

Toward A Democratic TransformTO

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Introduction

The fundamental problem of climate change is closing the gap between public voice and policy outcomes. The record of achieving this lofty goal is mixed. Despite progress, democracies have often failed to keep pace with the extraordinary demands climate change places on policymakers. While we accept that both science and large-scaled resources must meet this challenge, we suggest these solutions are meaningful insofar as they are equitable and legitimate. The path to achieving these high standards is more — not less — democracy. We emphasize the possibilities of local government, particularly urban municipalities, to make climate solutions that national governments fail to create. Our focus is on TransformTO, a plan to achieve net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Toronto by 2040. TransformTO includes extensive community consultation planning, but rarely does so with explicitly democratic language. To improve this, we target our recommendations into three priority areas: participatory budgeting (PB) to offer innovative structures to foster citizen participation; youth-specific capacity building to bring future generations into the fold of climate planning; and finally, we attempt to place Indigenous governance and knowledge of climate change at the forefront of TransformTO. These population-specific interventions are designed to feed back into our PB proposal, creating mechanisms to develop policy ideas and vet them by blending engagement and empowerment. Because of the unique needs of these populations and PB model, we offer section specific recommendations in addition to overall concluding recommendations. These suggestions will form the basis for building legitimacy of TransformTO by emphasizing public voice in its implementation.

Why Democracy?

Our focus on democracy and sustainability is not a foregone conclusion. Critics are impatient with democracy's ability to respond to the mammoth challenges of climate change, for varying reasons. On one hand, democracies have failed to meet their Paris commitments (Willis et al., 2021). On the other hand, scientists are exasperated that their expertise is not being translated into policy by presumed scientifically illiterate policymakers and publics (Stehr, 2015). Some political thinkers even suggest "good authoritarianism" as a response to these problems or suggest "liberal democracy creates climate change paralysis" (Beeson, 2010; Triffitt & Mcleod, 2015). These framings fail because they consider climate policy as a narrowly technical issue, not one complexly integrated with social and economic factors. Only democracy can solve the information problem of the multiple issues springing from the climate crisis, providing a sensitive method to move between problems (Stehr, 2015). To achieve this, we ask how democracy can be made more substantive and fairer to address the wicked problem of climate change. We use Welton's (2020) framework divided democratizing efforts as falling into two camps. First, citizen engagement integrates the public as a source of information for decision makers, providing valuable input and advice in the policymaking process and thereby strengthening the project of government. However, this model does not give power over final outcomes. Second, citizen empowerment aims to give the public more direct control over outcomes by averting administrative channels. It instead seeks to enhance direct democracy using tools like referenda and recalls to localize power and bring government "closer to the people" (Welton, 2020: 60). We argue TransformTO falls in the engagement camp. Its 2021 consultation report notes that 1,025 residents and interested partners participated in online surveys, 677 viewed an online explainer video, 110 submitted ideas through an online Idea Board and 70 joined 10 community discussions (City of Toronto, 2021). We believe this

emphasis on the public's role of advisor should be amended to granting it the power of decision-making. Following Welton, we believe both approaches have their appropriate context, depending on the population of interest and goals of a specific climate policy. However, because we consider TransformTO to overwhelmingly focus on citizen engagement, we will target our recommendations to mostly enhance citizen empowerment as means to improve legitimacy and public participation in the plan, though we do offer some engagement elements.

Toward Participation and Ownership

Guiding TransformTO toward a blended model of citizen empowerment and engagement involves an expanded toolset. That involves growing engagement opportunities for specific populations and creating new methods of empowerment to reimagine democratic policymaking. To offer the latter, we propose PB investments into public climate projects. Our primary motivating evidence is the association between PB and benefits for residents ranging from infrastructural and architectural improvements, increased quality of life, reduced air pollution, to boosted sustainable transportation systems (Klemens, 2022). We will first consider Toronto's history with PB, then examine how it can be improved by studying international examples of participatory climate budgeting and finally conclude by offering recommendations for future PB processes.

Key Context of Participatory Budgeting

Created in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 1989, PB is a "traveling" policy innovation, meaning it has morphed and been adopted across time and space since its inception (Lehtonen, 2022). Friendly (2016: 1) outlines four key aspects distinguishing PB from other citizen participation models:

- "Residents brainstorm ideas about how the money should be spent;
- Budget delegates develop proposals based on the community's initial ideas;

- The community is invited to vote on their top projects;
- The government implements the winning projects.”

Our paper will adopt Friendly’s basic framework because her analysis and recommendations were geared specifically toward Toronto and offer valuable groundwork to be adapted into the City’s climate policy. That said, there is no one size fits all model for PB, and projects of varying design and intention have been created by a range of municipalities as well as housing and youth organizations (Flynn, 2016). Indeed, several PB processes have already been tested in North America. In 2017, the Government of Ontario used online Budget Talks that asked residents to submit project ideas in one of five topic areas. For roughly two decades Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) has used PB to fund capital projects. Some U.S. cities use PB for school investments. Meanwhile, some cities make PB city-wide such as in Boston, Seattle, and Victoria, while Chicago, Halifax and Hamilton have used PB by ward (City of Toronto, 2019a). PB evidently changes shape and form depending on context and goals. Despite this flexibility, it has challenges. It may also face barriers in Ontario, where cities have limited autonomy (Pinnington et al., 2009). Similarly, time and resource commitments may limit the ability for equity seeking residents to participate, cutting against our equity goals — or worse — act as a democratic sheen for closed door deals and potential corruption (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). The diversity of PB, as well as its downsides should not dissuade policymakers from pursuing its vision of a more vibrant and substantive democratic process. When done effectively, it can address the needs of marginalized communities by bridging economic interests with the democratic sphere. As councilor Shelley Carrol said in 2017, “When you do [PB] in the ward and say it’s \$250,000 and we’re all going to spend it, everyone comes to the table” (Friendly, 2016:7). This paper argues that this diversity of outcome should be an invitation to modify and

innovate on PB's fundamental insights, imagining how it could be utilized for Toronto's climate goals.

Toronto's own experience with PB deserves special consideration, as seen in a pilot project the City ran from 2015 to 2017. According to its executive summary, the project ran in "former Ward 33 and the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas of Oakridge in the former Ward 35, and Rustic in the former Ward 12" (City of Toronto, 2019a). The executive report found residents valued clear and accessible information and the ability to take an active role in neighborhood decisionmaking and local improvements. It also found residents appreciated opportunities to meet and speak with their neighbors and City staff to discuss decision making. However, City staff found it had limited reach — with only about .8 per cent participation — while also being resource intensive and potentially could frustrating existent divisions between neighborhoods over unbalanced investments. (Toronto, 2019a). Planners overall noted that "jurisdictions with the highest participation rates often have the largest capital budgets and sufficient operating funds to support city-wide implementation and outreach to specific communities" (2019a). In a study of the pilot, Petite (2021) also critiques the power relations between City staff and participants, where the former took PB as an opportunity to explain how the City works, rather than collaborate to discover novel methods of public investment. This "ironically inhibited (participant) ability to allocate even small sums of capital due to the many processes and protocols that were enforced rather than called into question," (Petite 2021:273). We should not consider these interactions as inherently problematic: City of Toronto staff and residents have both cited enjoying the opportunity to meet and learn in the official executive report (2019a). What Petite is suggesting, however, is that power relations continuously narrowed the scope and definition of feasibility to dramatically undercut the transformative

potential of PB. We take his argument seriously: any future PB projects in Toronto must account for daily lives and everyday experiences as a vital source of knowledge to be legitimated, not cast aside (Petite, 2021: 281). Learning from the pilot project, we should assume that substantive investment and epistemological humility must be the foundations for climate PB. The City must both be prepared to offer the resources to make decision making meaningful, while also opening itself to challenge its own processes while empowering the public. This represents the fundamental shift from engagement to empowerment.

We should also evaluate international examples of specifically climate PB. European cities, such as Lisbon and Vienna, have encountered many of the same challenges while producing stronger outcomes with more significant public investment. First, Lisbon's 2020 experimentation with climate PB showed an unexpected creativity in defining climate goals in contrast to top-down proposals only emphasizing infrastructure. In a project dividing 2.5 million euros, "findings show that around 33% of citizen proposals and projects, 18% of votes, and 44% of public funding are dedicated to the 'environment, green structure, and energy'" while the rest went to non-traditional climate investments, such as animal protection (Falanga et al., 2021: 11). Comparatively, a significant commitment from Vienna city council saw high degrees of participation. With a budget of €13 million between 2022 and 2023, policy proposals went through online submissions, a feasibility evaluation, collaborative workshops for selected ideas, final selection by citizen juries and open public voting, followed by implementation. By October 2022, more than 1,000 proposals were evaluated through this with criteria based on economic and social criteria, in addition to other broader city planning strategies. This strong political and financial investment, with an expansive information campaign "resulted in more intensive participation from citizens in the idea generation phase, enhancing the communicative (how) and

participant dimension (who)— therefore legitimacy—in the budgeting process” (Ahn et al., 2023: 406). While citizen juries made final selections, Ahn et al. suggests the proposals most likely to be selected were highly technical, possibly because of expert influence on the policymaking process and the demographics of those who submitted proposals. They argue that more specific targeted recruitment for members of underrepresented social groups who are most exposed to risks to climate change may mediate this process while being more responsive to justice and equity concerns (Ahn et al., 2023). We consider these European examples as positive models for Toronto to emulate, emphasizing emergent resident creativity and influence on the PB process while nonetheless maintaining focus on climate change and its impacts. The strong investment and engagement they create in major cities within advanced economies suggest Toronto can achieve something similar.

Encouraging Participation by Reconsidering the Role of City Staff

Our proposal also partly seeks to diversify sources of knowledge available to City staff, offering a process of mutual learning between residents and planners. Professionalization has previously been a critical snag to democratizing municipal governance. MacCallum (2016) explains that planners form a community of practice, resisting exposure to direct democracy schemes and public empowerment as proposed in PB. She argues that this is determined in planning circles by

- “close relationships and idiosyncratic ways of engaging with one another, which outsiders cannot easily enter;
- a detailed and complex understanding of their enterprise as they done it, which outsiders may not share;
- a repertoire for which outsiders miss shared references” (MaCallum, 2016:173).

Similarly, Dahl cautions that a planner's role "is to give citizens easy access to expert views while at the same time encouraging them to examine claims to superior knowledge or infallibility with considerable skepticism" (Dahl: 1992, 56). Currently, the City of Toronto relies too heavily on an engagement model that seeks resident input with the guard rails of expert opinion. We should change this. First, MaCallum (2016) suggests a method of shared learning, where planning meetings are places where new and emergent practices can emerge. We believe this can be achieved by City staff understanding their role in discussions phase primarily as facilitators designing a learning environment where they can share their expertise while residents share practical wisdom with equal legitimacy. Lerner (2010) argues this transition is mutually beneficial: residents gain a more sophisticated, city-wide perspective on local governance; City staff gain confidence to support more ambitious policy when meeting with support from residents. We see engagement and empowerment as a virtuous cycle, contributing to and improving upon each other. Narrow technocracy is a barrier to democracy and a considerable risk when communicating scientific climate knowledge. A more reciprocal approach will produce more effective local governance.

Giving Investments Heft

PB requires significant investment to meet its emancipatory potential and give citizens power to shape their city. Indeed, restraints on the menu of budgeting options can limit the democratic potential of PB, circumscribing possibilities and projects. In studies of PB in Guelph, Ont. and Chicago, IL, Pin (2016; 2017: 130) states "staff can use the scope of the process as a means of shutting down more creative or unusual projects." What makes PB so innovative — its emphasis on direct control of resources — can restrict its potential. To correct this, we should consider four requirements: 1) whether participatory forums are given primacy as interactions

between municipalities and residents; 2) whether the budget is given sufficient scope and emphasis on social justice; 3) whether PB schemes offer direct and clear links between it and government action rather than officials retaining final discretion; 4) whether citizens set equity-sensitive rules of the forum and these rules influence broader governance (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2014: 39). We can glean that the scope of budgeting plays a significant role in the depth of citizen control over the PB process. The definitions of what portion of a budget is set aside, to what ends and who decides what falls within these lines is a political process. As the climate crisis interweaves with social and economic challenges, it becomes increasingly difficult to separate these concerns. It may simply be necessary to have City staff offer clear information explaining the degree of climate impacts on Toronto and to leave the question of how to respond to properly supported PB fora.

Our Recommendations for Climate PBs

1) Adapting Vienna's Climate PB Model to TransformTO

We believe Vienna's use of citizen submissions and juries complemented with expert advice is a step away from engagement and toward empowerment for everyday residents. Our analysis has shown Toronto overwhelmingly views citizens as advisors, not agents of change. Vienna's emphasis on significant investment and citizen governance responds to City staff's takeaways from Toronto's PB arguing the model is most effective with significant resources and city-wide scope.

2) Shifting City staff's role from final decision makers to facilitators

City staff have cultivated an impressive range of knowledge on their subject areas, but this expertise must be a tool of the democratic process — not an impediment. Critical evaluation of the Toronto PB pilot project suggests staff circumscribed proposals by

saying they would not be technically feasible. While this may be the case, City staff should be directed to be open to emergent and potentially critical insights from citizen empowerment fora. To maximize democracy, citizen knowledge must be given weight.

3) *City of Toronto should pre-approve budget allocations of PB*

To make PB a transparent and vibrant democratic process, City council should preapprove its capital investment, following the example of Lisbon and Vienna.

Similarly, this pre-approval should be deliberately open to interpretation to allow wider citizen creativity, producing novel policy proposals such as the citizens of Lisbon's support for animal protection within their climate change plan. This also responds to Pin's critique of PB initiatives in Guelph and Chicago circumscribing citizen proposals by intentionally limiting the scope of the budget allocation. For democracy to be real, there must be substantive resources invested in it — with minimal top-down interference.

Toward Youth-Capacity Building

Engaging young people, broadly defined as those aged 15 to 30, in decision-making processes can contribute to sustainability and create a more equitable society. Following the City's PB executive report (2019) we suggest outreach to key communities is vital to achieving success. To do so, we aim to build on the emerging literature and practice of youth engagement to make young people leaders of this process. In this effort, TransformTO can learn from experiments in youth led PB and successful initiatives like the Mayor's Youth Coalition on Climate Change Action (MYCCA), and the Parisian Youth Council. Our aim is to complement existing efforts to engage youth in TransformTO. Currently, TransformTO focuses on interactive activities and educational initiatives, including school presentations, workshops, and public events that allow young residents to learn about climate change and sustainable lifestyles (City of Toronto, 2016:

7-12). However, TransformTO may not have fully achieved its objective of engaging youth in sustainability and democracy. The program seems to have primarily focused on information dissemination through presentations, workshops, and public events. A more active approach, allowing young people to actively shape policy could be more effective by providing hands on experience and direct involvement.

Evidence of youth led PB in Boston offers valuable insights into enrolling youth into leading roles within TransformTO. In the project “Youth Lead the Change: Participatory Budgeting Boston,” the City of Boston asked young people to suggest capital projects to apply to parks, streets, schools, and neighborhoods. Youth volunteers worked in sub committees such as arts and culture, education, energy and open space, environment, and public health. The projects were required to cost at least \$25,000 and to have a lifespan of at least five years. Youth throughout the city then had the opportunity to vote on the completed proposals (Collins et al, 2017). Analysis of youth led PB in Boston revealed youth typically respond well to the high levels of responsibility and heavy demands of allocating resources collaboratively. Similarly, Augsberger et al. (2018) found youth demonstrated strong teamwork and developed social networks as they worked with community and youth groups across Boston to develop useful and doable capital project proposals. The concrete nature of voting on a proposal with money behind it held wide-appeal and produced the most engagement (Collins et al., 2017). Combining this emphasis on youth empowerment with more traditional engagement tools may prove to be a powerful boost to public-led decision making in TransformTO, offering a key tool of youth empowerment.

To do so, TransformTO must offer a more relatable and accessible approach for young people to share their understanding of climate change’s impact on their community outside of the

strict PB process, which is explicitly institutional and thus must be complemented with other forms of engagement (Collins et al., 2017). One example in Los Angeles is the Mayor's Youth Council for Climate Action (MYCCA) that promotes climate action, environmental justice, and youth engagement in developing climate solutions and influencing local government actions. TransformTO can draw inspiration from MYCCA's success. MYCCA primarily promotes youth engagement through storytelling, raising awareness about climate change impacts on local communities, and inspiring action among residents (C40 cities, 2021: 10). This provides a platform for young people to engage directly with local officials and decision-makers, MYCCA encourages active participation by developing skills such as leadership, public speaking, event organizing, and networking can improve young people's self-confidence and capacity for advocacy, enabling them to participate more effectively in politics (Quintelier, 2008: 356). In the program, youth members sit on the council for one year, hold subteam meetings for specific projects, engage with the mayor in an annual meeting to provide updates, and invite leaders from the City, environmental NGOs and local businesses on a regular basis to inform their decision making (C40 cities, 2021: 10). Taking inspiration from MYCCA, TransformTO could collaborate with local youth-led organizations, schools, and community groups to develop and implement storytelling projects that allow young people to share their experiences, concerns, and ideas regarding climate change and environmental justice. This could involve organizing storytelling events, workshops, and online campaigns where young people can express their thoughts and feelings through various mediums such as writing, photography, video, or art.

Sharing experience is helpful, but youth need to be able to shape policy to have genuine impact on how their municipality approaches climate change. The Parisian Youth Council and Climate Academy show how engaging young people in decision-making processes and

providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills can enhance democracy and contribute to more sustainable societies. TransformTO can learn valuable lessons from this initiative to foster similar youth engagement and empowerment in Toronto. The Parisian Youth Council serves as a platform for young people to participate in decision-making processes and advocate for climate action. With 125 members, including 75 young people elected by their peers and 50 appointed by the Mayor of Paris, the council ensures that young people's perspectives are considered in the city's climate action plans and environmental policies (C40 cities, 2021, pg.28). By involving young people in shaping policies that affect their lives, the council promotes democratic values and youth engagement. The Climate Academy further supports this goal by providing education and training on sustainability, helping young people develop the knowledge and skills necessary to become active participants in creating more sustainable societies. This education and training empower young people to engage in democratic processes and contribute their perspectives to decision-making.

Importantly, Collins et al. (2017) also notes the importance of technology to facilitate young people engaging with similar initiatives and any potential PB process. Young urban activists rely heavily on the internet for information, particularly social media and personal blogs, with academic articles being considered the most trusted source of information (Jaufar, 2021: 9). This reliance on digital platforms can be a useful tool to foster youth engagement with TransformTO and PB. By providing a platform for teenagers to find and use reliable sources of information, the Climate Academy and similar initiatives can enable them to distinguish between fake news and credible sources, ultimately contributing to a more informed and effective democratic decision-making process. Taking inspiration from MYCCA and the Climate Academy's focus on developing reliable information sharing, we believe these sources can act as

supports to a potential PB project, where young people engaged with the youth council are able to gain knowledge via integrated use of technology and reliable information on the impacts of the climate crisis on their community.

Our Recommendations for Youth Empowerment and Engagement

- 1) *Based on the Parisian Youth Council and Climate Academy, establish a dedicated youth council or advisory board composed of diverse youth representatives from diverse communities in Toronto.*

This council would collaborate closely with the TransformTO team and local government to ensure that young people's perspectives and ideas are considered when developing and implementing PB proposals. Additionally, the council could serve as a platform to promote youth-led projects, events, and campaigns that raise awareness about climate change and encourage sustainable practices among Toronto's residents. By integrating a youth council or advisory board into the TransformTO initiative, the city would further strengthen youth engagement and create more opportunities for young people to contribute to Toronto's sustainable and democratic future.

Toward Indigenous Governance of a PB TransformTo

Fostering connections and leadership among Indigenous peoples will be key to the success of the PB process. Climate change risks, especially those affecting marginalized communities, have highlighted the connections between climate change and social injustice. Since many Indigenous cultures and livelihoods are closely tied to their lands, territories, and resources, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) finds that Indigenous people worldwide bear the brunt of environmental and climate injustices (Shukla et al., 2022). . The IPCC's sixth report emphasizes the importance of empowering Indigenous communities, stating that doing so "not only

strengthens climate leadership in many countries, but also changes broad social norms by raising knowledge of Indigenous governance systems which supported sustainable lifeways over thousands of years." (Shukla et al., 2022) This is of particular concern given the growing proportion of Indigenous peoples in Toronto, which numbered 46,315 in the 2016 census (City of Toronto, 2019b). Another count states that the total Indigenous population in Toronto was 55,000 (Rotondi et al., 2017). Given this sizable population and the risk exposure it faces, we must recognize the expertise and power that Indigenous communities possess in addressing climate change (Brigham, 2021).

With TransformTO, Toronto bears a responsibility to address the risk climate change poses for Indigenous peoples. To do so, the city's plan must create more active involvement of Indigenous peoples in the decision making process. There have been some steps to achieve this. TransformTO currently acknowledges the importance of involving Indigenous leaders and communities in decision-making and has established partnerships with local Indigenous organizations to this end. The initiative has also made efforts to integrate traditional knowledge into their decision-making processes. It has similarly demonstrated a commitment to supporting Indigenous-led projects that align with the goals of the initiative. These are all positive steps towards creating a more equitable and sustainable city that respects the unique knowledge, perspectives, and experiences of Indigenous peoples. However, there are serious shortcomings. The first and last consultation with Indigenous Peoples took place in November 2018 and was formalized in the Indigenous Climate Action Summary Report in 8 pages (2018). Consultation results should not simply be relegated to a report or left on paper but should be integrated into the decision-making process. Failing to fully integrate ongoing Indigenous leadership could potentially erode trust as many Indigenous communities have experienced tokenistic consultation

in the past, where their input is solicited only to be ignored or dismissed by decision-makers. (Sinclair, 2021)

Comparing Toronto and Vancouver

To improve TransformTO's work with Indigenous peoples, it is helpful to compare with a similar jurisdiction such as Vancouver. Both cities attempt to involve Indigenous peoples in decision-making processes, incorporate their knowledge and finance climate projects led by Indigenous representatives. However, Vancouver has a more explicit emphasis on equity as part of its climate strategy. The City of Vancouver cites its responsibility to protect Indigenous Rights and collaborate with Indigenous peoples to improve economic, social, and environmental conditions in Indigenous communities. This requires upholding, recognizing, and protecting inherent Indigenous Rights, and engaging respectfully with Indigenous communities to build strong relationships. The City says it must acknowledge past harm, atone for causes, and take action to change behavior. It must achieve decolonization as a process of recognizing and reshaping colonial assumptions, narratives, and beliefs embedded in the City's ways of operating. These efforts, though not equal to Reconciliation, pave the way to repair and promote right relations with Indigenous communities. Solidarity is important, but the distinctness of Indigenous sovereignty must be respected. (The City of Vancouver's equity framework, 2021)

Conversely, the City of Toronto aims to effectively address climate change and advance reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples through engagement and partnerships that uphold Indigenous rights, knowledge, and approaches to climate change. It also evinces a need for TransformTO to include meaningful, in-depth, respectful, and ongoing engagement with local Indigenous Peoples to foster and improve nation to nation relationships, ensuring economic

development and employment opportunities and Indigenous representation throughout the implementation of TransformTO, including advisory committees and local community engagement. Toronto also committed to amplify the voices of those disproportionately impacted by climate change and create opportunities for them in decision-making processes, support the efforts of water protectors and land defenders, and explore opportunities to give land ownership back to Indigenous Peoples. The City of Toronto has nonetheless acknowledged the lack of meaningful engagement and co-development with Indigenous Peoples as a concern in the creation of TransformTO and aims to involve Indigenous Advisory Circles to implement actions and integrate Indigenous knowledge throughout the Strategy by 2025. The inclusion of diverse Indigenous representation in advisory groups, including 2SLGBTQIA+, Afro-Indigenous, Métis, and Inuit communities, are supposed to ensure their voices are represented and that the benefits of climate actions are felt by communities that have been disproportionately impacted by social and economic injustices. The City of Toronto said it will seek to build meaningful relationships with local Indigenous Peoples and develop a separate engagement approach with Urban Indigenous communities to ensure diverse voices are represented in the implementation of TransformTO. It should evolve as needed to ensure new and better ways of thinking about the environment are included, recognizing that meaningful engagement with urban Indigenous communities cannot be replaced solely by land acknowledgments or Indigenous representation in advisory circles. (City of Toronto, 2021)

Vancouver's civil society, meanwhile, offers a helpful example for advocating for equitable climate policymaking that can inform TransformTO's engagement strategy and our PB proposals. For example, the Climate Equity Working Group aimed to advocate for the adoption of "A Climate Justice Charter for Vancouver 2022." (Bhat, 2023) This comprehensive document

outlines a vision for a climate justice and sustainable future for Vancouver, in addition to the city's plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The charter identifies the urgent need to address climate change, social inequality, and colonialism, and proposes a set of principles and policies in response. It calls for community-led solutions, Indigenous sovereignty, and systemic change such as supporting the equitable redistribution of the burdens and benefits of climate response, responding to the need for accountability and resulting repair work related to climate injustices, catalyzing systems change within climate policy and practice (Badelt et al., 2022). Concrete steps are outlined to achieve this, including investments in public transportation, affordable housing, renewable energy, and green jobs, as well as measures to protect and restore natural ecosystems and promote food security. The charter emphasizes the importance of meaningful engagement and collaboration with marginalized communities, Indigenous peoples, and youth in decision-making processes. It also stresses the need for accountability and transparency in the implementation of climate policies (Badelt et al., 2022). We believe our PB proposal can implement this conceptual call to implement urban Indigenous leadership in climate governance and borrow its areas of focus. We can do so by integrating its proposals into our PB process, where Indigenous peoples could have dedicated positions on citizen juries and proposals be evaluated on the basis of decolonizing Toronto's daily governance of TransformTO.

The process of engagement of Indigenous peoples and leading some climate change policies ensures that TransformTO is a more inclusive and progressive initiative through PB. This is becoming increasingly vital in an international context, where Indigenous peoples are taking an increasingly prominent role. A study conducted by Tormos-Aponte (2021) highlights the increased presence and influence of Indigenous Peoples in climate negotiations, although their political influence remains limited. For example, Indigenous Peoples have successfully

advocated for the inclusion of language in the Paris Agreement of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that recognizes their role in shaping climate policies.

Municipalities have an opportunity to create meaningful climate action that includes Indigenous perspectives and knowledge systems. However, climate change solutions need to be tailored to the unique perspectives and realities of different communities, as each place has its own people and context. Engagement and relationship building with Indigenous Peoples should be an everyday practice. Municipalities are a good starting point for such efforts as they can act quickly and have closer connections to people's lived experiences and realities on the ground. (Meyer, 2021). By recognizing and respecting Indigenous knowledge, by bridging Western science and Indigenous knowledge systems, policymakers can not only build trust but gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the natural world, and the impacts of climate change on ecosystems and communities. (Abu et al., 2019) Indigenous knowledge can provide valuable insights into how to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and inform the development of effective climate policies that are grounded in local contexts and realities. (Brugnach et al., 2014)

Our Recommendations to build Indigenous Leadership in TransformTO

1) Ensure Indigenous leadership and elders are consulted on PB proposals and sit as members of citizen juries in the PB process

- i) Consultation with Indigenous communities and elders is essential to ensure that their perspectives, concerns, and knowledge are considered in the development of policy making. City staff must be willing to listen to and learn from Indigenous communities, and to demonstrate a commitment to

incorporating their perspectives into policy decisions. This requires a willingness to be flexible and responsive to Indigenous concerns and to work collaboratively towards shared goals. Moreover, consultation must be conducted in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner, which acknowledges the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

- ii) It is important to include Indigenous representatives in decision-making processes at all stages of climate policy development and implementation to ensure that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge are incorporated into policy decisions. This can lead to more effective, culturally appropriate, and responsive policies that address the needs and concerns not only Indigenous communities but all other categories of people who experience injustice.

2) Promote and support Indigenous-led initiatives for climate policy work to build capacity for engagement with the PB process

- i) Empowering Indigenous communities to act on climate change in ways that are culturally appropriate and responsive to their unique contexts and needs is vital. Supporting and promoting Indigenous-led initiatives can contribute to the development of community-led renewable energy projects, protecting traditional lands and waters, and implementing adaptation measures rooted in traditional knowledge and practices.
- ii) Building partnerships between Indigenous peoples in the city, non-Indigenous communities is key for sharing knowledge, building trust, and working together to address climate change. Partnerships can help to create

opportunities for collaboration and build capacity while recognizing the unique knowledge, perspectives, and sovereignty of Indigenous communities. This requires a willingness to collaborate, listen, learn, and respect cultural differences, and to work towards shared goals of creating a better city.

- iii) Providing access to resources for Indigenous-led research initiatives and addressing historical injustices and colonialism through reparations and reconciliation efforts. In such a way, the municipality can create more inclusive and equitable climate policies that are responsive to the unique needs and concerns of Indigenous communities. This will help to ensure that Indigenous peoples are able to fully participate in climate action and have their perspectives and knowledge incorporated into policy decisions.

Conclusion

Our analysis of TransformTO has hinged on changing its conception of residents as actors. We have argued the strategy tends to consider residents as sources of information, which can City staff can engage while retaining control over final outcomes. By introducing PB with two complementary outreach efforts to build relationships with Indigenous peoples and youth, we hope to create an emphasis on empowerment where citizens have final say over outcomes. We chose to emphasize Indigenous and youth communities because these populations are most associated with risks of climate change and thereby can play an important role in shaping citizen-led decision making.

Our sum recommendations seek to:

- 1) Establish a participatory budgeting system for TransformTO, with an emphasis on city-wide projects, a pre-approved budget and a reconsideration of the role of City staff as facilitators;
- 2) Establishing a youth council to generate proposals for PB while simultaneously mounting non-institutional engagement efforts to increase young people's leadership of TransformTo;
- 3) Implementing Indigenous leadership as a complementary wing of developing proposals and populating citizens juries to govern implementation of TransformTO projects, with additional support to build capacity for Indigenous peoples to share knowledge and insights for climate planning.

In putting these proposals forward, we purposefully aim to set ambitious goals that explicitly ground themselves in claims to democracy. We do so because democracy, as a core value to civic institutions in Toronto, can also be a subject of experimentation. As the City prepares to tackle a challenge with the scope and complexity of climate change, we believe all its resources — people included — should be brought to bear for a better city.

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