



# **Just Recovery Kingston Municipal Election Toolkit**



## *Just Recovery Kingston*

**On October 24th, 2022, people in Kingston will vote for city council and for mayor** — or, at least, some people will. The fact is local elections have the lowest participation of any elections in Canada. This is unfortunate, because residents have far more power to make change happen than at provincial or federal levels, especially when those elections are often heavily influenced by corporate media and well-funded lobbyists.

At the local level, it takes fewer people to make a big difference. We can put our vision for the city we need forward, we can talk to other people to build support for our ideas, and we can win.

Just Recovery Kingston began in 2020, in the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are a group of local people committed to making Kingston a place where we take care of the land, air, water, and each other. Over the last two years, we have worked on expanding funding and support for community gardens, improving local public transit, encouraging a more diverse group of candidates in city council, and increasing input from local people in the city budget.

This year, we have created a toolkit for you, the local person who might be wondering how a local election could matter. We've done the research, talked to others doing similar work, and created a list of some of the policies that would make living in Kingston better. **We want you to read them, talk to people about them, share them — and ask anyone who wants your vote what they think about them.**

Don't know what district you live in? Visit <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/city-council/district-map>

Contact the people running in your district — ask them about their position on climate change, housing, transit and food security: <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections/candidates/list>

Most importantly — register to vote:

Before September 1st: <https://voterlookup.ca/home.aspx>

After September 1st: <https://www.cityofkingston.ca/city-hall/elections>

**We want to work with you. Go to the last page for details on how!**





# Climate Change

## Why is This a Municipal Issue?

In Canada, around 50% of carbon emissions are from our municipalities. Not only that, but many of the early dangers of climate change, such as flooding, extreme heat, and harsh freeze-thaw cycles, will impact us first at the municipal level. That's why many climate activists urge citizens to act locally — to take action at home.

The municipality of Kingston has already declared a climate emergency, and begun a number of initiatives such as the Active Transport 5 Year Implementation Plan and the Climate Leadership Plan. But it will depend on the councillors we elect to carry out this action.

## What Climate Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level?

- Better Bike Infrastructure:** Imagine if everyone had reliable access to affordable bikes, and could use those to get wherever they needed, whenever they needed! Many cities support bike share programs within their cities — the city of Hamilton has a particularly compelling example of this: [their municipally-supported not-for-profit bike-share](#) program has over 26,000 members, and has saved over 900,000 kg of carbon since 2012. And while Kingston does have a not-for-profit community bike shop ([Yellow Bike Action](#)), they need support and space to expand — something that municipalities like [Peterborough](#) have done with notable success. Bike infrastructure, particularly protected bike lanes and safe lock-up sites — [some of which the city is undertaking already](#) — would make biking easier and safer in Kingston.
- Municipally-owned Green Energy:** Imagine if we generated our own, publicly-owned solar facility right here in Kingston! Renewable energy projects are urgently needed in order to move away from fossil fuel use — they are viable, sound investments, and emit no greenhouse gases in their operation. Utilities Kingston, which is owned by the City, has the knowledge and experience [to build and maintain such a facility](#). The City has a number of potential sites which are being assessed for suitability, including a closed landfill, and the land adjacent to a water treatment facility where the solar installation could power the processing, while capital funding could be obtained through the sale of Green Bonds. The electricity produced would be put into the Ontario grid, and the payment for this would flow to Kingston rate-payers, reducing our electricity costs while helping lower our emissions.
- Expanding Home Energy Retrofitting:** Imagine if green retrofits in our city were extended to multi-unit housing, and promised savings for tenants! In Canada, an estimated 80% of the buildings that will be standing by 2050 have already been built; in this city, buildings contribute 41% of community emissions. Green Retrofits could become a cornerstone of our climate policy, through an expansion to the rebates offered for homeowners in Kingston, community-housing retrofits such as [those led by the Edmonton Municipality](#), and [Aggregated Retrofit programs](#) (often based on the Dutch *Energiesprong* model)







# Climate Change

## What Climate Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level? (Cont'd)

- Investing in Urban Forests and Biodiversity:** Imagine if we had greenspaces for everyone, that served to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve biodiversity, all while saving resources! Canada is a signatory to the [30 by 30 Targets](#), committed to protecting 30% of our land. And municipalities are quickly realising the role of urban forests and greenspaces for climate resilience ([see, for example, the 3-30-300 rule](#)). The municipality of Hamilton, for example, offers [tax rebates for planting native plants](#); and some municipalities in New England have passed [Native Plant Ordinances](#) requiring at least 70% of city-planted areas to be native plants. Many municipalities have taken extensive steps, including wider Biodiversity Strategies, to protect [urban forests, greenspaces, and wetlands](#). Planning regulations and land-use policy, too, could be changed to place more emphasis on green infrastructure by regulating tree-cutting, requiring sustainable greenspace, and soil management plans.
- Climate action in line with science:** City council asked city staff, in 2021, to consider whether we could reduce emissions 50% by 2030. Imagine if Kingston was a city that followed through — a climate action leader, that stood out as an example of forward-thinking policy and real action for cities across Canada.



**Consider asking your municipal candidates for their positions and priorities. Here are some questions, just to get the conversation started...**

*What climate considerations would you take into account when deciding which development projects to move forward?*

*How do you think our neighbourhood could become a safer and better place for low-carbon transportation?*

*How can council make it easier for me to retrofit my home, whether I rent or own?*

*What do you know about Kingston's Climate Leadership Plan? How will you ensure that it is implemented in line with scientific recommendations ([such as the IPCC report](#)) — and actually helps us face the climate crisis?*

*What does a climate resilient city look like to you? How can we ensure that as our city grows what we build is climate resilient and conserves nature?*





# Housing

## Why is This a Municipal Issue?

Rent-g geared-to-income (RGI) housing is municipally managed. In Kingston, there are 2003 RGI units that are managed by the Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation and many non profit housing providers, yet a wait-list of over 1200 households. This waitlist has largely not been reduced in recent years—to do so, we need more RGI housing! We have also seen an increase in renovictions (a landlord evicting someone by claiming to complete major renovations), which allow landlords to put housing back on the market at a higher rate. This further reduces affordable housing options. We need housing that affordable, accessible, and that provides security of tenure for all Kingston residents.

## What Housing Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level?

1. **Support people who are unhoused:** Imagine if those who are unhoused, rather than being forced to leave city parks, were instead meaningfully engaged with to identify alternative places to live that they agree to and can afford. And if the City purchased motels or other buildings to offer single room occupancy units with optional support services for those who want that.
2. **Identify sites for affordable housing:** Imagine if available lots were repurposed for housing that was accessible to all! Access to land is a large barrier to housing development. Identifying municipally-owned properties nearby transit routes would act as a starting point to build these much needed housing units.
3. **Building acquisition program:** Imagine if non-profit organizations could easily receive support to increase the availability of affordable housing! The [MURA](#) program in Toronto helps fund eligible non-profit housing providers to aid in the purchase of existing buildings. Developing a similar program in Kingston would help keep affordable housing affordable.
4. **Develop an eviction database:** Imagine if everyone had secure housing tenure! An eviction database that tracks evictions by both landlord and building type would help the City of Kingston better understand when and where wrongful evictions are taking place, and help tenants fight landlords who evict in bad faith.
5. **Rental Licencing and Registration:** Imagine if every rental unit in Kingston was safe, clean, and a healthy place to live! A rental licencing and registration system reduces market inefficiencies within the local, long-term rental market and increases the detail and reliability of information on rental housing. This helps to ensure that the quality of housing is at a minimum standard as mandated by city bylaws.







# Housing

**Consider asking your municipal candidates for their positions and priorities. Here are some questions, just to get the conversation started...**

*What do you think the city can do to support people who are unhoused in the meantime, while they are waiting for affordable and appropriate housing?*

*What locations in your district do you think could be a potential site for mixed-income affordable housing?*

*How could Kingston increase the percent of Development Charges that are allocated for affordable housing?*

*What do you think the city can do to ensure that rental homes are safe and clean?*

*Given that we have a housing shortage, do you think a rental registry and licencing system would help ensure we don't lose units because of neglect?*

*Rents are going through the roof. Couldn't a rental registry ensure landlords behave legally, give the city valuable information about our housing market, while also generating money for the city to create rent-geared-to-income housing spaces?*

# Transit



## Why is This a Municipal Issue?

Almost a quarter of all of Canada's GHG emission comes from the transportation sector and about half that comes from passenger vehicles. With public transit run by the city, reducing emissions from transportation is one of the best ways Kingston can address climate change. A [recent fare-free transit pilot program in Boston](#) demonstrated that removing transit fees significantly increased ridership, saved residents money, improved the overall experience of riders, and provided important mobility to those who lacked access to transportation. By making public transit free, accessible, and reliable the City of Kingston can reduce our climate impact while making the city more liveable for all!

## What Transit Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level?

1. **Bussing Reliability and Community Hiring:** Imagine if busses were easily accessible and driving busses was an attractive career option! We need public transit that runs enough and goes enough places to be an attractive alternative to driving cars. Kingston Transit doesn't have enough drivers to meet service goals. They need a community hiring program targeting local high school students, and reconsider staffing and hours policies to ensure drivers are getting enough hours and are able to balance work and life fairly.
2. **Fare-free transit:** Imagine if public transit was actually easier to access than a personal vehicle! Making city busses free to ride is an important climate solution by encouraging more people to take public transit, as an alternative to a personal vehicle. It also makes busses more reliable by reducing wait times at stops and provides a badly-needed affordable transit option to residents who cannot afford more expensive alternatives. A starting point can be piloting fare-free transit on select heavily used routes as was done [very successfully in Boston](#).
3. **Pilot Bus Service to Little Cataraqui Creek:** Imagine if access to the benefits of nature was available to all, regardless of whether or not you have a car? Urban and suburban access to nature [can relieve stress, encourage exercise, and create community](#). But in Kingston, getting to most hiking areas requires access to a private vehicle — the creation of a transit link to Little Cataraqui Conservation Area would make it easier for everyone to access nature.







# Transit

**Consider asking your municipal candidates for their positions and priorities. Here are some questions, just to get the conversation started...**

*Why do you think personal transport such as automobiles and taxis are preferred over public transit?*

*What do you think about the choice between electric cars and public transit?*

*What would be the outcome of free transit and what would be the impact on our climate challenge?*

*What do you think of the transit subsidies being provided to sectors of the city population such as students and low income residents and seniors?*

*How do you think transit costs should be covered?*

*Do you think the operation of our public transit should be transferred to the private sector; what place do you see for the private sector in our public transit?*

*How do you see the path for Kingston to fare-free, green, excellent public transit?*

*What plan do you have to reduce car traffic - whether electric or not?*

*Will you advocate for free transit as a measure to address the Climate Emergency?*





# Food Security

## Why is This a Municipal Issue?

Food security is a situation in which everyone has access to sufficient, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Food security is an important municipal issue for several reasons. First, food security is not just about food availability or supply. It is about economic and physical access to food. As such, municipal policies governing housing affordability are closely tied to food security, as housing is generally the biggest portion of an individual or family's budget. The quality and efficiency of public transportation is also crucial to ensuring the physical access of residents to healthy food sources.

Second, the municipal level is a critical site for supporting citizens in having more control over their food systems. By connecting issues such as land use, climate, housing, income and transportation, among others, municipalities can support policies that push beyond piecemeal food charity responses to address the underlying inequities and barriers to equitable food access.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the vulnerabilities in long distance food supply chains and just in time delivery. There are significant opportunities to strengthen regional self-sufficiency, including farmer livelihoods and food access, through integrated food security policies that respond to the needs of Kingston.

## What Food Security Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level?

1. **Develop a Food Security Strategy:** Imagine if we developed home-grown strategies to deal with food insecurity here in Kingston, increasing local food production, markets, and access for all! Across Canada, a growing number of municipalities are engaging partners from civil society, government, and local business to develop food security strategies. While many aspects of food security tie into provincial and federal policy frameworks, municipal strategies lay out goals appropriate to the local food system (for example, food access, local infrastructure, urban agriculture) along with an action plan and metrics for monitoring progress. Developing such a Strategy can also be an entryway to engaging with policy at higher levels and fostering collaboration on local food system objectives. Key examples include the [Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy](#) and the [Toronto Food Strategy](#). One of the main insights from other municipalities is that citizens with lived experience of food insecurity need to be at the centre of Strategy development.





# Food Security

## What Food Security Policies Do We Need at the Municipal Level? (Cont'd)

2. **Affordable Housing and Community Gardens:** Imagine if gardens and markets were not just an afterthought in development, but a integral part of the way housing is designed in Kingston! Food insecurity, housing affordability, and income are closely linked. Social housing projects and other policies to increase housing affordability should incorporate food security in the design and implementation. For example, in Chicago, the [Cabrini Green](#) public housing project includes a market garden and youth-specific community garden projects. [Vancouver](#) features several food-growing gardens on social housing rooftops.
3. **Supporting a Basic Income Guarantee:** The connection between food and income insecurity is well documented. We know that when people have a sufficient income, there is a reduction in the rates of food insecurity, which can alleviate pressures on municipalities to provide and support food charity responses. A basic income guarantee could support municipalities in their efforts to address the downstream effects of poverty - including food insecurity.



**Consider asking your municipal candidates for their positions and priorities. Here are some questions, just to get the conversation started...**

*Why do you think food security is important to the city of Kingston?*

*What do you think about the role of local food systems in promoting healthy communities?*

*What is your vision for a food secure community?*





*Just Recovery Kingston*

Thank you for reading your Just Recovery Kingston Municipal Election Toolkit!

Please share it with others, and ask candidates about these ideas.

We are looking for more local people to help build the city we need. If you want to get involved, email us at [justrecoverykingston@gmail.com](mailto:justrecoverykingston@gmail.com)