

April 20, 2026, CAC Roundtable

In this meeting we had a presentation from the University of Toronto regarding graduate student placement opportunities and pro bono consulting for municipal environmental projects. The Atmospheric Fund (TAF) then introduced its new Home Solar Accelerator Program, which provides a free concierge service and educational resources to help homeowners in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area install solar and storage systems. A significant portion of the meeting addressed Bill 98 and the provincial government's impact on green development standards, prompting a discussion on a "pivot" toward voluntary tracking and transparency. CAC municipal member staff also explore the use of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) to incentivize sustainable construction and affordable housing

Presenters

- Linnet Kocheril | University of Toronto
- Chris Caners and Jessica Obodoechi | The Atmospheric Fund (TAF)

Presentation Overview

University of Toronto: Master of Science in Sustainability Management (MSCSM) Student Placements

- Summer Internships: Graduate students are available for a minimum of 10 weeks from May to August. Funding for these roles can often be secured through sources like Eco Canada or Canada Summer Jobs.
- Capstone Projects: These are pro bono consulting projects done for course credit. They require no financial cost from the employer, only a biweekly commitment of 30 to 60 minutes for guidance.
- Other Engagement: Municipalities can also participate through guest lectures, research collaborations, or by joining networking panels and event

The Atmospheric Fund (TAF): [Home Solar Accelerator](#)

- Education First: Providing jargon-free, trusted resources to help homeowners understand the specific solar landscape in Ontario.
- Concierge Service: A free, one-on-one service for GTHA residents that provides a "solar journey report" detailing costs and incentives, followed by three quotes from vetted installers.
- Ecosystem Improvement: Working to reduce "soft costs" by addressing barriers such as municipal bylaws, utility interconnection, and financing.
- Call to Action: TAF is seeking municipal partners to promote the program using a provided collaboration toolkit
- For outside GHTA, municipalities can use [Glean](#) support (TAF partners with them)

Roundtable Discussion Summary

Legislative Advocacy: Bill 98 and Green Development Standards (GDS)

- Bill 98 Response: The deadline for ERO submissions has been extended to May 14th . Advocacy focuses on the need for a tiered building code and increased transparency regarding Ministerial Zoning Orders (MZOs) .
- The GDS "Pivot": With the province pushing GDS toward a voluntary market, the focus is shifting to tracking and reporting . Regional tracking will help build the evidence base required to eventually move back toward mandatory standards.

Municipal Community Improvement Plans (CIPs)

Several municipalities are leveraging or investigating CIPs as a primary tool for driving sustainability:

- Richmond Hill: Currently maintains a CIP specifically for Affordable Housing and Sustainable Design.
- Barrie: Is investigating a CIP mechanism to incentivize sustainable development.
- Wellington County: Includes "green studies" in its CIP for both major new developments and storefront improvements.
- Caledon: Has embedded energy efficiency and carbon reduction grants (up to \$40,000) within its CIP for several years.

Energy and Utility Updates

- Better Homes London: The City of London is launching its "Better Homes" program and exploring buyer aggregation services (via iChooser) to lower solar and heat pump costs through bulk purchasing.
- IESO Incentives: Advocacy is underway to ensure the IESO’s new construction program prioritizes fuel switching (moving from AC to heat pumps) and hybrid heating systems that avoid increasing winter peak demand.
- Municipal Franchise Agreements (MFA): Ongoing efforts at the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) aim to level the playing field between fossil fuel providers and low-carbon utilities regarding access to municipal rights-of-way

Additional Resources and Action Items

- The City of Richmond Hill currently has a CIP for Affordable Housing and Sustainable Design: <https://www.richmondhill.ca/en/learn-more/cip-for-affordable-housing-and-sustainable-design.aspx>
- Wellington's CIP: [Community Improvement Funding | Economic Development](#)

CAC Roundtable Action Items Tracker

Action	Responsibilities
April, 2026	
CAC members want to know how using CIP approach can support achieve sustainable outcomes	Richmond Hill, Barrie, Wellington County, Caledon to share their approach CAP to organize meetings on this topic
March, 2026	
Identified need of working together on sharing on progress report and prioritization of actions for Climate Plan 2.0	CAP is doing a workshop June 5 on this topic

February 20, 2026	
Identified the need for sharing training materials on Equity and Climate Lens Council Climate 101 And other presentations and materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) CAC municipal members to send to CAP (Desi) 2) CAP provides links to the repository
Identified the need of resources on framing climate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Existing Resources: 2) CAP (Desi) to invite in a CAC meeting/webinar <p>Eco Analytics, who did a research on how the public in Ontario and the Greater Vancouver Regional District responds to building performance standards and retrofit policies (to support messaging/communication)</p> <p>Update: EcoAnalytics Webinar, June 9, 1 PM</p>
Share Sample Resolutions and Staff Reports with the Ontario Climate Caucus to encourage top-down advocacy and wider municipal adoption and securing staff mandate.	CAP (Gaby) preparing materials and presenting to OCC
January, 2026	
CAC municipalities expressed challenges related to collecting information for progress updates (e.g., date) from other departments.	<p>CAP (Desi & Gaby) confirm the need of a meeting/workshop</p> <p>Update: Workshop June 5th</p>
Many municipalities are updating their climate plans this year and are interested in meeting to discuss.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) CAP (Desi) CAC Roundtable meeting to confirm appetite for future meeting/workshop <p>Update: meeting was held in March</p>

Contact Information

Please reach out to us at any time with questions, input, or for additional information.

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