

For Immediate Release:

Provincial Climate Plan Sets Stage for Cities of Tomorrow

Toronto (June 8, 2016): The Province's new 5-Year Climate Change Action Plan will help set the stage for building the cities of tomorrow, says a group of urban-based environmental organizations from Windsor, Oakville, Hamilton, Toronto and Ottawa.

"This is a huge boost to our collective efforts to build world class cities in Ontario," said Graham Saul, Executive Director of Ecology Ottawa. "Fighting climate change and building great communities are two sides of the same coin. We want prosperous and compact neighbourhoods that are bustling with pedestrians and cyclists, fuelled by renewable energy, and connected by world class public transportation. That's what the city of tomorrow looks like, and that's the direction that this plan is taking us.

Key actions that will help Ontario's cities include: eliminating minimum parking space requirements and instead encouraging wider sidewalks and bike lanes; significant and sustained funding for cycling and pedestrian infrastructure; expanding electric vehicle charging stations; investing in public transit; supporting the creation and implementation of community energy plans; and requiring cities to include climate change strategies in their official plans.

"Many city residents would love to cycle instead of drive. But they will only do so if they know cycling is safe for themselves and their family," says Lynda Lukasik from Environment Hamilton. "This plan earmarks over \$150 million to create safe cycling networks and infrastructure. This is great news for everyone because it will also reduce traffic congestion."

"We are also happy to see that the Action Plan requires municipalities to think about climate change when planning and making it easier to integrate low carbon actions into their plans," said Franz Hartmann from the Toronto Environmental Alliance. "For example, we're glad to see a move to eliminate minimum parking requirements in neighbourhoods where it's clear people don't want to rely on cars to move around."

The Action Plan also sets aside over \$250 million to help municipalities build low carbon cities. "This is a good down payment for the future," says Derek Coronado from Citizens Environment Alliance of Southwestern Ontario. "Not only will it create lots of good local, green jobs, it will save us lots of money in the future by helping us avoid the terrible costs of inaction."

The Citizens Environment Alliance, Oakvillegreen Conservation Association, Environment Hamilton, the Toronto Environmental Alliance and Ecology Ottawa have come together to establish the Urban Climate Alliance, an association of urban environmental organizations working together to promote prosperous communities and climate change action in the Province of Ontario.

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