Benefits of Acting on Climate Change

There are a number of benefits that can result from taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change, including:

- **Improvements to individual and public health** due to more active lifestyles, cleaner air, and improved water and soil quality. These factors can significantly reduce rates of hospitalization, illness, and mortality, particularly for children, seniors, and those facing existing health challenges. Health issues can also decrease as community networks are strengthened.
- **Economic development** by supporting new forms of employment, innovation, investment opportunities, and quality jobs. Not only is planning for and responding to climate change considered best practice, but taking action on climate change has also been shown to open up opportunities for new and emerging sectors, particularly those focused on:
    - Renewable/clean energy;
    - Energy efficiency;
    - Buildings;
    - Water and wastewater;
    - Waste management;
    - Land and soil remediation;
    - Food production;
    - Transportation;
    - Land use planning;
    - Design; and
    - Technology.

  Industry trends also demonstrate that investing in a green economy can lead to employee, supplier, and vendor innovation; reduced operating and maintenance costs; enhanced customer experiences; and tourism.
- **Improved land-use planning and development patterns** that support the integration and accessibility of transit and active transportation, increase the efficiency of shipping goods, support the renewal of historic neighbourhoods, and improve access to amenities, businesses, and recreational opportunities.
- **Increases in innovation and investments in research & development** that lead to new products and services, social systems, business models, and markets.
- **Lower utility bills**, which can result in:
    - More money for basic needs such as food, housing, and health;
    - Reduced energy burden ("energy poverty"), especially for vulnerable populations;
    - Savings that are invested into local economies; and
    - Lower costs of doing business in the region, which can strengthen the competitiveness of local employers.
- **Enhanced social capital and inclusiveness** due to people interacting more as a result of mixed-use developments, increased walking and cycling, and more shared spaces and amenities.
- **Smaller ecological footprint** due to the use of renewable energy, a modal shift towards public and active transportation options, and a more efficient use of urban land, existing infrastructure, and resources, such as water, energy, food, and fuel.
- **Equity and quality of life improvements** through improved housing quality, energy and food security, and poverty alleviation. For example:

    - Building quality is improved through environmental design that can improve indoor air quality, save water, improve energy performance, lower monthly utility costs, and provide comfort through better lighting, insulation, draft proofing, and regulated indoor temperatures.
    - Households and businesses become more resilient against fluctuations in global commodities, as well as rising food, energy, and other costs.
- **A more accessible city** as neighbourhoods become centred around transit and active transportation routes, gardens and parks, commercial destinations, and public services and amenities, which is particularly important for children, seniors, and those who cannot drive or afford an automobile.
- **A safer community** due to better access to affordable and energy-efficient housing, an increase in quality jobs, more resilience in the face of extreme environmental events, better ability to respond to fluctuations in product and service costs, more community amenities (e.g. community gardens and parks), and improved services that meet the needs of our diverse community.
- **Strategic regional planning** that:
    - Includes a triple bottom line approach (financial, environmental, social);
    - Includes sustainability as a lens when planning regional connectivity, transportation networks, and land use;
    - Reduces negative impacts on natural areas and agricultural lands; and
    - Considers new opportunities for economic prosperity.
- **Quieter environment** due to less driving, fewer combustion engines, and better insulation in buildings.
- **More access to natural, recreational, cultural, and educational spaces** through parks, greenspaces, and improved infrastructure and amenities.
- **Improved protection, enhancement, and development of natural and naturalized areas** that sequester carbon, regulate our climate, and provide ecosystem services.
- **Improvements to public services, infrastructure, and delivery models** in areas such as roadways and transportation, parks and urban forestry, drinking water, watershed, snow and ice services, recreational amenities, waste management, energy services, and city beautification.
- **Strategic partnerships** with other levels of government, post-secondary institutions, community organizations, Indigenous communities, New Canadians, and others in order to develop programs and projects, conduct research, develop strategies, and identify economic opportunities.
- **Technological, social, and economic improvements** that improve how we live, benefit our communities, and meet the needs of residents, businesses, and other organizations and institutions.
- **Decreased burden on future generations** because acting today will reduce damages caused by climate change, decrease future costs, and mitigate risks.

Sources: City of Toronto's *TransformTO*; Acadia Center's *Energy Efficiency: Engine of Economic Growth in Canada*; Leyden's *Social capital and the built environment*