Green Communities Canada acknowledges the many treaty and traditional territories of Indigenous Nations throughout Canada. We are grateful for the continued work of many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples who are the original caretakers of the Land and Waters. In our work we have a responsibility to respect Indigenous perspectives and elevate Indigenous voices.

Letter from the Executive Director
There are so many aspects of this unbelievable year I could comment on, highlight, and draw attention to. But I’d like to centre it around the deep gratitude and humble appreciation for the people behind the work: our staff, our board, our member organizations and our many, many partners out there.

The pandemic has exposed our weaknesses as a society, as a sector, within our systems and institutions, and within ourselves. And while at the height of a global health crisis, as the alarm bells are sounding on so many intersecting fronts from climate justice, systemic racism and oppression, capitalistic greed—I’m reminded of the bold and dedicated people who keep the climate movement pushing forward, evolving, and forever learning. To those who have devoted their working careers and lives to ensuring their communities are cared for and nurtured now and into the future—you all deserve a medal (and a serious vacation). You inspire me, daily.

For those who have struggled and continue to struggle with the challenges this year has brought, please be kind to yourself! I see you and appreciate how difficult it has been. I wish I could have done more to lighten your load.

So there it is: a sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone—for your enthusiasm, your honesty, your vulnerability, your patience and hard work amongst everything else. I’ve learned a lot from each and every one of you during my time at GCC. This organization has survived and thrived for over 25 years given the hard work and passion of its people. So many folks along that way have contributed to that.

I’m very excited to see how Brianna Salmon, the new Executive Director, helps shape and influence this next phase for GCC. She is an immensely capable, caring and empathic leader who I know will strengthen the network and bring people together under our new vision.

Take care of each other!

Carol Steuri
Meet our dedicated GCC team:

Carol Steuri
Executive Director

Sé Keohane
Director of Finance

Mary Anna Zakula
Support Manager

Jose Joy
Communications Coordinator

Kate Berry
Program Director, Transportation and Water

Wallace Beaton
Manager of Community Engagement, Ontario Active School Travel

Celenna Ciuro
Project Coordinator, Ontario Active School Travel

Laura Zeglen
Program Manager, School Travel Planning

Isooada Niroomand
School Travel Planner

Sanjana Sharma
School Travel Planner

Alix Taylor
Advisor, Water Programs

Emily Amon
Coordinator, Water Programs

Kai Millyard
Consultant, Home Energy Solutions

Devon Calder
Program Director, Energy

Transitioned to new endeavors: Megan Miller, Alix Taylor, Laura Zeglen, Fenella Hood, Louise Clunas

“"I have had the good fortune to be part of some exciting growth at GCC, and to work alongside an energetic team. It has been a learning curve for me, understanding more about the organization and contributing to climate action work despite the challenges posed by the pandemic."

– Jose Joy, Communications Coordinator

Along with our amazing Board of Directors:

Shannon Costigan
Program Coordinator, North Superior Workforce Planning Board

Brianna Salmon
Executive Director, GreenUP

Lisa Kohler
Executive Director, Halton Environmental Network

David MacIsaac
Active Transportation Supervisor, Halifax Regional Municipality

Britt McKee
Executive Director, Ecosource

Tracy Hucul
Executive Director, Green Action Centre

Duke Trifunovic
Treasurer, Green Venture

Caitlin Cassie
Senior Policy Advisor, Ontario Ministry of Transportation

Nirmala Naidoo
CRTC Commissioner for Alberta and NWT

Many thanks to departing Board Directors: Kevin Behan, Kalen Taylor, and Brianna Salmon

Chris Birchall
Program Coordinator, City Green Solutions
This year we rearticulated our Vision, Mission and Values with input from staff, board and member organizations. We’re now equipped with a guiding way forward to build out GCC’s Theory of Change and strategic plan for the next 3-5 years.

Values:

- **Deeply appreciative** of this planet and **committed** to protecting it for all those that call it home
- Driven to pursue **community-based solutions**...because community is at our heart
- **Open, humble, and always learning** in this beautiful and complex world
- **Creative and collaborative** in our approach—together we achieve more
- Determined to be **more inclusive**—to infuse greater equity into our work and the sector
- **Welcoming, supportive** and eager to help one another

Our Vision:
Communities working together for a vibrant, equitable and sustainable future.

Our Mission:
We connect community-based climate action groups through a national network to share resources, inspire innovative programs, and elevate our collective impact.
Our member organizations span the country—all working tirelessly in their communities. GCC helps support their work by sharing tools and resources, engaging different stakeholders to advance our shared interests, and co-developing programs that are meaningful and easily adopted in community.

GCC is in the process of strengthening our network infrastructure to ensure deeper member engagement, community connection, and impact. We are committed to expanding our reach, both geographically and from a diversity perspective, and to advancing social justice in the sector.

We are happy to welcome four new members to our Green Communities family:

- London Environmental Network
- Halton Environmental Network
- EnviroCentre
- eMERGE

Member organization work cuts across different program areas such as:

- energy efficiency
- food security
- active transportation
- climate education
- stormwater management
- sustainable retail
- waste
- youth engagement

Our Member Organizations

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<th>City Green</th>
<th>eMERGE</th>
<th>Environment Network</th>
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206 staff employed

1,145 volunteers engaged

54,952+ participants (events, webinars, workshops)
Transportation

We operate two successful programs: Ontario Active School Travel and Toronto School Travel Planning. Throughout the challenges of COVID we have continued to support schools by adapting to virtual formats of engagement, and by shifting our communication campaigns more towards parents, families, and the broader community.

Ontario Active School Travel (OAST)
This provincial framework has been in place since 2017 and is supported by $5 million in funding from the Government of Ontario. The program supports walking and cycling to school initiatives. The program also provides central support services to build the capacity and knowledge of our partners. To date, we have organized two summits and more than 25 webinars, engaging almost 1,200 professionals to learn about topics ranging from School Travel Planning to Social Marketing. Over 100 practitioners and professionals are members of the OAST Network and use this online community of practice to share knowledge.

Toronto School Travel Planning
We work closely with school boards, municipalities, police, public health, and community partners to create active and safe routes to Toronto schools. Since 2017, we have supported 54 schools, impacting over 27,000 students as well as their families and surrounding neighbourhoods. In the past three years, program reach has expanded to 21 of 25 city wards. Working in partnership with each school community, we have collected more than 3,200 responses to School Travel Planning Surveys, conducted 54 school site audits, 53 neighbourhood walkabouts, and 77 school zone traffic observations.

Equity Work Group
The rise of the anti-racist movement made the team reflect on program design. An Equity Working Group was formed to review whether and how our School Travel Planning (STP) Framework might unintentionally be perpetuating systemic racism or other forms of
oppression. Based on our findings and considerations, the STP Framework was revised making Enforcement optional and including two overarching lenses - Equity and Engagement - through which all STP actions must be addressed. We are currently working on a report “Framework for Improving Equity and Engagement in School Travel Planning” to share our findings.

Our School Travel Planning team has supported

54 Toronto District/Toronto Catholic School Board schools
27,000 students
3,200 responses to School Travel Planning Surveys
54 school site audits
53 neighbourhood walkabouts
77 school zone traffic observations

COVID adapts
The global pandemic required the adoption of creative new approaches for delivering programs, and holding events and workshops. Kudos to the collective for your resiliency and care for your communities while shifting to the online environment and adapting to health and safety guidelines.
Water

GCC has been at the forefront of promoting Green Infrastructure through public engagement and leading municipal discussions. Our team had some transition this year. Senior Manager Alix Taylor, who has been a strong asset, left GCC but continues to work with us as an Advisor.

Depave Paradise

For the last nine years, our engaging Depave Paradise program has worked with communities to remove unused asphalt by hand and create permeable green space with locally sourced native plants and trees at 54 sites. Native flora planted at these sites act as sponges for stormwater runoff, sequester carbon, improve air quality, reduce heat islands, and recharge groundwater. The program has facilitated the removal of over 10,000 m² of asphalt and mobilized over 4,000 volunteers.

COVID restrictions put many Depave projects on hold this year. Ontario Trillium Foundation funding was extended, allowing our partners to adjust activities to meet current health and safety guidelines. GCC has also received funding from a private trust to continue this program into 2022 and expand it to 15 sites across the country.

RBC Tech for Nature funding allowed us make Depave training materials available through an on-line learning platform. 31 participants from 20 organizations received Depave Paradise Coordinator Training last year, all of whom now have the knowledge and resources to coordinate Depave events.

Some creative ways member organization Green Venture adjusted to this year’s challenges:

- Hosted a Facebook Live during a Depaving event
- Held a ‘Depave Art’ competition for temporary art features
- Organized street clean ups, through business improvement associations, near depave sites
- Engaged Mohawk College students for creative videography of the transformation

The program has facilitated the removal of over 10,000 m² of asphalt and mobilized over 4,000 volunteers.
RAIN Garden Master Class
Our RAIN Garden Master Class moved to a new on-line platform. Capitalizing on the accessibility of on-line learning and the renewed interest of home gardeners to take on landscaping projects allowed us to deliver three sessions of the RAIN Garden Master Class and train 40 new participants.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nations Flood Plain Mapping Project
GCC is honoured to provide online learning and workshop support for the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Flood Plain Mapping Project coordinated through Cambium Indigenous Professional Services.

The workshops meld community and Indigenous knowledge and stories with western approaches to flood-plain mapping and management. Learnings from this project will be shared with other First Nations-led watershed management projects.

Chippewas of the Thames First Nations Flood Plain Mapping Project

Nature-Based Climate Solutions within the City of Vancouver
With support from Green Infrastructure Ontario, GCC provided the City of Vancouver with advice on urban green-infrastructure options in support of the city’s Emergency Climate Action Plan.
Energy

GCC increased Energy department capacity by hiring Program Director Devon Calder, and Energy Coordinator Eric Ta. These new hires will assist GCC in improving existing programs and developing pathways into new energy program areas.

Home Energy Efficiency Program Delivery
GCC pioneered home energy evaluation in Ontario. We are Ontario’s first and longest-serving federally-licensed EnerGuide Rating system Service Organization, and are committed to creating energy efficient homes for all sections of society.

GCC’s EnerGuide and Winterproofing programs persevered throughout this year of unprecedented operational hurdles. Our participating member organizations delivered 399 pre-retrofit and 237 post-retrofit EnerGuide audits (YTD Apr-30-2021). The retrofits resulted in 8,532 GJ of estimated energy savings across our Ontario green communities.

Energy Auditor Training
GCC adapted recruitment and training practices to meet the needs of our members under COVID, including offering some training online.

The strength, resilience and successes demonstrated by our member organizations over this past year provides an exciting foundation on which to build energy programming going forward. With the recently launched Canada Greener Homes Grant program, GCC foresees a greater number of audits being completed, leading to more retrofits and significant carbon reductions.
Commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The pandemic has shone a light on the deep inequities that run through our communities, governments and institutions. As an organization that fosters community-based environmental change, GCC must play a role in breaking down the long history of racism that exists in Canada and its ongoing colonial legacy. Now more than ever, we realize that supporting sustainable communities includes social justice.

We understand this work takes time, and there is much work to be done. It requires that we keep learning and unlearning while engaging different stakeholders and building new relationships. This work will continue and deepen over the course of years to come.

To the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, as the original caretakers of the Land and Waters, we are grateful for your continued work. As an organization and as individuals, we also acknowledge Canada’s horrific truths and commit to helping move towards reconciliation.

Some of the actions we have taken this year:
1. Supporting BIPOC-led climate action groups and amplifying their voices through our channels
2. Working to diversify our Board of Directors by adapting recruitment policies and practices; signed on to the Federal 50-30 challenge
3. Training staff on equity, diversity and inclusion, and promoting a culture of continuous learning
4. Forming Equity Working Groups within our program areas
5. Seeking out opportunities to collaborate with BIPOC-led organizations and engaging through allyship and programming

Some initiatives within our member organizations to support EDI.

Green Action Centre, Winnipeg, MB
Supported several First Nation communities with waste diversion and minimization efforts and delivered online workshops to promote sustainability in First Nation schools and communities.

Environment Network, Collingwood, ON
Launched youth campaigns around equity and diversity featuring photos displayed throughout the community, both inside buildings and outside along trail systems.
Our Partners and Funders

Thank you to our generous funders and dedicated partners who make our work possible:

Audited Financials

View our audited financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020.
The Year Ahead

Many sectors, including Canada’s non-profit network, were hit by unforeseen challenges because of COVID-19. We are observing the changes in the sector, helping to contribute to a better way forward, and looking on the bright side. Here are a few thoughts from GCC staff on hopes for the future.

“We know that sustainable and climate-ready communities are needed, and we know that the need is urgent. During this critical decade, GCC moves beyond the question of ‘why’ and provides community-based solutions to the question of ‘how.’ I am thrilled to begin working in partnership with our incredible network of member organizations to lead Canada’s local climate action movement!”

- Brianna Salmon, Executive Director, GreenUP and incoming Executive Director, Green Communities Canada

COVID has resulted in an explosion in levels of walking and cycling in cities across Canada which will push governments at all levels to strengthen their commitment to supporting sustainable transportation.”

- Wallace Beaton, Manager, Community Engagement, Ontario Active School Travel

“My wish is for GCC to strengthen its commitment over the next year to making positive and lasting change towards a low carbon future for all our Green Communities.”

- Devon Calder, Director, Energy Program

“I hope that GCC’s membership will expand in the year ahead to include culturally diverse organizations from across the country.”

- Sé Keohane, Director of Finance

“I’m proud of GCC’s commitment to equity and diversity and look forward to welcoming new voices to our collective.”

- Mary Anna Zakula, Support Manager

“Removing lawns in favour of native plants that provide habitat, improve soil structure, sequester carbon, and soak up stormwater has always been met with some degree of skepticism – but throughout this year at home we’ve seen an incredible increase in this pro-environmental behaviour. I sincerely hope we can harness this momentum to create some new and exciting landscape-focused projects in 2022.”

- Emily Amon, Coordinator, Urban Water Programs
Get Involved

Donate to Green Communities Foundation.
Subscribe to our monthly e-newsletter.
Become a member.
Contact us.

greencommunitiescanada.org