

# Supporting Youth Engagement in Municipal Climate Action

March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

We will get started at 1 pm



# Land Acknowledgements and Origins of Black History Month



- Joining you from the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas.
- Want to Keep Black History Month going for a bit longer....
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNxzOliUCTc&t=111s>



The History of Black History Month

36,364 views · Feb 22, 2021

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The Importance of Youth Engagement in Municipal Climate Action

Input from Municipalities for how to improve Youth Engagement

Input from Youth on How Municipalities can Improve Youth Engagement

Possible Action Items for Supporting Municipal and Youth Engagement

Participant Input on Possible Actions

Next Steps



# Why Advance Municipal Youth Engagement?



They are our future

They are dealing with all the delay that has occurred on climate action

They are sick of delays

Their engagement in civil society is critical

Their engagement with government is critical

We cannot risk them becoming cynical re: government climate action

Youth engagement alleviates municipal climate staff depression

We are stronger together



# Importance of Youth Voice in Municipal Climate Decisions



Not only about voting and consultation

Provides an antidote to the short-term nature of municipal decision-making

The challenge faced re: municipal climate action implementation

Youth have not traditionally been engaged by municipalities

Traditional engagement strategies aren't engaging youth thus far

The demographic calling for climate action more than any other demographic

Succession planning

Youth help keep government accountable!!!!



# Municipal Youth Matchmaking



- [Climate Justice Durham](#)
- [Peel Community Climate Council](#)
- [Youth Climate Lab](#)
- [Youth Challenge International](#)
- [Canadian Youth Climate Coalition](#)
- [Sustainable Youth Canada](#)
- [Environmental Youth Alliance](#)
- [Youth Climate Collective](#)
- [Canadian Youth Alliance for Climate Action](#)
- [Ecoschools Canada](#)
- [Indigenous Climate Action](#)
- [Youth Climate Values Survey](#)
- [Future Majority](#)
- [Guelph Youth Council](#)
- [Burlington Youth Council](#)
- [Windsor Youth Climate Council](#)
- [Youth Hubs \(Guelph - Wellington County\)](#)
- [Canadian Youth Biodiversity Network](#)
- [Burlington Green Youth Network](#)
- [Halton Climate Collective – Generation Green Conference](#)



# Youth Engagement Barriers



Youth feel disconnected and overwhelmed by political processes

Feel their voices aren't heard and acted upon, unclear what happens with feedback they give

Logistical and resource barriers, youth organizations play a critical role

How can youth organizations be better supported?

Government engagement efforts are limited in achieving meaningful engagement

How to best engage and support youth....

Youth will not engage with tick the box consultation



# Input from Youth



Not looking for superficial engagement

They want and need to affect change

Feet: Putting the head and heart into action

Head, Heart and Feet

Head: Learning new things, practicing skills

Heart: The feeling of making a difference

Youth are most engaged when they feel they are contributing to something larger than themselves

Spirit: Working as part of a collective effort to make the change needed to ensure an effective civil society and social cohesion



# Youth Engagement Approaches



- **1<sup>st</sup> Approach:** youth as receivers of information where adults are the ones providing all the information
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Approach:** Youth as recipients of information provided by youth but youth are provided with options to put that information into action
- **Method # 1:** Youth engage in activities that are delivered by adults
- **Method # 2:** Youth provide input and are informed of what will happen with their input and there is checks and balances in the system where youth are informed of how their input was considered in decision making
- **Method # 3:** youth represent and work on behalf of their peers, there is an ongoing relationship between municipality and youth representatives. There is accountability between youth members and youth representatives.



# Municipal Engagement Efforts



- Youth shouldn't take it personally, government engagement doesn't work for many demographics
- But it is especially not suited for youth engagement
- Need to engage with youth to figure out how to engage with them
- This makes more sense to do at a larger scale than individual municipality
- Youth organizations are critical here
- This is the start of a journey, we are not at our destination
- We need to trip plan together
- Ironically covid has resulted in an improvement to municipal engagement efforts
- Moving to online engagement has improved youth engagement, but it is still at a superficial level.



# Input from Youth Groups



- Disillusionment with political follow through on climate commitments
- Disillusionment with how youth are engaged (come support the climate actions we see as important but little time allocated to hearing from youth on what they think is important)
- Preference for informal engagement over formal engagement
- Climate literate in terms of climate impacts and issues
- Have challenges navigating political world
- Don't know how to best affect change
- What is the role and responsibilities of different levels of government
- Youth groups believe their members would benefit from training on the role and responsibilities re: climate roles, responsibilities, and opportunities from different levels of government
- They would like to know what actions each level of government needs to take for climate action to advance towards the level science says we need to achieve
- Opportunity for a Governmental Climate Action and Governance Education Series



# Navigating Municipal Climate Actions and Decisions



Hidden, long, and difficult to read council reports

Challenging for youth to navigate and track climate decisions that are coming to municipal councils

Scheduling challenges

Resource challenges

Municipalities working together to advance their youth engagement practices

What has worked, what hasn't and why hasn't it worked



# Municipal Input on Youth Engagement Efforts



Very little resources to engage youth

Undertaken often as a personal effort with little municipal support and resources

Not sure who and how to engage

Roster of Youth Groups – who are the right groups to reach out to?

Having challenges engaging with youth in the way they would like to have youth engaged

Navigating the government process is a challenge for youth

Staff limitations regarding delegations/advocacy at the municipal political level

Understanding that there is an existing municipal decision-making process and accepting that the system may improve but not get overhauled (at least no time soon..)



# More Municipal Input on Youth Engagement Efforts



Awareness and knowledge building more than actions and decision making

Recognition that youth are provided no resources to do this hard work

Dedicated resources for youth engagement efforts so they don't have to compete in an unequal footing

Youth may have expectations of municipal climate staff that are difficult for municipal climate staff to live up to

Need to better understand each other's limitations.

Youth groups and schools are common avenues municipal staff use to advance their engagement efforts

Often way better outcomes from supporting others to advance municipal youth engagement



# Even More Municipal Input on Youth Engagement Efforts



Covid and online engagement is a bit of a game changer re: youth engagement

Youth succession planning – sustaining engagement

How can municipalities and youth groups work together on succession planning to reduce the burden onboarding a steady stream of youth

Shoddy engagement efforts across all demographics, nit just youth

Lack of staff time to dedicate to youth engagement



# Possible Actions to Support Youth Engagement Efforts



- **Youth Groups and Municipal Matchmaking** – Who are the youth groups? How can we streamline municipal awareness of youth groups and avenues for engaging with them?
- **Supporting Youth** – How can youth groups be better supported to facilitate municipal youth engagement opportunities?
- **Development and delivery of a Governmental Climate Action and Governance Education Series** – what would be the value of that? How would it be doable and of value? How can we start small with this and build it out over time? How can a collective effort be advanced towards this goal?
- **Transparency and Accessibility** – Tracking climate action decisions being put in front of council. How can we simplify access/notice of council climate decisions coming to committee and councils?
- **Collaboration** – Sharing across municipalities on youth engagement efforts, what is being tried, what is working, what isn't working, what are possible improvements?

Let's move onto gathering input..... Menti, verbal, chat, discussion....

# Suggestions for Municipal Supports for Youth Groups to Facilitate Engagement



Hire youth ambassador to engage and guide/lead events

Facilitate Talking Circles as an inclusive governance structure

Include Youth Leaders on Stakeholder Committees

provided with funding / paid for their time

Teach the foundations of civics and how municipal governments work

Being included in decision making processes

access to municipal staff

Reach out to them via Instagram, Tik-Tok or other platforms

connecting youth/youth groups with existing community groups with similar interests & goals

Engagement with urban Indigenous youth

Youth advisory committees to council

mentorship opportunities for Youth Leaders

# Input for how to Track



"Climate Action" is very broad ... it's transportation (transit, active transportation); it's planning decisions (growth, etc.); it's asset management planning; forestry plans, etc. Would be difficult to collate.

Enbridge has requested that they be notified of all climate change reports going to Council. There is a mechanism for our Clerks office to do this.

Have kids give their municipality a climate change report card ;)

Would this be GTA wide? One common calendar?

We try to share them in our newsletter

# Youth Engagement Action Sharing Input



yes, the water festivals municipalities put on already do this and it works well

From our local school boards - youth are tapped out. Everyone wants their input on everything. Coordinated efforts are best and be very specific as to what you are asking.