energy Intensity
- Appendix B: Twenty Years of Climate Action at the TDSB

From

Manon Gardner, Associate Director, School Operations & Service Excellence at manon.gardner@tdsb.on.ca or at 416-394-2041.

Steve Shaw, Executive Officer, Facilities at steve.shaw@tdsb.on.ca or at 416-393-8780.

Richard Christie, Senior Manager, Sustainability at richard.christie@tdsb.on.ca or at 416-396-8554.