

# CLIMATE CHANGE CHARTER

Simcoe Muskoka Climate Change Exchange



Simcoe Muskoka  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
EXCHANGE



## OVERVIEW

Climate change is the greatest threat to health this century, and the greatest health opportunity (1, 2). Human-induced greenhouse gas emissions drive unprecedented changes to the global climate system, such as record-breaking average annual temperatures, more extreme heat, and more frequent, intense, and severe extreme weather events. Climate change has the potential to impact all aspects of people's life, health, and wellbeing through changes to our interconnected natural, built, economic, and social environments. In Simcoe Muskoka, climate data has shown that the climate is already changing and will continue to pose threats to the health and wellbeing of people who live, work, and play in the Simcoe Muskoka region (3). Potential health impacts are varied and widespread and will affect some people more than others, especially children, seniors, individuals living with low income, people who are homeless and precariously housed, and individuals with pre-existing chronic conditions. While climate change presents many challenges for the region, it also offers opportunities to create a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable society that will benefit current and future generations.

Ambitious, coordinated, and transformative actions are needed now to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and enhance the resilience of human and natural systems to the impacts of climate change (adaptation) (4). These actions can offer many additional benefits to society, including improved physical and mental health, social justice and equity, environmental health, economic benefits, and more. The Simcoe Muskoka Climate Change Exchange (CCE) was established to support local climate change mitigation and adaptation, build capacity, and explore new opportunities to address climate change across the Simcoe Muskoka region. The CCE is made up of representatives from organizations and municipalities across Simcoe Muskoka who are engaged or interested in climate change action. This includes but is not limited to Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, watershed-based planning and environmental agencies, education and training institutions, Indigenous organizations and communities, regional, lower, single, and upper tier municipalities.



The CCE has created this Climate Change Charter to guide the activities of this collective by setting out the CCE's vision, mission, guiding principles, pillars where we will focus our activities, and tools that we will leverage to achieve our mission. The Charter acknowledges and affirms a commitment from the CCE, member organizations and the wider Simcoe Muskoka community to engage in collaborative, coordinated, and transformative climate action across the region. This includes meaningful engagement and collaboration with Indigenous communities, creating space for Indigenous knowledge and leadership, and engaging in efforts that support decolonization and reconciliation. We hope that this Charter will also help to inspire and guide others to take climate action within the Simcoe Muskoka community and beyond by increasing awareness, support, and consistency in messages relating to climate change, its risks and impacts, and how we can take action.

We recognize that climate change actions must be culturally relevant and be guided by social justice and equity principles. Health and equity are intended to be integrated into all aspects of this Charter to ensure that climate change actions appropriately and effectively respond to and reflect the needs of local communities to enable them to thrive under changing and uncertain future climate conditions. Climate change can affect people in different ways and can exacerbate existing inequities. By integrating health and equity, we are working to ensure that climate actions will help to improve health, well-being, and equity outcomes for all.

## VISION

To be the current of transformation for a connected, sustainable community that is resilient to climate change.

## MISSION

Take action together to propel climate mitigation and adaptation through awareness, innovation, and action.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding Principles are overarching themes of the Charter. They set the foundation for all action and initiatives. The guiding principles reflect the 3 pillars of sustainable development



## PILLARS

The following Pillars represent areas of action. While the Pillars are organized by theme, they are all interconnected. Health and equity are integrated throughout and thus are not presented as separate Pillars.

### Active Mobility

Encourage low carbon or carbon-neutral transportation modes that offer affordable, accessible, and safe mobility for all, and that support active living and community connectedness. Support efforts to make it easy, safe, and convenient to use active transportation (e.g., walking, biking, roller-blading, etc.), transit, ride-sharing, and electric vehicle options. Ensure that transportation systems are well-connected within and between cities, towns, and regions, and that systems are resilient to the impacts of climate change.



### Housing and Development

Advocate for and support access to adequate and affordable housing as a human right to help reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience to climate change. Encourage low-carbon, efficient, and resilient buildings through new builds and retrofits that improve housing and building quality. Support smart growth, complete communities and walkable neighbourhoods through progressive planning policies, and zoning bylaws, which offer an appropriate range and mix of housing options and services to meet projected needs and future uncertainties related to climate change (e.g. extreme weather events).

## Infrastructure

Protect, restore, preserve, and enhance natural and built infrastructure<sup>1</sup> that benefit climate change mitigation, adaptation, and health. Work synergistically with nature to prioritize resilient nature-based solutions, reducing the cost and carbon footprint of infrastructure through sustainable lifecycle management. Recognize that natural systems are important infrastructure that provide many co-benefits such as flood protection, water resource management, improved air quality, and improved physical and mental health, and work to preserve ecological diversity and encourage further enhancement of these systems. Support the equitable distribution of nature-based solutions throughout the region on an integrated watershed basis. Encourage the innovative urban design of complete streets, communities, and neighbourhoods, which provide opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to conveniently live, work, and play.



## Natural Environments, Greenspace, and Parks

Protect, conserve, and expand natural environments, greenspaces, and parks to enhance benefits for climate change mitigation, adaptation, the physical and mental health of people, and healthy ecosystems, wildlife, and biodiversity. Advocate and support equitable access to natural environments within and between urban, rural, and suburban areas and the benefits that they provide. Encourage connectivity between natural areas so species and natural features can flourish and evolve, even in a changing climate. Promote and enhance awareness of the environmental and health benefits associated

with thriving natural environments and resources and the negative impacts of anthropogenic environmental pressures, including loss of biodiversity, fragmentation, deforestation, and climate change. Encourage initiatives that connect people to the natural environment and integrate spaces for recreational, cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic services. Support the employment of natural resources and environmental stewardship activities to promote wellbeing, community identity, social activity, and social participation.

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<sup>1</sup> Built infrastructure refers to anything constructed, including bridges, roads, and sewers.



### Food Systems

Support and plan for a sustainable, equitable, and healthy food system<sup>2</sup> that is low-carbon and resilient to the impacts of climate change. Promote local food production with an emphasis on urban and regenerative agricultural practices. Support foraging opportunities of safe and edible wild plants, medicine and food, local community gardens, and systems that reduce and/or divert waste.

### Energy

Encourage transition and divestment from fossil fuels towards low carbon, clean, and renewable energy sources; and ensuring that energy systems (including generation, distribution, and transmission) are resilient to the impacts of climate change. Promote energy efficient and low carbon retrofits and new construction and encourages district heating and cooling initiatives when possible. Advocate for energy rebate and efficiency or affordability programs at all government levels, to ensure equitable access to clean electricity and energy.



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<sup>2</sup> Food systems encompass the entire lifecycle of food including production, processing, packaging, transportation, consumption, composting and waste.



## Education and Outreach

Promote and encourage a culture of transformative climate change mitigation and adaptation actions based on scientific knowledge and traditional ways of knowing. Enhance peoples’ understanding, and awareness of climate change’s cause, current, and expected impacts of climate change, ways climate change can be addressed, and the associated benefits of climate-action, based on a consistent narrative. Foster collaboration and shared learning opportunities. Support the development of more climate-related curriculum in our schools. Provide consistent, hopeful, and action-oriented messages and tools to support the public in taking actions to combat climate change and climate-related impacts.

## TOOLS

Charter tools represent types of activities to facilitate progress on the areas of action (pillars). The charter tools are not mutually exclusive but often work together.

Charter Tools	Details
<b>Innovative Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creative or new ways of acting on climate change</li> <li>▪ The use of technology</li> </ul>
<b>Policy Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Influence policy direction</li> <li>▪ Advocate for climate policies</li> <li>▪ Integrate climate change considerations into operational planning</li> </ul>
<b>Educational Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education about climate change</li> <li>▪ Awareness-raising of climate change mitigation and adaptation</li> </ul>
<b>Promotional/ Collaborative Tools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community-based marketing</li> <li>▪ Recognition and awards</li> <li>▪ Funding and grant opportunities</li> <li>▪ Team work and collaborative actions</li> </ul>



## Summary

The CCE has created this Climate Change Charter to support collaboration and unite the region in a common goal of climate action so that all people and communities are resilient and adaptive to the changing climate while simultaneously promoting health, wellbeing, equity, and sustainability. The Climate Change Charter is intended to be a living document that will continue to reflect the urgency, priorities, and climate action clues across the region. The CCE and member organizations will continue to work with a broad range of partners and stakeholders to advance the Charter's Pillars. CCE members commit to taking action against the threat climate change poses on the region and its communities. Stakeholders affirm their support towards the vision, principles and activities presented in the Charter.



**Nottawasaga Valley**  
Conservation Authority



Toronto and Region  
**Conservation**  
Authority



**Lake Simcoe Region**  
conservation authority



**simcoe**  
**muskoka**  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT



**New Tecumseth**  
Alliston · Beeton · Tottenham



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