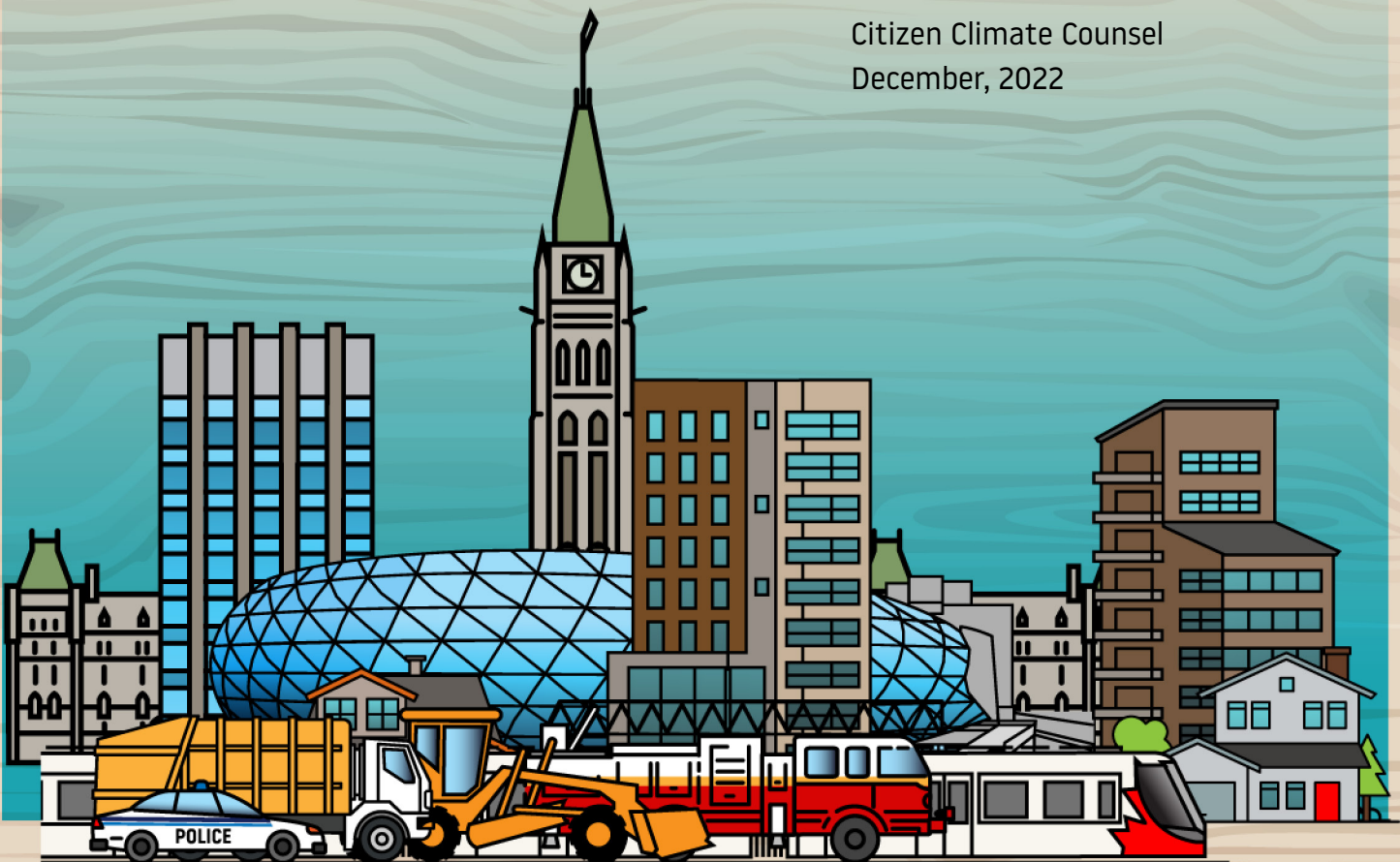


# 2022 CLIMATE PROGRESS ACCOUNT

City of Ottawa  
Actions to the  
End of 2021

Citizen Climate Counsel  
December, 2022



# Climate is a mission that must succeed

For the health, safety and prosperity of Ottawa's community, and for life on Earth, Ottawa's unavoidable climate mission is to sharply reduce the greenhouse gases (GHGs) we emit, and to fundamentally adapt Ottawa to become resilient to climate changes.

**The threats are real, present, and stark.** The rewards are safety, liveability, and a vibrant economy.

We can succeed or we can fail in reducing the GHGs that cause the climate emergency. We can succeed or fail in becoming a city that is resilient to changes. We are not yet succeeding in either.

The 2018–2022 Ottawa City Council acknowledged the climate emergency, and adopted targets for reducing GHGs. It committed the City Corporation to a strategy and to a number of projects, and began to address them. However, it did not say how much individual projects are supposed to reduce GHGs. It only began to prepare Ottawa for the effects of the new climate. It did not budget or secure anything close to the financial resources Ottawa needs to mobilize.

**Most important to success is action in and by the community.** The community is where the biggest climate impacts are felt, and the biggest climate work is to be done. This calls for new cooperation among partners, to be facilitated and led by Council. For GHG reductions and for resilience, Ottawa needs the City and the community to share planning and reporting on climate targets, projects and budgets, and on their results.

**The 2022–2026 Council has to achieve coherent, transparent presentation of its climate budgets, activities, and results to the Ottawa community.**

Ottawa's new Council 2022–2026 must partner with the Ottawa community in coherent climate planning, budgeting, and reporting.

**This report by Citizen Climate Counsel, a volunteer group of Ottawa residents,** gives an overview: it summarizes the climate tasks we face, the milestones the 2018–2022 Ottawa City Council committed to meeting up to the end of 2021, and whether milestones were met.

Most were not.

*Ottawa needs the City and the community to share planning and reporting on climate targets, projects and budgets, and on their results.*

We hope this account of progress will help open doors to deeper action by the City Corporation and the Ottawa community. Its aim is to stimulate urgent, innovative and accountable collaboration. Ottawa needs strong climate leadership, communication and support both in City Council and staff, and in the community.

Ottawa's success in addressing climate challenges and opportunities together depends on transparent reporting.

—Citizen Climate Counsel, Ottawa

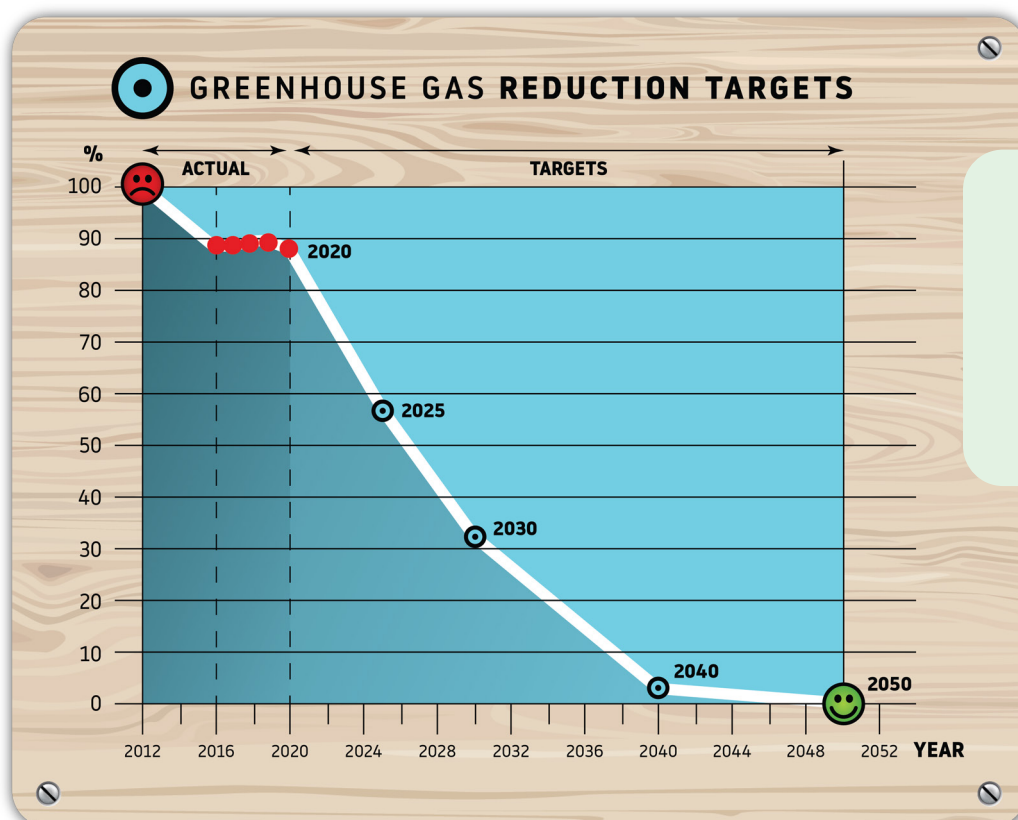
# Report

In response to the global climate crisis, the City of Ottawa declared a **Climate Emergency** in April 2019. The [Climate Change Master Plan \(CCMP\)](#) and [Energy Evolution Strategy \(EE\)](#) are the City documents that address the emergency. They include 159 specific milestones to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and to adapt Ottawa to be climate resilient.

## How much more Greenhouse Gas may we emit to 2050?

Greenhouse Gas is measured as the amount of carbon emitted by burning fuels. The “carbon budget” is the amount of carbon the City of Ottawa is allowed to burn in total between 2019 and 2050 in order to reach net zero emissions: 58 Megatonnes. This carbon budget is shown as the grey area in the graph below. The 100% reference level for comparing annual burning in later years is the amount of carbon Ottawa burned in 2012. In 2020 Ottawa burned 5.8 Megatonnes of carbon, using up 10% of the 30 year budget in just 1 year.

The clear blue area represents the achievement of clean energy in Ottawa—net zero emissions by 2050. The targets show the reductions to be met along the way as a percentage of the 2012 emissions.



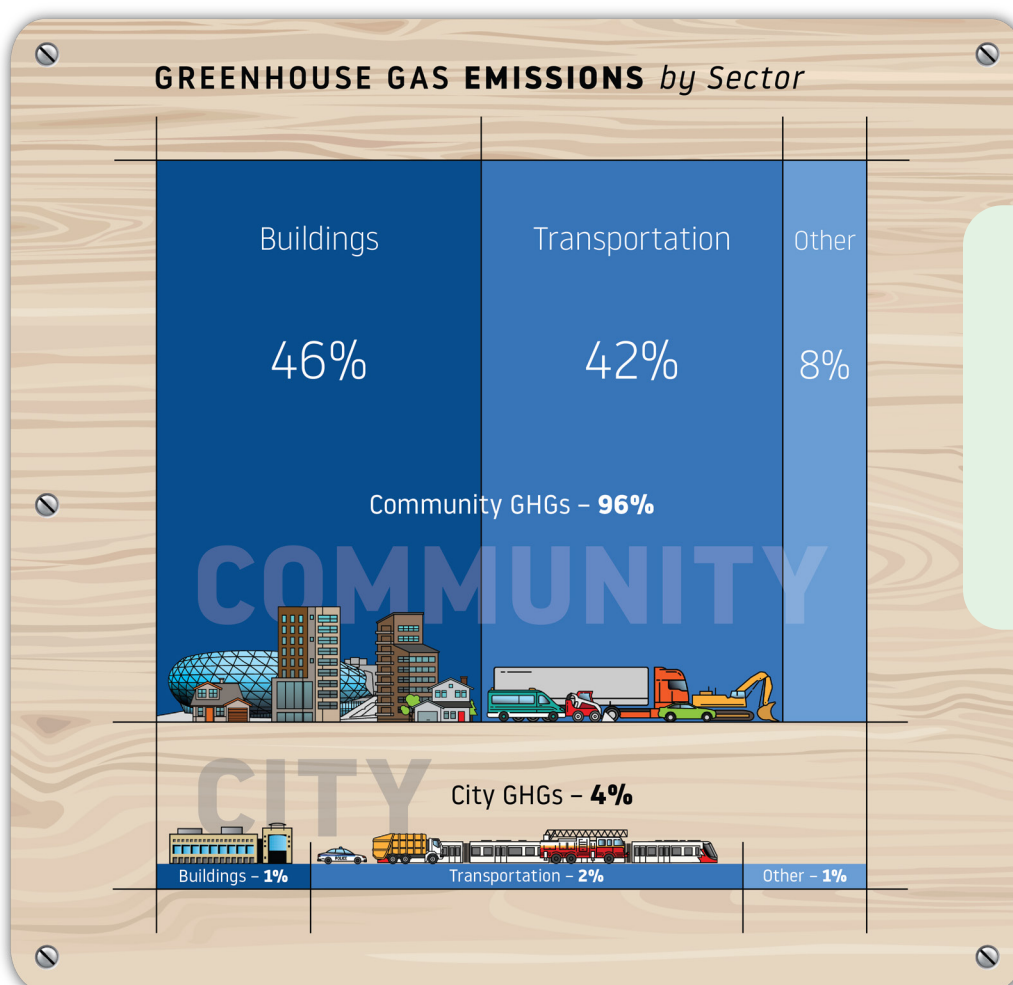
*The City's [technical model](#) shows we should be emitting 4.9Mt/year by now, and decreasing this amount every year.*

## Who are Ottawa's big emitters of GHGs? What needs to change the most?

Buildings and transportation produce almost all of Ottawa's GHGs. Waste treatment and agriculture emit the rest.

Currently, 96% of GHGs in Ottawa are emitted by the Ottawa community—residents, businesses and institutions. 4% are emitted by the corporation of the City of Ottawa—primarily municipal buildings, the City's vehicle fleet, and public transportation.

Ottawa's success in reducing GHGs will depend overwhelmingly (96 to 4) on cooperative initiatives by the community—residents, businesses and institutions.



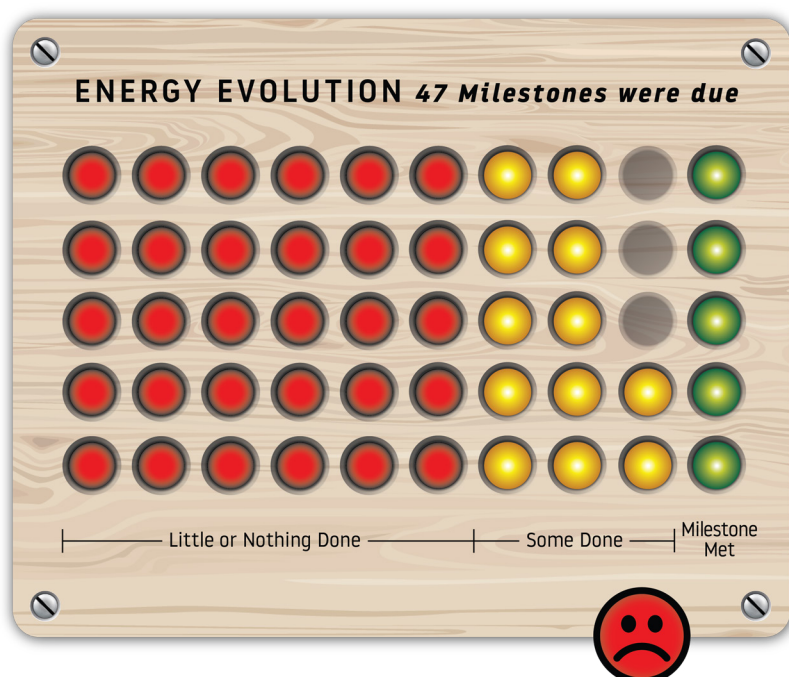
*The City needs to facilitate community actions at scale, mandate building standards, and provide transportation infrastructure that reduces GHGs.*

## How are the City's climate programs doing?

Let's look at progress on the milestones in Energy Evolution and in the rest of the Climate Change Master Plan that were to be reached by the end of 2021—almost three years after the climate emergency was declared.

**Energy Evolution** is the part of the Climate Change Master Plan that takes direct action on GHG emissions. Its 20 priority projects reduce energy use, increase energy efficiency, and switch to cleaner energy sources. Each project has its own milestones.

Of the 47 Energy Evolution milestones due by the end of 2021, 5 were met.



*Overall, we are not meeting Ottawa's action milestones for reducing GHGs.*

## A closer look at progress on milestones in the sectors that emit the most GHGs

**Community Buildings**—Ottawa residences, businesses, and institutions—emit 46% of Ottawa’s GHGs, primarily for heating. Of 8 milestones due by 31 December 2021, 2 were met.

Among the milestones for community buildings is the Better Homes Ottawa program for retrofitting individual residences. It is in place but it’s not nearly adequately funded to meet community needs or GHG targets from this sector. Similarly, High Performance Development Standards are drafted for new developments and large buildings, but are not as robust as those in other cities, and will only apply to about 35% of new construction, a fatal flaw in the City’s ability to meet its 2050 climate change targets.

**Community Transportation**—private cars, trucks, maintenance and construction vehicles—emit 42% of Ottawa’s GHGs. Of 8 milestones due in 2021, 1 was met.

Federal funding was obtained to install a first set of EV chargers, with some community engagement underway, but there was no indication of strategic planning for Personal or Commercial Vehicle Electrification.

**Community Emission Reductions to date** are not a result of City action. They are due to provincial measures that phased out coal-fired electricity generation, and to reduced use of transit in the Covid pandemic. The City expects it will be several years before real community GHG reductions occur. This puts Ottawa well behind its targets, with no apparent plan to ramp up to overcome the slow start.



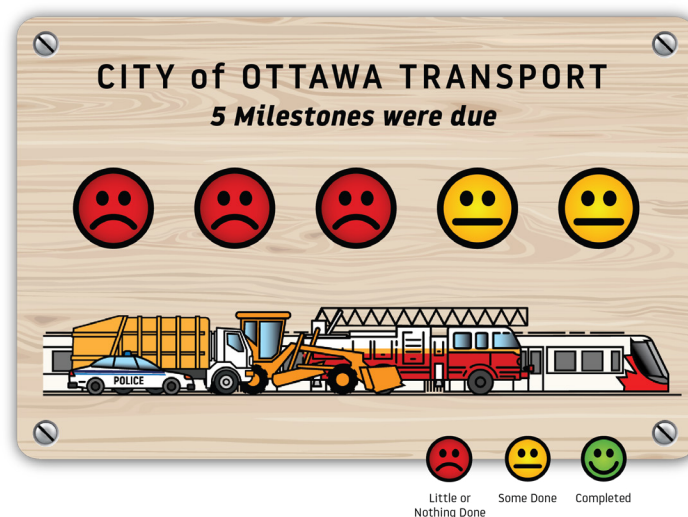
**City of Ottawa Buildings**—City Hall, sport and recreation facilities, community centres, libraries—emit 1% of Ottawa’s GHGs. Of 9 milestones due by 31 December 2021, 0 were met.

By the end of 2021 there was no evidence that the milestones for the Municipal Buildings Renewal & Retrofit Program or the Community Building Heating Strategy have been met. Additional staff resources in the City’s Climate Change unit may be needed to achieve timely progress on these important components of climate action.

**City of Ottawa Transportation**—OC Transpo buses, LRT, police and bylaw officer cars, snow clearance trucks, etc—emit 2% of Ottawa’s GHGs. Of 5 milestones due in 2021, 0 were met.

An initial purchase of electric buses has been made, along with other work on Alternative Energy for Transit. But there’s no evidence of strategic planning for a Municipal Green Fleet, nor an environmental scan of the Transportation Master Plan.

**Corporate Emission Reductions to date** are ahead of the 2021 target, primarily due to a big decline in emissions from solid wastes brought by new efficiencies at the Trail Road Waste Facility. To reach its GHG emission reductions cost-effectively, the City needs a strategic plan for energy retrofits to municipal buildings. Significant ongoing work must be underway and sustained to achieve the big additional GHG reductions Ottawa needs for 2030 and 2050.



## Building Ottawa's capacity to deal with climate change

The ***Climate Change Master Plan***, in addition to the Energy Evolution Projects, makes commitments to develop Ottawa's ability to do climate work. The City is to establish new frameworks for effective governance, steer the management of municipal assets, and implement a strategy to make Ottawa resilient in a changed climate. The commitments include the use of incentives, communications, and partnerships to inspire and support actions by citizens, as well as to find funds and develop financing mechanisms commensurate with the climate emergency.

Beyond Energy Evolution, 39 Climate Change Master Plan milestones were due by the end of 2021. Of these, 13 were met.



*Ottawa is not yet increasing its climate abilities fast enough to meet its climate challenges. Lagging progress in creating capacity now risks failure, and ensures a greater burden on the next generation.*

## Will Ottawa be resilient to the changing climate?

**Ottawa is behind other Canadian cities and behind its own milestones.** Buildings, infrastructure, environments, and services have to be adapted to reduce the physical, financial, and social impacts of more frequent extreme heat, cold, storms, floods, and icing.



Positively, in a climate-resilient Ottawa, the city's economy will have investment, skilled people and entrepreneurs poised to take advantage of the economic opportunities and reap the cost savings that come from making the city resilient. All municipal projects and infrastructure will be planned and built so they contribute to Ottawa's resilience.

For the period up to the end of December 2021, the Climate Change Master Plan set three milestones on Council's path to adapting Ottawa to a changed climate: a climate projection for Ottawa, a report on Ottawa's vulnerability to climate risks, and a strategy to address the vulnerabilities. Of these 3 milestones, 1 was met on schedule. For comparison, Edmonton's resilience strategy was delivered in 2018.

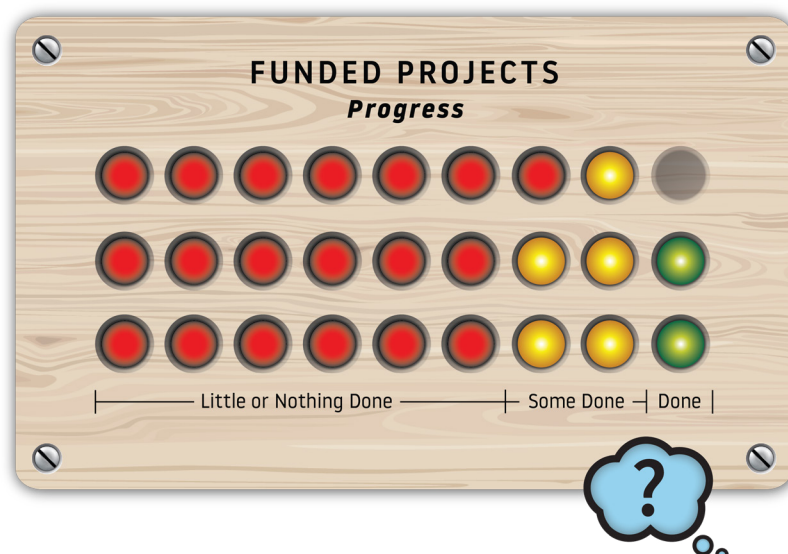


*Ottawa needs strategies to prepare and cope sooner rather than later.*

The [climate vulnerability assessment](#) has been delivered in 2022. The resilience strategy has been deferred to 2023. We are far behind the milestones to become climate resilient. The impacts of not being prepared will increasingly be felt in more expensive insurance coverage, public liability for damages, more vulnerable neighbourhoods, and lost competitiveness compared to municipalities that are prepared. The recent litany of tornadoes, floods and a derecho show how vital resilience is.

## Reporting and budgeting: are we spending funds wisely on climate programs?

**We can't tell.** In 2020 Council put City funds into 26 projects to address climate change. How these projects relate to milestones in the Climate Change Master Plan is not clear. Reasons for choosing these particular projects are not evident. In any case, of the 26 projects, 2 were completed by the end of 2021.



The reasons for this record of performance—apparently not good—are not well reported. Were the resources allocated not enough? Were conflicting objectives unresolved? In any case, how much are these projects expected to reduce carbon emissions? Are they aimed at the most important climate targets? Do other City initiatives complement these projects, or reduce their effectiveness for climate?

We don't know the answers to these questions. The budget allocations do not seem to be part of a strategic approach to climate. There has been little reporting on these projects to Council Committees, or to the public. Current weaknesses in reporting ability could be due to insufficient staffing to address the Climate Change Emergency. But the answers are vital to success.

***We need transparent accounting and reporting in a strategic framework.*** Without markers for success or failure, neither Ottawa taxpayers nor Ottawa's funding partners can know whether they are getting value for money in Ottawa's climate programs.

## Have we invested enough to succeed?

**No.** City climate documents indicate that Ottawa currently needs to invest \$1.6 billion per year between 2020 and 2030 to succeed in climate work. This is investment by residents, businesses, and institutions, funding from other levels of government, and the City's own budget. The City budget for 2021 showed only \$800K from the unstable Ottawa Hydro surplus for climate work. It didn't identify other amounts, such as for the climate staff. For 2022, significantly more has been mentioned, but we have not found a coherent City climate budget, nor an indication of investments by the Ottawa community.

In City Council's budget for 2021, only \$800,000 from the Hydro Ottawa "dividend"—its revenue surplus to its costs—was allocated to climate. Even this was a 69% reduction from the previous year. The Hydro Ottawa dividend is variable. This prevents the essential multi-year planning and commitments.

A transforming investment in climate is needed, at a new order of magnitude. Securing the funds now will reduce Ottawa's costs for cleanups, and home and infrastructure repair after climate-driven weather damages. They'll reduce personal injury and public health impacts from heat, freeze-thaw, floods and storms. They'll reduce insurance costs for everyone. They'll provide the platform for pervasive economic benefits in climate-positive innovation and businesses. Transformation now will make it easier for our children to do what they have to in a changing climate.



## Is the City leadership in place to build effective partnerships?

**Not yet.** To reduce GHG emissions, the greatest need for action is in the community (96% of Ottawa's total emissions). The scale of the needed effort calls for cooperation and coordination. For example, to achieve the reduction targets, retrofits of buildings in the community should be organized at the neighbourhood level and beyond.

City Council leadership for actions by the community depends on realistic communication about the scale and urgency of the tasks. It calls for Council to encourage and support capability and performance in the community, and to advocate to other levels of government. It means mobilizing partnerships among climate stakeholders and supporters, and seeing that the costs and benefits of addressing climate are distributed equitably across Ottawa.

In the Climate Change Master Plan and Energy Evolution there are 19 milestones for partnership (11) and outreach (8). Of these, 0 were met by December 2021.



*Ottawa City Council and staff have to lead and facilitate new partnerships, connecting and energizing many groups, organizations, businesses and citizens of Ottawa.*

In 2022, updates on the City's Climate webpages have improved in number and content, and more outreach and contacts with stakeholders are evident. However, a clear shared strategy is not evident yet for building effective partnerships and networks, nor for communicating and reporting on needs and progress more than once a year.

# Recommendations for the Ottawa City Council and the Ottawa community

**1**

## *Strengthen the response to the Climate Emergency*

- ensure that programs are ambitious enough to achieve targets, with adequate financial and human resources to achieve success

**2**

## *Improve oversight and exercise accountability for climate action*

- institute regular specific reports to Council committees by City staff and by stakeholders to generate a public record of progress on climate priorities, to inform and consult the community about changes in priorities and resource allocation, to air challenges faced by staff and stakeholders, and to propose adjustments in City and community plans and actions.

**3**

## *Enhance communication to improve community engagement*

- the annual GHG status report and update needs to be more comprehensive in tracking specific action on the 159 priorities and the associated GHG reductions achieved under both community and corporate projects
- continue improving the City of Ottawa website on the Climate Emergency: make it easy to navigate, clearly highlighting and facilitating local climate program knowledge and actions by the Ottawa community

# Annex

## Methods

To measure progress on City of Ottawa climate action, **Citizen Climate Counsel** (C3, a group of concerned Ottawa residents) compiled a spreadsheet of the 159 milestones and funded projects that are published in the Climate Change Master Plan, Energy Evolution, and other City documents. In combination, these documents present the City's strategic approach to meeting its stated targets for greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reductions in the operations of the City corporation and in the community. Energy Evolution accounts for 60 percent of the City's climate action milestone commitments. Of these, 48% were slated for completion in 2021. **The rest of the Climate Change Master Plan accounts for the remaining 40 percent of total City milestones. Of these, more than half (62%) have completion dates of 2021 or earlier.**

We scanned the minutes of City Council and its various committees as well as staff reports to find evidence of progress on these items. We also reviewed the 3 of 2020 Community and Corporate Greenhouse Gas Inventories and Climate Change Master Plan Status Report and Update 2020 (GHG Report). C3 also interacted with City staff on climate change data.

An additional 26 projects were allocated funding in 2020 (15 from the \$2.6M HydroOttawa dividend surplus from 2019 for a total of \$1.4M, and another \$3.25M from other sources). In 2020, \$800K was allocated from the HydroOttawa surplus for expenditure in 2021. It is not always clear how these funded projects contribute to GHG reductions or how they link to strategic priorities. There was very little reporting on whether these projects were accomplished.

**Based on the reporting in these sources we assigned a percentage completeness ranking for each of the 78 milestones that had a due date of 2021 or earlier. These rankings were grouped into 3 categories: Red (less than 35% complete), Yellow (35-99% complete), and Green (100% complete).**

We then focused specifically on 30 milestones in the Buildings and Transportation sectors as they account for approximately 90% of GHG emissions at the community level, and 66% of emissions at the City corporate level that had current deadlines.

Information on progress towards the original 159 commitments is not being consistently reported to council committees responsible for oversight; it is possible that progress has occurred, but we couldn't find evidence of it. For municipal trust and cooperation, the City needs to improve its reporting.

For further information, contact: [citizenclimatecounselottawa@gmail.com](mailto:citizenclimatecounselottawa@gmail.com).

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## Land acknowledgement

Citizen Climate Counsel, Ottawa, meets on the traditional unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People. We show our gratitude and respect to you, and to the land for all that it provides.

## Seeking a francophone partner

Conseils climatiques citoyens recherche une association ou individu francophone afin de créer une version française de ce rapport qui soit à la fois bien rédigée et techniquement correcte. Veuillez nous contacter.