



## Briefing Note: Community Investment is Climate Action

### Summary

*Every conversation about climate is an opportunity to focus on investment in housing, affordability, food security, good jobs, and vibrant communities.*

Climate action is a powerful way for Canada (Ontario) to address pressing community concerns. Achieving this synergy requires framing and implementing climate action in ways that are relevant to people's lives. The first step is listening to communities about what they actually need and hope for. Climate action can then be harnessed in acting on these priorities precisely because effective climate action entails building vibrant, climate-safe communities. Polling shows people care about climate, but they need government support to take action.<sup>1</sup> Our research shows that helping Canadians with core problems in their communities **IS** climate action.<sup>2</sup> Platforms should make the argument to voters that climate action is about making their lives better and solving their problems. *Take climate out of the elite narrative and bring it to communities where they are.*

### Applying a Climate Lens to Community Priorities

**Climate-Safe Community Employment and Development:** Canadians are concerned about employment and job opportunities. The transition to a low-carbon economy will create employment opportunities. ***Climate Action is Good for Jobs.***

#### *How to frame actions:*

- Workforce training programs focused on low-carbon jobs.
- Large-scale investments and massive job opportunities in decarbonizing and climate-proofing the built environment.
- Investing in sustaining livelihoods beyond the creation of technical green jobs in traditionally male-dominated industries, such as construction and engineering, extending to the work of care and sustenance (e.g. jobs in sectors such as teaching, child and eldercare, healthcare, ecosystem management, and food production).

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<sup>1</sup> Simpson, S. (2023). Six in Ten (59%, +3 pts) Canadians Agree That if Canada's Government Does Not Act Now to Combat Climate Change, It Will Be Failing the People of Canada. *Ipsos*. Available at: [https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/six-in-ten-canadians-agree-if-canadas-government-does-not-act-now-combat-climate-change-failing#:~:text=Six%20in%20ten%20\(59%25\),54%25%20men](https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/six-in-ten-canadians-agree-if-canadas-government-does-not-act-now-combat-climate-change-failing#:~:text=Six%20in%20ten%20(59%25),54%25%20men)

<sup>2</sup> Our research project *Just Transition in Action* is a collaboration between University of Toronto academics and community partners. This briefing is grounded in 2 years of data collection focused on deep listening with communities in Scarborough to understand how community priorities can be addressed through climate action. Further information: <https://urbanjusttransitions.ca/>



**Foster Vibrant Communities through Climate Action:** Our research shows that a top priority for communities is to build more connections, social capital, and collective activities. ***Climate Action Builds Communities***

How to frame actions:

- Invest in arts and culture programming with a climate focus.
- Create, expand, and maintain common infrastructure and collective spaces, such as community gardens. Community centres and organizations can also be leveraged to support community needs, build social bonds, and invest in care work – all of which can support community climate action and resilience in the face of climate impacts.
- Support walkability, density, and business diversity. Compact urban forms and co-locating jobs with housing can simultaneously enable climate adaptation and mitigation in cities.

**Food Security is Climate Action:** Canadians are struggling with food insecurity. There is a pressing need for increased access to healthy, organic, and local food options and more spaces and opportunities for local food production. Addressing food security is not only a climate resilience measure so that people have affordable food as climate impacts increase, but it is also a greenhouse gas emission reduction measure to support more local, organic food.

***Climate Action Feeds Communities***

How to frame actions:

- Create more urban farms, community gardens, and hydroponic gardens or greenhouses
- Invest in local food entrepreneurs and businesses, supporting vibrant, walkable communities

**Climate Action and Affordability go Hand-in-Hand:** Climate action can enhance the affordability of people's everyday lives. Focus on initiatives that lower the costs of participation in low-carbon systems that enhance people's quality of life, such as deeply affordable, zero-emissions public transportation and housing. ***Climate Action Means Affordable Lives***

How to frame actions:

- Investment in new affordable housing that is climate-safe
- Spur massive net-zero and efficiency investment in our existing homes to lower energy bills
- Use climate action to end energy poverty, which affects millions of Canadian households
- Invest in public transit. Shifting to sustainable mobility options will reduce a key source of emissions while fostering healthier, more connected communities.

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