

Scoping, designing, delivering and scaling practical solutions to dramatically reduce climate emissions in our communities since 1999.

# envirocentre 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

[envirocentre.ca](https://envirocentre.ca)



## OUR MISSION

EnviroCentre scopes, designs, delivers and scales practical solutions to dramatically reduce climate emissions in our communities.



## OUR VISION

A sustainable net-zero future is achieved in Ottawa and beyond.

## OUR METHOD



### INSPIRE

We use positive, practical, vision-focused messaging, pointing to a hopeful future.



### SCALE

We keep the end-goal in sight and focus on projects that can grow to the level of impact needed to meet climate targets.



### CATALYZE

We collaborate, build capacity, and share resources to support effective, impactful climate action, everywhere.



### VISION

We champion forward-thinking approaches for our region and country.



### ACTION

We mobilize people and fundings to make plans a reality.



### LISTEN

We listen to trends, friends, opponents, communities, cultures, partners, ecosystems and the land to find the good path.

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR + EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The first year of our new strategic plan saw some exciting movement in climate action for our region. For EnviroCentre, with our mission to scope, design, deliver and scale practical solutions to dramatically reduce climate emissions in our communities, we had planned for 2023 to be heavy on “scoping”. But it turned out to be a pretty big year on all fronts.

We did **scope** 9 initiatives, to assess some of the most promising areas for emerging climate action in our region, and how EnviroCentre can most effectively engage to accelerate them. This work included: the exploration of an Ottawa Bike Share; an expanded Social Housing Retrofit Accelerator, serving Eastern Ontario; and the development of a climate coaching service for municipalities.

We **designed** 7 initiatives, beginning to move forward those we think are most promising. Featured among these are the social housing Retrofit Accelerator, planning and installation of tiny forests, and support for regional municipalities to accelerate local PACE (property assessed clean energy) programs.

As always, climate action project delivery is at the core of EnviroCentre’s work and impact. In 2023, we **delivered** 19 projects. These included establishing tiny forests in Ottawa Community Housing locations and York Street Public school; the training of 19 new Registered Energy Advisors as part of our REA training program; continued delivery of the highly-successful Better Homes Ottawa Loan Program; long-term projects like Let’s Bike, School Active Transportation, Home Energy Assessments, energy conservation programs (the Home Winterproofing Program and the Energy Affordability Program); and of course our residential deep retrofit project, Future Homes. These projects served 125,000 residents, and reduced 3636 tonnes of carbon, 96% of which are annual reductions which will continue well into the future.

And we **scaled**. As our programs have grown, in 2023 we saw significant growth in 74% of our programs, from Let’s Bike (45%), to Home Energy Assessments (53%) through conservation program delivery (157%). Our emissions reduction impact increased 27%, and our reach 60%. This is big news for our team, and a great step toward the scale of climate action we want to catalyze across our region. Along the way, our organization more than doubled in size, part of the 500% growth since 2019. This has enabled EnviroCentre to continue to increase our impact and commit to ambitious plans for the future.

# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR + EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

And ambitious plans are needed! For the Ottawa region to reach its climate targets, it must accelerate emissions reduction at least 5-6% every year to 2040, and then maintain every year thereafter, to 2050. In hard numbers, EnviroCentre's measurable emissions reduction impact in 2023 amounted to around 2.6% of the total annual regional reduction we need to see. Multiply this out across the Eastern Ontario region we support, and you start to get a sense of the scale of the task. We need more action, and fast, and we're hard at work to get there.



DOUG MICHAELIDES  
*Chair of the EnviroCentre Board of Directors*



SHARON COWARD  
*Executive Director*



- **Anishinabewaki**
- **Omàmiwininiwag**
- **Cree**

EnviroCentre lives and works on the unceded traditional land of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. We recognize the Algonquin Anishinaabeg have lived on and cared for this land since time immemorial. As the descendants of settlers, more recent immigrants, and Indigenous ancestors, we recognize it is our responsibility to work towards true reconciliation with the land's original people.

We are committed to moving toward a full understanding of the meaning of reconciliation, ensuring our work embodies the spirit and goals of reconciliation, and helps bring to reality genuine reconciliation in the Ottawa region and beyond.



# DRIVING ACTION IN 2023

## Scaling Climate Action in Canada

Impact is more than what can be measured and in all of our numbers, we can lose sight of that. Major climate action projects take years of legwork, laying the foundation in education, outreach, tool development, policy advocacy, and strategic partnership. Major climate action projects require slow-growing cultural shifts that eventually result in the availability of new public funding, willingness of private partners to sign on and contribute, and sufficient buy-in from Canadians. The five years of building that lay the groundwork for a practical climate action initiative will often have no measurable impact on paper (unless you're counting the draw on your bottom line!), but without that work, practical climate action cannot move forward. At the end of all that work, if you're lucky, an initiative is launched that impacts countable individuals, and reduces measurable energy, or emissions, or both. That impact we can count.

What we can't count are all the initiatives, the policy changes, and the behavior changes and cultural shifts (even very small) that ripple from the years of legwork. Whose opinion was shifted by a social media post, who then went on to influence the leading policy analyst, who eventually pushed through a national clean energy policy for Canada? Which partnership roundtable fielded the ideas that coalesced in the mind of an attendee, who brought it into reality five years later in a new job? How many of our audit recommendations were put into action without our knowledge? These ripples are the little forces that come together to create real cultural change.



## DRIVING ACTION IN 2023

At EnviroCentre we prioritize practical, measurable impact. Emissions need to go down by measurable units and large-scale action on the ground is lacking across the country. As such, we are working hard to scale our boots-on-the-ground projects to plan for the near future of accelerated climate action that we expect and need. We want to provide high-quality, efficient, reliable climate action services that result in measurable reductions today and tomorrow.

But from years of experience, we know practical action is a long game, and we are increasingly mindful that this game cannot be effectively played to scale until the rules of the game support climate action as a win. This year our Future Homes project catalyzed the reduction of only 32 tonnes of GHGs, but we also built and piloted the framework for a retrofit accelerator project that aims to impact 6,000 social housing units over the next three years, and scale across Eastern Ontario to grow that impact still further. We had countless conversations with partners, funders and policymakers about the barriers to uptake in deep retrofits, and the solutions that will accelerate action. The conversations we had with partners across the country planted seeds for policy change and for new work that will spread well beyond our impact area.

In 2023, our active transportation initiatives reduced only 349 tonnes of GHGs, but our cycling safety, transportation demand management, and outreach and education services reached over 17 thousand people, and our strategic conversations with City, transportation, and urban planning partners helped lay the groundwork for an active-transportation-friendly region that will encourage low-carbon transportation for years to come.

As we look toward rapidly scaling measurable climate action in our communities, EnviroCentre will be working hard to scale up countable results, yes, but also to do the hard work of setting the scene for effective climate action to grow up around us. We will be investing time and resources to support the development of a regional and national context that encourages practical initiatives to sprout up all over the country, well beyond what we could do ourselves.

**This is the story behind the numbers.**





# 2023 IN NUMBERS

In 2023, EnviroCentre made big strides in all our focus areas.



## GREEN HOMES

- ✔ Completed over 2,400 home energy assessments, and 150 rain readiness evaluations.
- ✔ Executed 436 residential retrofits and installed 750 cutting-edge smart thermostats.
- ✔ Reduced 290,160 m<sup>3</sup> in annual fossil fuel consumption through winterproofing retrofits.
- ✔ Spearheaded initiatives resulting in gross energy savings of 2,406,244 kWh.
- ✔ Enabled the disbursement of over \$3 million in loans across 100 residential retrofit projects, for an average 39% reduction in emissions per project.
- ✔ Demonstrated a 71% annual GHG reduction across showcase homes.
- ✔ Fostered growth in the sector by actively training 19 Registered Energy Advisors, poised to enter the field by March 2024.
- ✔ Averted 10.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through Ottawa Community Housing waste programs.



## GREEN TRANSPORTATION

- ✔ Promoted sustainable transportation through the success of Let's Bike Month, logging 282,000 kilometers of travel by bicycle and averting 72 tonnes of greenhouse gases.
- ✔ Facilitated 535 electric vehicle test drives and rides across 16 community events, amplifying awareness and engagement.
- ✔ Conducted 11 workshops on sustainable commuting for employers.
- ✔ Reached over 2,000 residents through 29 cycling safety events.
- ✔ Reached more than 3,000 students over 29 walk days with partnering schools.
- ✔ Logged 25,279 km of walking through the Hop! app.

# 2023 IN NUMBERS



## GREEN ENTERPRISES

- Partnered with five local enterprises to create comprehensive carbon footprint maps.
- Collaborated with three organizations to develop customized sustainability action plans, including sustainability commitments, implementation of emissions reduction projects and scoping of data collection.
- Successfully installed four Tiny Forests at three Ottawa Community Housing sites and York Street Public School.
- Launched an AI-based waste sorting program at La Cité, averting 5.6 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.



## GREEN FUTURE

- Invested over 300 hours into comprehensive studies on equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation, integrating continuous education into all-staff meetings, ensuring availability of organization-wide learning opportunities.
- In collaboration with Green Communities Canada, joined *Acting Together on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization* an initiative which shares diversity learning between environmental organizations as a commitment to shared principles.
- Prepared a School Streets Feasibility Study focused on the City of Ottawa.
- Brought together 10 local stakeholders, including representatives on both sides of the river, for a collaborative study on the feasibility and success of a bike share in Ottawa-Gatineau.
- Formalized two partnerships with universities to further advance climate advocacy and the measurement of success and impact.





## FUTURE HOMES RETROFIT ACCELERATOR

In 2023, the Future Homes Retrofit Accelerator began its growth pathway from a small Ottawa-based pilot project into a growing service that will support social housing providers across Eastern Ontario to plan and complete deep energy retrofits.

As we wound up the work of the second Phase of the Future Homes Ottawa program, our team saw participating deep retrofit demonstration homes through to project completion, achieving an average per-home GHG reduction of 71%.

We partnered with Gloucester Housing to continue planning and resource development for Ottawa's first mass deep retrofit, a retrofit of 110 affordable townhouses in two Gloucester Housing neighbourhoods, planned for 2024. And we laid the groundwork for a retrofit accelerator service and market development team that will rapidly accelerate deep retrofits in social housing units over the coming 3 years.

## HOME ENERGY ASSESSMENTS

Our home energy assessment team completed over 1,600 pre-retrofit home energy assessments and more than 850 post-retrofit assessments, supporting over 450 homeowners to receive retrofit rebates and complete home energy efficiency upgrades.

These milestones underscore EnviroCentre's commitment to incentivizing and supporting homeowners in their efforts to adopt energy-efficient and sustainable practices.

We also wound up our free-of-charge Registered Energy Advisor Training, with 2023 seeing 17 newly qualified REAs working in the field, and 27 more on the way to certification. Our training focused on bringing under-represented and under-employed individuals into the field, including women, racialized Canadians, Indigenous peoples and 2SLGBTQ. Across the project, our team trained and mentored 24 under-represented individuals into the field.

## ENERGY AFFORDABILITY PROGRAM

This year, EnviroCentre accelerated our delivery of the IESO's Energy Affordability Program, a program that provides no-cost energy saving devices to lower-income residents of Ontario. Our delivery in Eastern Ontario resulted in gross annual energy savings of nearly 2.5M kWh, which is equivalent to approximately 200 homes worth of annual power usage. Through this work, nearly 3,000 Eastern Ontario residents benefited from lower energy bills and consumption this year.

## HOME WINTERPROOFING PROGRAM

This year, EnviroCentre's delivery of the Enbridge Gas Home Winterproofing Program saw insulation upgrades, smart thermostats, carbon monoxide detectors, and water conservation measures installed free-of-charge across 436 lower-income homes in Eastern Ontario. This work reduced natural gas consumption by over 290,000 m<sup>3</sup> annually, cutting home energy costs and emissions for Ontario's residents. Through EnviroCentre's dedication and hard work, we achieved 120% of our annual reduction target, which meant bigger savings for Ontarians, and less natural gas burned in the province.

## RAIN READY OTTAWA

The Rain Ready Ottawa pilot program continued to thrive in 2023. Under this program, 150 homes were assessed for residential stormwater management practices and a 115 sq ft rain garden was installed at the Aquaview Community Centre, where it will capture





rainwater where it falls and allow it to permeate into the ground rather than flow untreated into local waterways. A City of Ottawa initiative, Rain Ready Ottawa empowers residents to manage rainwater effectively, keeping our waterways and beaches cleaner, and reducing stormwater impacts. The work has been enormously popular and with EnviroCentre's support, we are proud to report it has won the City of Ottawa's 2023 Environmental Excellence award. The City is poised to scale up Rain Ready Ottawa operations in Ottawa in 2024, helping even more residents have the information and resources they need to make their properties rain ready.

## BETTER HOMES OTTAWA

The EnviroCentre-administered Better Homes Ottawa Loan program supported Ottawa homeowners to complete 100 energy retrofit projects with over \$3 million disbursed in low-interest loans in 2023. Now in its third year, this City of Ottawa program has supported 191 home retrofit projects to-date, seeing an average per-home greenhouse gas reduction of 39%. These are reductions that save local residents money, reduce energy consumption, and make for a cleaner, more climate-friendly region.



## WASTE DIVERSION

EnviroCentre supported four Ottawa Community Housing communities to increase the diversion of recyclables and organic waste from Ottawa's landfills. Through an organics implementation guidebook, and 7 community events, we helped OCH reach 279 residents with current and practical information for reducing waste in their community. Supporting Ottawa and Ontario's goal of zero-organics-to-landfill, this work reduces landfill emissions and collection costs, while improving waste diversion systems for Ottawa residents.

## EV EXPERIENCE

The EV Experience program went into its second phase in 2023, just as EVs are poised to accelerate across the country. A collaborative initiative to encourage electric vehicle adoption in the Ottawa region, through education and test drives, the program facilitated 535 test drives and rides across 16 community events, in 2023, as well as 160 e-bike and e-scooter test rides at the SmartNet Coalition Sustainability Showcase.

The team published four articles on electric vehicles, accessibility, and equity. Partnerships with the Electric Vehicle Council of Ottawa (EVCO), Ottawa Climate Action Fund, the City of Ottawa, and the Ottawa Community Foundation made this project a true collaborative success, and in 2024, EnviroCentre passes the torch to EVCO to continue the good work.

## TRAVELWISE

A City of Ottawa project, delivered by EnviroCentre, TravelWise engaged 11

employers across the city in 2023 to encourage sustainable commuting practices. Through 11 workshops, impacting 888 employees and commuters, this long-standing City initiative fostered environmentally friendly transportation choices amongst some of Ottawa's largest employers.

## CYCLING SAFETY AND AWARENESS PROGRAM

In 2023, EnviroCentre engaged over 2,000 residents across 29 events in Cycling Safety Awareness, for the City of Ottawa, improving cycling culture, safety and systems across Ottawa's extensive cycling network.

From pop-up support along bike paths, to community gatherings, EnviroCentre program staff provided support for residents, observational reporting, and strategic advice to the ongoing development of Ottawa's active transportation network.





## LET'S BIKE MONTH

Let's Bike Month celebrated its 14th anniversary in 2023. This event is hosted in partnership with the City of Ottawa, engaging over 5,100 participants, 33 sponsors, and hundreds of community groups and workplaces.

Let's Bike Month saw participants collectively log 282,000 kilometres of bike rides, a distance equivalent to more than seven trips around the Earth. This effort averted 72 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and showcased the impact of community collaboration.

## SCHOOL ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION (SAT)

The City of Ottawa's Student Active Transportation Program is coordinated and delivered by EnviroCentre. This impactful initiative advanced active and sustainable transportation in Ottawa elementary schools by increasing the number of students who walk, wheel, or ride the bus every day. Over 3,000 students were reached over the course of multiple partner events. This included 8 Winter Walk Days, 12 Spring into Spring Walk to school days, and 9 iWalk Days at schools across Ottawa. The Hop! app continues to delight and engage students to encourage them to walk to school. More than 25,000 km of walking was logged through this mobile tracker, proving that children are getting exercise, getting to know their neighbourhoods, and reducing emissions.

These initiatives collectively demonstrate EnviroCentre's dedication to fostering sustainable transportation practices, promoting healthy and active choices to move throughout our City, and creating a lasting impact toward a better future for Ottawa's transportation system.







## ENVIROCENTRE SERVICES

In 2023, the EnviroCentre Business Services team partnered with five local enterprises to create comprehensive carbon footprint maps. The team and their work empowered organizations to gain insights into their emissions and lay the foundation for strategic emissions reduction plans. Beyond assessment, the Business Services team collaborated with three companies to develop customized sustainability action plans.

These plans outlined tangible commitments, including the implementation of emissions reduction projects and collection of scope three emissions. Through these initiatives, EnviroCentre Business Services continues to play a pivotal role in guiding local businesses towards environmentally responsible practices and fostering a greener and more sustainable business landscape.





## WASTE DIVERSION FOR ENTERPRISES

In 2023, EnviroCentre supported Collège La Cité to increase the diversion of recyclables and organic waste from Ottawa's landfills. The OSCAR project at Collège La Cité leveraged AI technology to help guide students to use proper waste bins for sorting their waste.



## TINY FORESTS FOR ENTERPRISES

We successfully installed four Tiny Forests at three Ottawa Community Housing sites and York Street Public School. These forests have been installed using the Miyawaki method meaning that the soil has been amended to a near-native state and the plants and trees have been selected to maximize biodiversity and minimize maintenance.

Tiny Forests add naturalized spaces to urban environments where access to nature for both human and urban wildlife is limited. These forests will be enjoyed by community members while adding benefits to our City such as capturing runoff and improving air quality. Over 2,000 plants and trees were planted throughout these forests. The project was supported in large part by the Josette Robertson and Joan Johnston Family Foundation.





## SUPPORTING CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Research plays a key role in building the solutions needed for tomorrow. In 2023, EnviroCentre collaborated with McGill University and Carleton University to advance building energy efficiency techniques. EnviroCentre supported The Centre for Advanced Building Envelope Research, the Peter Guo-hua Fu School of Architecture, and the Department of Geography at McGill University, with real-world home energy data to advance their important long-term work.

## REVITALIZING BIKE SHARE

EnviroCentre and the Ottawa Climate Action Fund collaborated to reignite the conversation around Bike Share in the Ottawa-Gatineau region through an overview report and recommendations. We interviewed 20 stakeholders, researched best practices from successful programs across North America, and examined Ottawa's Bike Share history. The end product is a Bike Share Report that will be released this spring, presenting a renewed vision for the role that bike share could play in a multi-modal, low carbon transportation system in our region, and catalyzing a feasibility study designed to dig into the details and map a pathway forward.

## SCHOOL STREETS FEASIBILITY STUDY

Looking to the future, EnviroCentre completed the School Streets Feasibility Study to examine best practices around this popular approach to school transportation and safety. This report concluded that temporarily closing traffic near schools during opening and closing provides a wealth of benefits, such as improved air quality, safety, and social connections. It noted that this practice is entirely viable here in Ottawa, but would require Ottawa to amend a bylaw to accommodate the practice in a sustainable and viable way. (The City is currently reviewing its road closure bylaws and School Street pilots may be implemented as soon as fall of 2024.)

# CORPORATE OPERATIONS

## ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

In 2023, EnviroCentre grew. Over the past year, our staff has expanded program offerings, concluding 2023 with a robust team of 49, up from 35 full-time staff the year prior.

## STRATEGIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Our Business Development department was busier than ever in 2023. We secured 10 project grants and 10 contracts in our core business areas to accelerate climate action. We developed 20 new partnerships and introduced 15 new programs to advance climate action in Eastern Ontario.

EnviroCentre is committed to continuous learning and transformative actions in equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation. In 2023, our team undertook a series of initiatives aimed at cultivating a more inclusive and culturally-aware organizational environment.

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Our staff completed The Path training, a culturally-enriching program facilitated by NVision. It provided indispensable insights into Indigenous perspectives. Follow-up discussions, led by The Path coordinator, further deepened our collective understanding of Indigenous culture, history and experience, across modern-day Canada.

In an effort to further broaden our awareness, EnviroCentre staff engaged in team viewings of impactful documentaries. "The Skin We're In" addressed systemic anti-Black racism in Canada, and "In Full Voice" explored the identities of six Muslim Canadian women.





# EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION + RECONCILIATION

## EDUCATION

EnviroCentre dedicated over 300 hours to equity, diversity, inclusion, and reconciliation, reinforcing our commitment to continuous learning in these crucial areas.

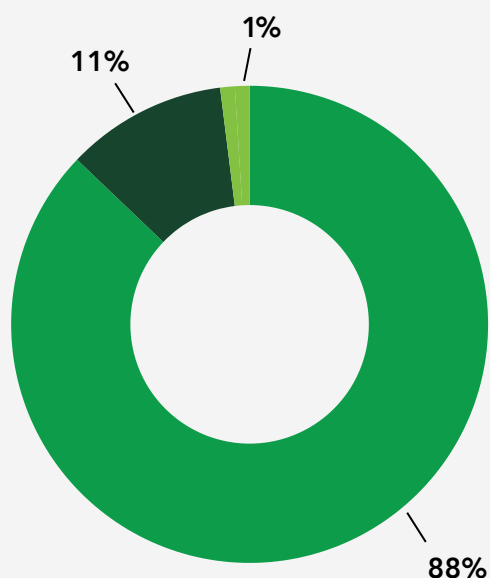
## COLLABORATION

This year EnviroCentre joined an environmental non-profit collaboration with Green Communities Canada called "Acting Together on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization." This collaborative effort ensures our alignment with sector-wide best practices and will culminate in the development of a comprehensive EDII strategy.

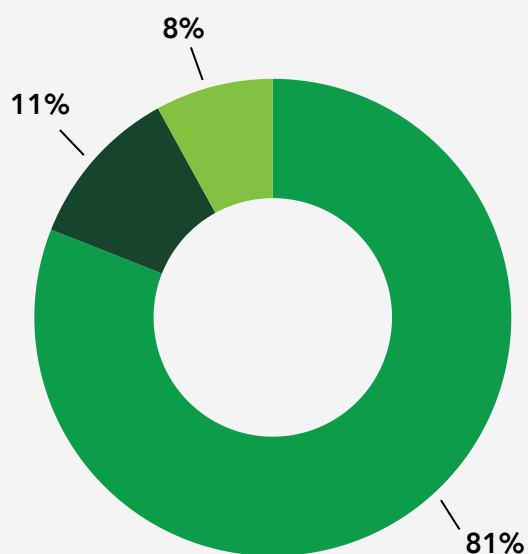




# FINANCIALS



REVENUES	\$	%
Energy Programs	10,187,355	88%
Community Sustainability Programs	1,256,471	11%
Investment and Other Income	159,427	1%
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>11,603,253</b>	<b>100%</b>



EXPENDITURES	\$	%
Energy Programs	8,311,394	81%
Community Sustainability Programs	1,098,923	11%
Corporate and Communications	845,395	8%
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>10,255,712</b>	<b>100%</b>

**enviro**centre

**NET RESULT**

**1,347,541**

# OUR SUPPORTERS

The successes and progress of 2023 would not have been possible without our partners and funders. We thank all those who continue to support EnviroCentre, our projects, and our work.

## FUNDERS



## PARTNERS



# VIEW INTO 2024

2023 was a year of growth, scaling programs, and seeking out new opportunities to engage in climate action across the region. Throughout we remained committed to the identity and priorities of the organization. This meant maintaining a positive and energetic team environment, growing our understanding of equity, building our professional capacities, and rigorously planning to grow our emissions reduction impact.

EnviroCentre is proud of our not-for-profit social enterprise model, a business approach that has provided stability over our 25 years of community service. Our social enterprise approach allows us to deliver top-quality sustainability services while also investing strategically in the strongest climate action approaches available.

In 2024 we are looking forward to leveraging our resources to support emerging climate action through our Strategic Initiatives Reserve Fund. Key projects such as the Retrofit Accelerator, PACE loan delivery, as well as the tree, waste diversion and transportation projects will continue to grow, while we build the organizational capacity required to manage the scale of delivery expected to meet emissions reduction targets over the next two decades. We will be taking a deep dive into the path to dramatic emissions reduction through our project work across Ontario and drilling down into what needs to happen to build the teams that will get us there.

EnviroCentre is getting ready for the coming two decades of intense climate action on the ground, across Canada, and the world. We are ready to meet our friends, partners, and allies around the world, answering the call to action to scale, grow, and act fast.

**We'll see you out there.**

The logo for EnviroCentre, with "enviro" in a dark green color and "centre" in a lighter green color, both in a lowercase sans-serif font.



An aerial photograph of a dense, green forest. A winding road with orange-yellow lane markings curves through the trees. The word "envirocentre" is overlaid in white lowercase letters.

# envirocentre

**This document is available in an accessible format.** Please email us at [communications@envirocentre.ca](mailto:communications@envirocentre.ca) and we will be happy to send it to you.