

ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE GOVERNANCE AUDIT

Recommendation

That the April 15, 2024, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02369, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information Only		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Climate Resilience		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Greener as we Grow	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the Future		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C627 - Climate Resilience Policy • Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan • Edmonton Community Energy Transition Strategy • 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 		

Executive Summary

- The Office of the City Auditor undertook an audit to determine whether the City has an effective governance structure to deliver the Climate Resilient Edmonton: Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan and Community Energy Transition Strategy.
- The Office of the City Auditor identified areas of improvement and provided four recommendations.
- Administration has made progress in addressing the audit's findings. Full implementation

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will require transformational change across the organization.

- Administration accepts the Office of City Auditor's findings and recommendations. All recommendations will be implemented between Q2 2024 and Q2 2026.

REPORT

The City of Edmonton is a municipal leader in sustainable development and is working on numerous fronts to advance climate change mitigation and adaptation. Through a combination of innovative policies and programs, community engagement, and long-term planning, Edmonton is demonstrating tangible action on climate change.

City Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, signalling the need to take urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build a more sustainable future. Guided by Edmonton's Community Energy Transition Strategy¹ and The Climate Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan,² the City set ambitious targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to renewable energy sources and building a more resilient and sustainable community. The strategies include a wide range of measures, such as investing in energy efficient infrastructure, promoting green transportation options, and supporting residents, communities and businesses to adopt sustainable practices and prepare for the changing climate.

Significant climate solutions require the active participation from Edmontonians. Administration established a number of initiatives to engage and raise awareness of residents about climate change including public webinars, educational programs and community-based projects such as Neighbouring for Climate.

Evolution of Climate Action Implementation

Climate action is evolving globally, the 2015 Paris Agreement³ solidified the commitment to take action and there is increasing pressure on decision makers to meet climate commitments. In recent years, there has been a greater effort to shift from a voluntary approach to more structured implementation and accountability. This reflects a growing recognition of the need for action at all levels of government, businesses and individuals. As the City of Edmonton is often at the forefront of climate action, many of the City's climate change decisions are in new and emerging areas of professional practice.

Recent Progress

Edmonton's commitment to climate action has been recognized both nationally and internationally. The City of Edmonton was recognized at the 2022 American Planning Association Sustainable Communities Division Awards⁴ for its work developing one of the first municipal carbon budgets, a tool to integrate greenhouse gas emissions into the City budgeting and

¹ edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/energy-transition

² edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/climate-change-adaptation-strategy

³ The Paris Agreement. Proceedings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Paris, France, November 2015.

⁴ American Planning Association Sustainable Communities Division. 2022 Awards for Excellence in Sustainability. Policy, Law or Tool Award. 2022.

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prioritization process. In 2023, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) recognized Edmonton as one of 119 A-List cities across the globe taking bold leadership on environmental action and transparency⁵, despite the pressures of a challenging global economic situation.

As of the writing of this report, the City's approved 2023-2026 operating and capital budget includes \$371 million to advance the energy transition and climate adaptation strategies. This significant investment supports projects such as energy-efficient retrofits in City facilities, the accelerated implementation of the active transportation network and implementation of the District Energy Strategy.

Edmonton has made strides in recent years to promote and advance renewable energy. Since 2019, the City has provided \$6 million in solar rebates to more than 1,900 residents. These residents generate more than 15 megawatts of renewable energy. The city has seen an increase in solar and wind energy installations, with notable examples being the Edmonton Expo Centre, which houses Canada's largest rooftop solar photovoltaic array. By 2025, 100 per cent of the City's corporate electricity needs will be powered by renewable electricity generated through wind and solar power.

The City is also working to adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Climate Adaptation Strategy includes measures to protect critical infrastructure, enhance community resilience and manage the risks associated with extreme weather events. Under Climate Resilience Policy C627, City buildings will transition to be emissions neutral.

The Climate Task Force

While Edmonton has taken these steps on the climate change journey, this challenge cannot be solved quickly or with a single solution. This is a long-term challenge, requiring transformational change on a system-wide scale. Despite these significant actions and work already underway, there are still implementation gaps and actions that require scaling up.

To fill these gaps and ensure effective implementation of the Energy Transition and Climate Resilience strategies, the City established a cross-corporate Climate Task Force in 2023. The work Administration is undertaking within the Climate Task Force will improve climate governance and accountability and will address many of the Auditor's findings.

Administration's Response to the Auditor's Recommendations

The Office of the City Auditor recommendations are a natural progression of work already underway, including the creation and actions of the Climate Task Force and the anticipated hiring of a Chief Climate Officer.

Many initiatives have already advanced since the time of the audit, as the Auditor objectives were previously identified by Administration as areas of focus for improvement.

⁵ Carbon Disclosure Project North America. 2023 Cities A List. 2023.

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The Office of the City Auditor made four recommendations from their audit to improve governance of the climate strategies. Administration accepts these recommendations outlined below, and implementation is scheduled to be completed by Q2 2026.

Audit Recommendation 1

Formally assign and communicate roles and responsibilities for clear accountability and integration of the climate strategies throughout the organization.

Response from Administration

Administration accepts Recommendation 1. Eighty per cent of the actions in the Energy Transition Strategy and the Climate Adaptation Strategy are in progress. A number of actions, roles and responsibilities related to climate action are defined within Administration's ISO 14001 environmental management system. Administration is also taking action to better define, document and communicate roles and responsibilities:

- Action is required by all City employees to protect the environment and take action on climate change. An accountability matrix is being developed to outline what is needed at each level within the organization. This matrix will be used to provide guidance for goal setting in employee performance and learning plans.
- Administration has taken steps to support improved accountability and integration across the organization. These steps include creating a Chief Climate Officer role and establishing the Executive Leadership Team's (ELT) Climate Task Force. The Task Force will provide corporate-wide recommendations to enhance environmental and climate governance, decision making, roles and responsibilities, performance and accountability. Administration will also formally assign and communicate roles and responsibilities through work underway as part of the Climate Task Force's work plan.
- In addition to governance recommendations, the Climate Task Force was also created to lead and coordinate the delivery of Administration's climate focus areas:
 - 1) Governance and Decision Making
 - 2) Developing and Implementing Climate Policy and Bylaws
 - 3) Building Capacity to Accelerate (both competencies and financial capacity)
 - 4) Culture
 - 5) Partnership and Advocacy
 - 6) Green Economy
 - 7) Intersectionality

Implementation date - December 31, 2025

Audit Recommendation 2

Identify climate-related training needs, and develop a program to provide identified staff with that training to build climate competencies throughout the organization.

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Response from Administration

Administration accepts Recommendation 2. Climate change requires municipalities, and municipal staff, to do things differently. This requires different competencies, skills and training. Administration is taking a number of steps to ensure the City's workforce has the skills, experience and training to meet the challenge of transitioning to a low carbon and climate resilient city. Targeted training and learning opportunities have already been made available to staff in relevant roles (Recommendation 2 of Attachment 1).

- Building off the progress outlined in Attachment 1, Administration is currently developing additional training including:
 - Updating mandatory environmental management training for all new employees to include climate content
 - An introductory climate training course will be made available to all City employees and will include information related to implementation of the City's climate strategies
 - Administration is also leveraging additional grant funding from Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) to update its existing energy management training which will also be available to all employees
 - Climate risk assessment training for staff involved in capital projects (being developed in partnership with the City of Calgary).

Climate change mitigation and adaptation are fields that continue to evolve with new knowledge and technology. The Climate Task Force is conducting a training needs assessment to determine where additional skills and competencies may be required to deliver on the City's climate objectives.

The results of that assessment will inform the development of a strategy for building competency in climate-related knowledge and skills of varying levels throughout the organization. Requirements may include introductory level information as well as specific skill training.

Implementation date - December 31, 2025

Audit Recommendation 3

Develop and implement a formal monitoring and evaluation framework for the climate strategies to assess progress towards strategic goals.

Response from Administration

Administration accepts Recommendation 3. City Council has established climate plans and energy transition targets. Monitoring and evaluation are critical to understanding progress and for understanding when additional or different actions are required. Given the broad range of actions included in the strategies, not every action will require targets or the same level of evaluation or tracking. Administration has taken a number of steps to track, evaluate

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and report on progress, including prescribing to accredited reporting standards. Recommendation 3 on Attachment 1 includes additional detail.

- Building off the progress outlined in Attachment 1, Administration's Climate Task Force will:
 - Develop and implement a climate tracking, evaluation and analytics framework
 - Establish additional corporate climate targets (energy transition and adaptation) to be incorporated within the tracking, evaluation and analytics framework
 - Determine new climate data approaches that will improve organization-wide collection, storage, tracking, processing and governance for climate-related data and information.
- Administration will develop adaptation targets for Council approval as part of the work to update the climate strategies. The City is legislatively required, under the City of Edmonton Charter Regulation, to review the climate strategies every five years.

Implementation date - June 30, 2026

Audit Recommendation 4

Improve processes for sharing climate information with decision-makers when making operational and budget decisions.

Response from Administration

Administration accepts Recommendation 4. Edmonton's Climate Resilience Policy (C627) makes the commitment that City decisions and actions will be science and evidence based.

Administration has taken a number of steps to integrate climate information into decision making as outlined in Recommendation 4 of Attachment 1.

Building off these steps, the Climate Task Force will continue to:

- Establish a new process for including environment and climate considerations at the start of City projects
- Develop an environment and climate information and data repository for staff to be able to access climate information
- Establish an Environment and Climate review section in standard Council reports
- Implement and improve carbon accounting processes with new tools, establishing carbon checkpoints throughout the life of a project, and improving measurement abilities

Climate information and knowledge is a field that is constantly evolving and this work will be ongoing.

Implementation date of Recommendation 4 - June 30, 2026.

Community Insight

Since 2017, the Climate Change and Energy Perception Survey has helped the City of Edmonton benchmark attitudes and beliefs on climate and energy transition. This survey is used to inform and measure the effectiveness of policies and programs that work together to

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meet the goals of the Energy Transition Strategy and, since 2020, the Climate Adaptation Strategy.

In 2023, more than 1,000 residents participated in the survey which covered topics ranging from climate change awareness to knowledge of mitigation measures such as solar panels, hydrogen, and electric vehicles.

- More than 70 per cent of respondents continue to agree with three central statements about the concern for climate change, the need for immediate action, and about human activity contributing to a changing climate. These views on climate change have remained stable since this survey began in 2017.
- 65 per cent of respondents wish for the City to either increase or maintain its efforts to address climate change.
- More than 70 per cent of respondents agree that climate change is linked to increased frequency and intensity of events such as flooding, heat waves and forest fires; climate change is affecting Edmonton's weather; and climate change negatively impacts the health and well-being of individuals.
- More than 65 per cent of respondents continue to recognize the economic opportunities associated with climate change, such as job opportunities from investing in energy efficiency and from transitioning to renewable sources of energy.

The Energy Transition Climate Resilience Committee (ETCRC) provides expert community advice as the strategies are implemented. ETCRC has provided advice to Council and Administration on a number of the Climate Task Force's deliverables as well as advice on climate targets, monitoring and metrics.

GBA+

The City of Edmonton's climate adaptation and energy transition efforts must be planned and delivered in an integrated way to be effective, given the complex and interconnected social, economic and environmental challenges facing Edmontonians. Climate change is widely understood to be a risk multiplier because it intensifies resource scarcity and worsens existing social and economic issues. To ensure climate equity for all Edmontonians and to minimize unintended impacts on diverse communities, all current and future climate work must be informed by intersectionality from concept to delivery.

For this reason, one of the seven focus areas for the Climate Task Force is intersectionality. Intersectional analysis is a critical tool being used to examine task force work plans, as climate resilience efforts provide an opportunity to address systemic oppression and ensure that marginalized communities share in the benefits of climate action. The City's existing GBA+ framework is used to mitigate continued inequities that disproportionately affect marginalized communities in Edmonton.

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Attachment

1. Progress Already Underway