



Renewable Regina

Putting Equity into Action

FALL 2020



This report was authored by Emily Eaton and Simon Enoch. Emily Eaton (University of Regina), Simon Enoch (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives) and Shanon Zachidniak (EnviroCollective) arranged and conducted the focus groups that provided the insights on which this report is based. A number of organizations helped to make the research possible, including our community-based research partner EnviroCollective, the Community Research Unit in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Regina, the David Suzuki Foundation and the Corporate Mapping Project.



The researchers would like to thank the many organizations and individuals who participated in this research. Representatives from 38 organizations participated in the focus groups, including:

- Aids Programs South Saskatchewan
- All Nations Hope Network
- Amalgamated Transit Union Local 588
- Cathedral Area Community Association
- Canadian Labour Congress
- Council of Union Retirees Regina
- Heritage Community Association
- Inclusion Saskatchewan
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2038
- Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan
- North Central Community Association
- New Yotina Friendship Centre
- Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry
- Regina Citizens Public Transit Coalition
- Regina District Labour Council
- Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger
- Regina Eco-Museum
- Regina Early Learning Centre
- Regina Food Bank
- Regina Transition House
- Saskatchewan Building Trades
- Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation
- Saskatchewan Disability Income Support Coalition
- Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
- Saskatchewan Government Employees Union
- Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism
- Saskatchewan Union of Nurses
- Service Employees International Union West
- Street Culture Project
- Unifor Local 594
- United Steel Workers Local 5890

This is part of the Corporate Mapping Project (CMP), a research and public engagement initiative investigating the power of the fossil fuel industry. The CMP is jointly led by the University of Victoria, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Parkland Institute. This research was supported by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada





Renewable Regina: Putting Equity into Action

On October 29, 2018, the City of Regina made a momentous decision to join the growing number of cities around the world taking the lead on climate change. In a unanimous decision, Regina's city council committed to becoming "a 100 per cent renewable city by 2050."

Now that the city has set this ambitious goal, the hard work of achieving it begins. As Coun. Bob Hawkins stated after adoption of the motion, "Aspiration is fine, but action is much better."¹

Fortunately, the city is not seeking to realize this goal in isolation. Other cities worldwide are striving for 100 per cent renewability, and we can learn valuable lessons from their mistakes and successes.

Of all the cities in North America that have adopted renewability and climate targets, no one is more experienced than Portland, Oregon. Portland was the first city in the United States to adopt a climate change strategy, in 1993. Since then, the City of Portland has been an internationally recognized pioneer in best practices on how cities can effectively address the climate crisis.²

While carbon emissions have increased nationally throughout the U.S., Portland and surrounding Multnomah County have achieved significant declines. In 2014, total emissions were 21 per cent below 1990 levels.³ Portland's goal of generating or purchasing

100 per cent of all electricity for city operations from renewable resources by 2030 was achieved by 2018. It now embarks on the even more ambitious goal of meeting 100 per cent of community-wide energy needs with renewable energy by 2050.⁴

Despite these successes, Portland has also acknowledged the mistakes it has made in its quest to become a sustainable city. According to Alisa Kane, climate action manager for the City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the biggest, and the one that has most frustrated their efforts to achieve greater sustainability, was the failure to adopt an equity lens for climate planning from the outset:

"In our climate work, we've neglected our communities of color. Portland's white residents make up 77% of the population but they are not experiencing the most harmful effects of climate change. It's people of color and low-income residents that are on Portland's frontlines of climate change. And we've failed them."⁵

The City of Portland's prior climate action plans focused on reducing carbon emissions but neglected to discuss who benefits and who is burdened.⁶ While marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by climate change relative to other communities, they are often the least likely to benefit from

“...[C]limate justice equals social justice equals Indigenous justice. Keeping all of that in mind, it’s marginalized people in this province that need to have issues addressed far better than they have been.”

– Community-based organization participant in Renewable Regina focus group



investments in sustainability. Low-income populations and communities of colour are more likely to live in areas with less green space and fewer public transportation options, farther from essential goods and services. They are more vulnerable to heat-related and respiratory illnesses, while living in inefficient housing and closer to environmental hazards. An equity lens recognizes these disparities and ensures that climate policies redress rather than exacerbate these inequities.

“The key is to put people at the heart of planning and ask: Which groups or frontline communities in my city are impacted by climate change? When it comes to climate action, who has access and who does not? City planners must understand how access to services and policies differs amongst parts of the urban population in order to design policies to reach the maximum amount of people, and particularly those most in need.”

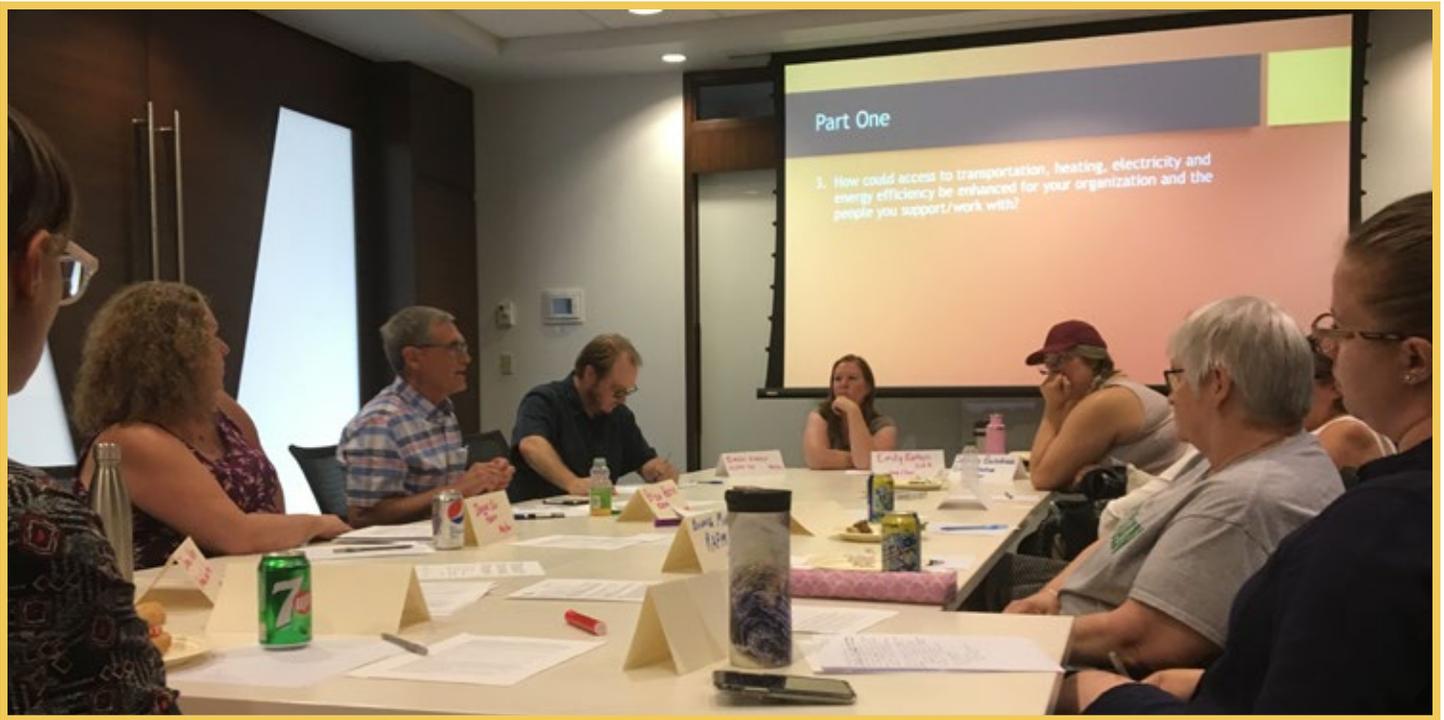
- Maria Hart
Research and Engagement Specialist, WRI Ross Center for Sustainable Cities

An equity lens shouldn’t be seen as some luxury add-on; rather, it is a tool to ensure the just distribution of climate protection efforts to all city residents. Moreover, failure to adopt an equity lens in planning can frustrate and even undermine citywide sustainability efforts. For instance, Alisa Kane describes how attempts in Portland to increase bus ridership were stalling despite aggressive targets. As Kane explains, instead of asking,

“How do we get more people on the bus?” we should be asking more probing questions like, “Who can’t ride the bus safely, and why?” According to Kane, the Portland transit system is not always safe for everyone – there are real dangers to riding transit. Misogyny, homophobia, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination “don’t disappear once the door of the bus opens.” No amount of added convenience or speed will convince those who feel unsafe on the system to ride it. This is the unique perspective that an equity lens can bring, ensuring climate policy meets the needs of all residents. As Kane concludes, “Doing what we’ve always done (e.g., more transit routes, electric buses) but just doing those things harder, faster, or with better messaging isn’t going to work.”⁷

As other cities have experienced, failure to consider equity in climate policy can also have damaging unintended consequences. For example, many cities that have made substantial investments in sustainable infrastructure and initiatives have begun to experience “green gentrification.” This is when investments in environmental improvements in marginalized communities have the perverse impact of inflating the cost of living and driving out the very members of the community the investments were supposed to help.⁸ The introduction of new bike lanes, green spaces and a reclaimed waterfront park in Sunset Park in Brooklyn resulted in a surge of new development and a dramatic rise in the cost of housing:

“The average price of a condo in Sunset Park has shot up by 67 per cent, far outpacing Brooklyn as a whole. Day by day, the neighborhood is turning wealthier – and whiter – as longtime residents are priced out of their homes.”⁹



Such experiences can have the added effect of making communities resistant to environmental investments, particularly if there is no clear plan to ensure that the costs of sustainability are not their own form of displacement. If environmental policies are viewed as inherently unfair or unjust, the political cost of imposing them on people can be substantial. Witness the Yellow Vests movement in France, the protests in Chile against metro fare increases and the reception of the carbon tax in Western Canada as examples of the failure to consider equity concerns when devising environmental policy. The success of these policies depends on the degree to which people see them as enriching rather than impoverishing their lives. By adopting an equity lens early in its planning, the City of Regina can ensure that all residents see themselves and their communities as equal participants in the goal of a renewable Regina and a more just and sustainable city.

In adopting an equity lens for the city's energy and sustainability framework, it is important to take lessons from elsewhere. But if Regina residents are to see themselves and their communities as participants in the energy transition, they need to be substantively engaged by the city and by the research community. In 2015, there were over 25,000 people, or 11.2% of the population, living below Statistics Canada's low income cut off line in Regina.¹⁰ While Regina's median total income increased substantially (by 28%) between 2005 and 2015 due to the economic boom, the percentage of the population living with a low income remained

relatively unchanged (declining by just 1.4% over the same period). The recent COVID-19 crisis has probably further exacerbated the widening gap between those who can and cannot afford increased costs associated with energy transition. The sustainability and energy framework must look to the specific needs and recommendations of Regina's vulnerable communities while learning from what has worked and failed elsewhere. Universal policies and programs that improve the lives of marginalized communities will benefit us all.

In summer 2019, researchers from the University of Regina and EnviroCollective convened four focus groups with 29 representatives from 25 community-based organizations to hear about the challenges and opportunities associated with 100 per cent renewability for Regina's marginalized communities. Our focus groups included participants from Indigenous, women's, 2SLGBTQ+, newcomer, youth, seniors, disability, food security and neighbourhood organizations. Representatives of these organizations reported on the energy needs of the people they support and detailed how an equity lens to energy transition could enhance their clients' lives. We also convened one focus group with 13 representatives from public- and private-sector unions to hear how municipal energy transitions could ensure that workers are not left behind. This report details our key findings and can help inform development and implementation of an equity lens to energy and sustainability in Regina.

Key Findings



Public transit

Although Regina is often considered a car-dependent city, participants in our focus groups painted a different picture. As a diversity of organizations made clear, a large number of youth, seniors, people living in poverty, people with disabilities and newcomers do not have access to cars. They take public transit when they can afford it and when it is accessible, but they often also walk and bike long distances in all kinds of weather. As one participant explained:

“On the transportation front, with the people we serve it’s very different – they don’t drive. And they certainly navigate the system using public transport as much as they can, although I will tell you that most of the folks we serve can’t afford public transit, and so they walk, and they ride bicycles.”

The problem

Organizations reported that public transit is unaffordable, unsafe and inaccessible for a large number of their clients. Several agencies reported that bus tickets and passes are in high demand. One participant emphasized, “We can’t keep bus passes. If we ever get donations of bus passes, they’re gone ... It’s the most popular thing that happens in our building.”

Another participant pointed out, while reflecting on the temporary bus passes the organization had available last summer, “We’ve had more interest in that bus pass than we’ve had in anything else we’ve done in a long time.”

Even discounted bus passes through the Affordable Access Program and the \$25/month pass for people on provincial income support are increasingly difficult to afford as living costs increase and income assistance is cut. According to one participant, “Certainly with the rental supplement being taken away, that meant that a lot of people couldn’t afford their bus tickets anymore, or bus passes.” Furthermore, as one participant emphasized, “Larger granting bodies are often provincially run or provincially subsidized, and they’ll subsidize cabs or bus tickets

but they won’t subsidize bus passes.”

Transit affordability and accessibility are also issues for families with kids in tow. Low frequency on many city transit routes, cold weather and the expense of multiple fares were barriers our participants identified.

Proposed solutions

Fare-free public transit is gaining momentum around the world and within Canada. Kansas City, Missouri, recently became the first major U.S. city to provide [fare-free bus service](#). Closer to home, the City of Victoria now provides youth with [free transit passes](#) using, at least in part, funds collected through ending free downtown parking on Sundays.

Fare-free public transportation would be a big step forward for Regina in addressing its commitments to sustainability while providing a significant benefit to marginalized communities. This idea was supported enthusiastically by all our participants, including labour union representatives and was seen as benefiting all city residents. Specifically, it was noted that fare-free public transit would improve access to good food and Regina’s food bank and, importantly, would allow low-income people to geographically expand their employment searches and work sites.

However, it was also emphasized that simply making the current transit system fare-free would not go far enough to reduce barriers for marginalized communities. As detailed in City of Regina’s 2017 Transportation Master Plan, expanded routes, bus-only lanes and increased frequency are all key to accessibility and to ensuring everyone is well connected to services and employment. Better transit will only be achieved if ridership is increased across the board. As one participant expressed, “That would be really, really helpful for a lot of folks that can’t hold down jobs because they can’t get transportation out of their neighbourhood to go to work, especially not reliable or inexpensive transportation that’s accessible to them.”



Safety and accessibility

Our focus groups identified safety and accessibility concerns as major barriers to low-carbon transportation (including public transit, walking and cycling). As our research showed, policies that remove cost barriers to public transit can only go so far. If the safety of marginalized and vulnerable populations is not addressed, they will not adopt low-carbon transportation. Such was the experience in Portland, which has, as previously discussed, adopted an equity lens to its climate work, recognizing that one-size-fits-all approaches often deepen existing inequities.

The organizations that participated in our research reported that the people they support, especially 2SLGBTQ+ people, women living in shelters, newcomers, people with disabilities and other marginalized and racialized people, do not always feel safe on public transit, riding bikes or walking. As one representative said, "Oftentimes the queer/trans communities can be discriminated against in public spaces, on public transportation, that sort of thing. So in order to safely get someone from point A to point B, we'll offer them a ride."

Indeed, we found that many organizations maintain vehicle fleets or buy cab fares to transport their clients safely to appointments and to acquire necessities. These fleets were understood as necessary for safety reasons (for example, women fleeing domestic abuse did not feel safe on public transit) and because often women have children in tow, which makes public transit more challenging. Safety improvements would thus lead to lower emissions from reduced reliance on organizational fleets, but ultimately, some organizations may need to keep limited fleets, in which case they will need grants to transition to electric vehicles.

Safety and infrastructure concerns also deter people from walking and cycling in Regina. Another organization reported, "I wish the city was easier to just walk [around in]. I feel like a lot of time people are scared to walk, especially once the sun sets ... What if you get followed by someone?"

Moreover, this participant expressed concern about a lack of pedestrian and cycling culture and poor cycling infrastructure where bike lanes are limited and often not kept clean and clear enough for safe use by cyclists. Limited and unsafe infrastructure combined with poor public visibility of pedestrians and cyclists can result in dangerous encounters with motorists. The same participant expressed, "I'm worried when I see youth leaving [our services] at night on bikes."

Another participant noted that sidewalks sometimes end abruptly in the city, suggesting that many "area[s] are not accessible if you're in a chair or you're on a bike...[We] don't really take care of our sidewalks so in the wintertime too if you're trying to get outside and they haven't cleaned off the sidewalks then you're not going anywhere for the day, right?"

Investments made as part of the 100 per cent renewable commitment should improve cycling and walking infrastructure, lighting, crossings and snow removal, not just on main arteries. One participant also suggested that public campaigns against racism and xenophobia could help a diversity of people feel more comfortable on public transit and walking or cycling in public spaces. Increased ridership on public transit would also help with safety concerns.

A final consideration concerns the safety and accessibility of the current transfer points in our transit system. The downtown transfer points are spread from Albert Street to Hamilton Street amid busy traffic, making transfers difficult for people who are less mobile. Yet we also heard that vehicle traffic makes some pedestrians and transit users feel safer when the downtown core empties after hours. The city should explore a pedestrian-protected transit or mobility hub downtown that would allow for safe transfers during busy times of the day.¹¹ This hub could be partially covered to protect from snowfall and provide heated spaces, which would make journeys that include transfers much more accessible and safer to a wider population. Given that many services and jobs are downtown, participants expressed a desire to keep transfer points in the downtown core.



Unmet energy needs

Environmental policy related to energy and climate change is often focused on getting individuals to reduce their (over)consumption through mechanisms like carbon taxes and investments in new technologies, such as solar panels and smart thermostats or retrofits to their homes. These policies and incentives, however, do not address the large number of people living in poverty whose basic energy needs are currently unmet and who certainly cannot afford to invest in energy savings or energy production. If energy policy is made within a framework of equity, it must address the gap between those living with energy insecurity and those whose energy consumption needs to be curbed.

In our focus groups, we heard repeatedly that a large number of residents within Regina are living in landlord-owned housing that is not meeting their energy needs. This is particularly the case for people living in housing in disrepair, where windows and doors are too drafty and not properly sealed for the winter and/or may not open and shut for proper ventilation and cooling in the summer. Poor insulation is another cause of energy inefficiency that negatively affects the lives of people living in inadequate housing. A lack of affordable housing in Regina has meant that tenants, especially Indigenous and racialized people living in poverty, must cope with high utility costs and conditions that are either too hot or too cold for comfort.

We also heard that people living on social assistance are having to devote more of their allowances to heating and electricity bills as rates for energy increase without concomitant increases to assistance and as the Saskatchewan Assistance Program transitions to Saskatchewan Income Support, under which there are no dedicated funds for utilities. Several participants suggested that a significant proportion of provincial assistance is going toward payments for heating and electricity, leaving individuals “on the fringes of homelessness because of their utilities,” as one participant expressed.

Another participant expressed how difficult utility payments can be for youth ageing out of care:

“The ageing out thing, with social assistance, is super challenging, because they’ll get an allowance and they’ll be approved for \$650 or \$600. Okay, well if your water’s not included, and you love your baths,

surprise — you’re gonna have a very high water bill. Kids are not super aware of that kind of thing, and they’re getting out right at 18.”

In addition to the difficult decisions low-income people make about stretching fixed incomes across rent, transportation, groceries, heating and electricity, numerous participants cited costly hook-up and reconnection fees for energy utilities as particularly punishing. Several participants reported that a typical reconnection fee with SaskEnergy costs \$500.

Proposed solutions

Although regulation of tenants and landlords is a provincial responsibility, municipalities have the power to enforce certain health and safety standards on rental properties. Stronger enforcement of these bylaws could improve the state of rental housing stock in the city. However, keeping buildings in good repair is just a first step toward improving energy insecurity in our city. Community energy transition policies should include energy-efficiency regulations on rental properties and devise a strategy to ensure that a portion of any savings associated with renewable energy infrastructure is passed along to tenants. One participant in our focus groups suggested that maintaining heritage buildings is key to sustainability because of the embodied energy in their structures. If these buildings are allowed to fall into disrepair and, eventually, to be landfilled, significant stores of energy are lost from our urban ecologies and are turned into sources of greenhouse gas emissions in our dumps at the same time as new energy is needed for new construction.

A focus on equity requires a broader review of energy generation and delivery in Saskatchewan. The current model of centralized power generation produced, distributed and sold to ratepayers that characterizes utilities like SaskPower is being challenged by more distributed power generation models that rely on smaller, independent micro-producers. The 2019 restructuring of the popular net metering and solar rebate programs, which cost the solar industry hundreds of jobs and drastically reduced homeowner incentives to install solar, is a perfect example of this tension between centralized versus distributed power generation.

As renewable technologies advance, the potential for distributed systems of energy production will grow. Indeed, community self-generation of renewable power is a key component of many successful renewable cities and can be an important way of ensuring equity. Community energy-sharing programs that coordinate bulk purchasing of energy-efficiency technologies and clean energy for low-income communities can reduce energy bills and support local clean energy businesses. The City of Austin, Texas, received the United States Conference of Mayors Climate Award for its Community Solar Program. The program allows residents who rent or have shaded roofs to subscribe to 100 per cent locally generated solar energy and lock in the price for 15 years, ensuring the benefits of renewable energy are more evenly distributed.¹²

Fortunately, because our utilities are crown corporations, we have the power to ensure that our crown energy companies adopt policies that help facilitate rather than obstruct these types of community power-generation programs. The 20-year power purchase agreement between SaskPower and Cowessess First Nation's Renewable Energy Storage Facility is an excellent example of the kind of community power generation projects that could be replicated throughout the province if we enact the right incentives.¹³ While we recognize that this kind of structural change is more a provincial responsibility than a municipal one, the City of Regina could play a lead role in advocating for changes to the current model to ensure that municipalities in the province have the tools they need to successfully pursue the types of community energy-sharing programs we outline above.



Financing community energy transition

If Regina is to become a 100 per cent renewable community, every individual and organization in our city will need to take part. With that in mind, we collected reflections and insights from our focus groups on what organizations and the people they work with need in order to benefit from and partake in the energy transition.

Many community-based organizations that participated in our study agreed with one participant who said, "In a sense, as nonprofit and community-based organizations, we are marginalized economically, just like the people we are working with, in terms of our resources."

Indeed, we heard over and over that these organizations don't have the ability to invest in building upgrades, energy conservation or energy production even though they would benefit immensely from such investments. For example, many organizations maintain 24-hour facilities and house a variety of different uses within their buildings but don't have the ability to turn off electricity and reduce heat in unused wings. One participant reported that her organization didn't have the capital funds to upgrade light fixtures and transition all lighting to LED across their facilities. Another participant made clear that organizations

have more success seeking and obtaining capital at the start of a new project or program when capital investments are needed throughout the life cycle of a project to meet sustainability goals. As this participant expressed, "We tend to build these buildings and then we do nothing about them."

The city should work with the provincial government and SaskPower to develop innovative energy financing programs for organizations and individuals that cannot afford the upfront costs associated with retrofitting and energy transition. Certain utilities in the United States, such as Green Mountain Power in Vermont, provide such programs.¹⁴ British Columbia's social housing retrofit program is another example of energy utilities facilitating access to energy retrofits that might otherwise be out of reach.¹⁵ These programs would provide loans to municipalities, reserves, homeowners, agricultural producers, businesses, developers and community-based organizations so they can cover the cost of clean energy installations or retrofits. Loans would be paid back over time from the savings on energy bills. Programs like these would enable community-based organizations to be part of the energy transition in Regina, in which each organization expressed it would very much like to take part.



Green space

Increasing green space is a key part of augmenting the sustainability of urban municipalities. Plants and trees remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, green space encourages residents to partake in leisure activities and transportation (such as walking and cycling) that don't draw on fossil fuels, and access to urban nature increases residents' mental and physical health. Green space is also often unequally distributed throughout cities, with marginalized communities experiencing less access to quality parks and green spaces.

In our focus groups, several organizations that operate in neighbourhoods close to downtown expressed their disappointment with the abundance of parking lots and cars in their communities. These organizations articulated a strong desire to reduce surface parking lots and replace them with green spaces for walking, cycling and recreation. Surface parking in these often marginalized communities primarily serves people who work downtown rather than the residents of the neighbourhood.

Regina already has a fabulous network of parks and paths that connect large parts of the city and encourage walking and cycling. However, this system could be greatly enhanced

by improving its safety and accessibility, particularly in marginalized communities where parks and paths are more likely to fall into disrepair. Improving public transit for those who work downtown and increasing walking and cycling infrastructure would help reduce the demand for surface parking in downtown-adjacent communities.

For inspiration, the City might look to the improvements the City of Dallas made to its park and path system. Dallas committed to providing parkland or natural space connections within a 10-minute walk of all city residents. The 110-mile system incorporates a comprehensive wayfinding system that displays connections to local landmarks, major streets and transit stops using the same style and language as the public transit network. This system has made visible what was once an invisible pedestrian network, encouraging residents to increase walking and cycling trips. The wayfinding maps are also available in multiple languages, making green space accessible to newcomers and long-time residents alike.





Labour

Energy transitions will inevitably have an effect on workforces as some forms of fossil fuel-intensive work are replaced by greener jobs. Labour movements worldwide have been agitating for “just transition” policies that ensure workers in fossil fuel industries are not left behind in energy transitions and that workers are involved in decisions about their livelihoods. A focus on equity must engage workers in our communities and mitigate the impacts of energy-transition policies on workplaces. To this end, we convened one focus group with labour leaders from public- and private-sector unions. We asked these representatives how the city’s 100 per cent renewable target might affect and benefit their members. Many of the unions represented in our focus groups have national-level policies, positions and conversations about just transition. For example, in [October 2019](#), Unifor hosted a national conference in Saskatoon titled “Just Transition – Ensuring a Future that Works for All.” However, most labour representatives reported that such conversations are not happening at the local level. This means that local workplaces and their representatives must begin to mobilize now if they want a say in how energy transition will happen in our city.

Unsurprisingly, the transition off of fossil fuels will affect different industries, sectors and workplaces in uneven ways. Some union representatives reported potential opportunities in the areas of construction and electrical work, while other sectors and unions face existential crises as fossil fuel production is phased out. A few participants made clear that private transnational corporations in fossil fuel-intensive sectors are unlikely to stick around to retool and reimagine their work and workplaces beyond the first signs of trouble.

Union representatives in our focus groups identified deskilling and automation as significant threats associated with energy transition. Several participants expressed concern about their trades being “broken apart” under a process of deregulation that would introduce lower-paid, less safe and more precarious work:

“In B.C. we see the complete deregulation of trades and the installation of far lower-paying jobs [including] the solar installer, the wire puller, the lighting installer. They’re cracking apart the trade

that I work in right now and bringing in workers at a 50 per cent rate. More workers in means more work gets done, I get that. But the regulatory framework exists for a reason. There’s a reason that an electrician, traditionally, would install a solar array. It’s because you can have as much as 1,500 volts there. If you unplugged it in your hands, your hands would probably [disintegrate].”

Participants noted that automation is already displacing jobs in mining and extraction and will likely affect transit and other sectors as well. We note that the city’s energy and sustainability framework already includes a substantial focus on autonomous and connected vehicles. Considering these issues together provides an opportunity for the city to engage workers on the impacts of automation.

Union members are not just workers. They are also community members who will benefit from investments in public transportation, safety and accessibility, green space, and programs to help them save and produce energy. The representatives around our table were genuinely enthusiastic about what a 100 per cent renewable city might offer them as residents of this city. And they acknowledged that further conversations about just transition are crucial for the future of organized labour. One participant highlighted that city investments into the “social wage” benefit us all:

“So what public investments I’d like to see is to see an increase in that social wage...our UFCW [United Food and Commercial Workers] members who are struggling or some of our members who make low wages where that social wage would really benefit them at the end of the day. So the public investments I’d like to see would be that free transit because we’d see members benefit from that. And make that transit inclusive for our members who are shift workers, and safe so that a woman who gets out of the hospital at 2 a.m. can go on transit safely without fear, because that’s why so many women drive. So when I’m thinking public investments I’m thinking how can we use the transformation not just to protect our jobs but to protect our communities, and increase jobs.”

Recommendations

Our recommendations are based on what we heard from a diversity of organizations whose daily work involves supporting people who have been marginalized because of their age, sexuality, gender, Indigeneity, race, ethnicity, ability or because they live in poverty, are escaping domestic abuse, are homeless, are food insecure, or live in a stigmatized neighbourhood. Our two main recommendations are to continue the research and consultation processes that should inform the city's energy and sustainability framework.

First, we recommend that the City of Regina strike an equity committee on sustainability that will conduct research and consultations meant to inform and guide the city's energy and sustainability framework.

The committee should be well-resourced and supported by city staff and should be composed of people with the lived experience of various forms of marginalization as well as organizations that support these people. We believe that a well-resourced and community-supported City of Regina climate equity committee could discover even more potential co-benefits of applying an equity lens to climate policy.

Second, we recommend that the City of Regina strike a just transition committee that will conduct research and consultations meant to inform and guide the city's energy and sustainability framework.

The committee should be well-resourced and supported by city staff and should be composed of workers and their representatives from a wide variety of unionized and non-unionized sectors.

If the City of Regina is serious about achieving its 100 per cent renewable target by 2050 it must get going immediately and it must prioritize equity to get buy-in from all city residents. But it must also be ambitious and start to rethink the way people in Regina produce and consume energy, how they move around the city, the location and nature of their work, the homes they live in and the services they access. These are no small tasks and will require strong leadership and a collective sense of purpose. To conclude this report, we recommend specific issues and issue areas that climate equity and just transition committees could explore based on our own research.

Recommended areas of investigation for the climate equity and just transition committees

1. The committees should explore the potential of phased-in, fare-free public transit.
2. The committees should build on the City of Regina's Master Transportation Plan by identifying improvements to the city's physical infrastructure that would allow for safe, accessible low-carbon modes of transport, including public transit, walking and cycling.
3. The committees should learn from the experiences of marginalized people in the city to better understand and combat discrimination in public spaces.
4. The committees should investigate how to best regulate rental properties to incentivize energy efficiency while ensuring co-benefits with renters.
5. The committees should consider how SaskPower could best adapt so that municipalities can pursue community energy-sharing programs.
6. The committees should investigate the potential for innovative energy-financing programs that could reduce or remove the up-front costs of renewable energy installations and retrofits for homeowners, community-based organizations, reserves, businesses and developers.
7. The committees should investigate the potential to convert significant amounts of surface parking to green space for walking, cycling and recreation, which would directly benefit the residents of downtown-adjacent neighbourhoods.
8. The committees should consider how to ensure equitable access to and maintenance of Regina's network of parks and paths. They should also explore how wayfinding systems could make green space accessible to a diversity of newcomers and long-time residents.
9. The committees should consider the impacts of automation and autonomous vehicles on jobs.

Endnotes

1. Arthur White-Crummey (2018). "Council opts to chart path to a renewable Regina." Regina Leader-Post. October 31. Available at: <https://leaderpost.com/news/local-news/council-opts-to-chart-path-to-a-renewable-regina>
2. Multnomah County (2017). "Portland wins C40 Cities award for best climate action plans." February 10, 2017. Available at: <https://multco.us/sustainability/news/portland-wins-c40-cities-award-best-climate-action-plans-and-inventories-project>
3. Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance: Portland, Oregon. Available at: <https://carbonneutralcities.org/cities/portland/>
4. City of Portland: Renewable Energy. Available at: <https://beta.portland.gov/bps/scg/renewable-energy>
5. Alisa Kane (2019). "How Portland is building equity into its climate planning." Fast Company. November 21. Available at: <https://www.fastcompany.com/90434502/how-portland-is-building-equity-into-its-climate-planning>
6. Desiree Williams-Rajee and Taren Evans (2016). Climate Action Through Equity. City of Portland and Multnomah County. Available at: <https://beta.portland.gov/sites/default/files/2019-07/cap-equity-case-study-web29jul.pdf>
7. Kane, 2019.
8. Maria Hart, Jillian Du and Caroline Coccoli (2019). "How to Prevent City Climate Action from Becoming "Green Gentrification." World Resources Institute. December 12. Available at: <https://www.wri.org/blog/2019/12/how-prevent-city-climate-action-becoming-green-gentrification>
9. Jeremy Deaton (2018). "The Curse of Green Gentrification." Nexusmedia. January 25. Available at: <https://nexusmedianews.com/the-curse-of-green-gentrification-936c9b8bf2c3>
10. Statistics Canada (2017). "Focus on Geography Series". Available at: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GK=CMA&GC=705&TOPIC=6s>
11. Saki Aono (2019). Identifying Best Practices for Mobility Hubs. Prepared for Translink. Available at: https://sustain.ubc.ca/sites/default/files/Sustainability%20Scholars/2018_Sustainability_Scholars/Reports/2018-71%20Identifying%20Best%20Practices%20for%20Mobility%20Hubs_Aono.pdf
12. U.S. Conference of Mayors (2018). Mayors and Climate Protection Best Practices. June. Available at: <https://www.usmayors.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/climateawards2018.pdf>
13. CTV News (2018). "Cowessess First Nation unveils new solar site alongside wind power site." October 10. Available at: <https://regina.ctvnews.ca/cowessess-first-nation-unveils-new-solar-site-alongside-wind-power-site-1.4128298>
14. Bill McKibben (2015). "Power to the People: Why the rise of green energy makes utility companies nervous. The New Yorker. June 22. Available at: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/power-to-the-people>
15. Through FortisBC and BC Hydro's Social Housing Retrofit Support Program, charities and non-profit housing providers can receive energy study funding, implementation support funding, and incentives on a variety of high-efficiency natural gas and electric upgrades. See <https://www.fortisbc.com/rebates/business/social-housing-retrofit-support-program>

