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Laurier research centre leads new international partnership to address equity and accessibility within climate action planning

WATERLOO – As an increasing number of Canadian municipalities declare climate emergencies and develop comprehensive climate action plans, well-intentioned efforts to mitigate climate change can exacerbate or create social inequities within communities. Researchers at Wilfrid Laurier University are teaming up with stakeholders across Canada and internationally to identify, develop and test innovative and practical approaches to addressing climate change in a manner that is just and equitable for all.

Led by Laurier's [Viessmann Centre for Engagement and Research in Sustainability](#) (VERiS), the project, titled *Toward Just Transitions: A Partnership for Addressing Equity and Accessibility in Municipal Climate Action Planning*, will launch this fall with a series of three online workshops. The workshops will bring together members of equity-seeking groups and the organizations that support them, government representatives, social innovators and academics in an effort to collectively shape and focus research. Confirmed partners for the first phase of the project include the City of Kitchener, Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners, the University of Waterloo, and the African, Caribbean and Black Network of Waterloo Region.

"By bringing together individuals and organizations with such diverse backgrounds and perspectives, we want to transcend disciplines and sectors to find approaches that move our society toward just and sustainable communities," said [Manuel Riemer](#), director of VERiS and the primary investigator for the study. "This exchange is intended to set the foundation for a long-term, international applied research program with a key focus on the Canadian context."

The research team was recently awarded nearly \$25,000 in funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

"The relationships and knowledge being built through this project at the local and international levels are invaluable to the City of Kitchener in supporting innovative approaches to community betterment," said Claire Bennett, corporate sustainability officer at the City of Kitchener. "These complex global challenges can only be achieved with a wide cross-section of voices."

The *Toward Just Transitions* project will build on an existing collaboration between Riemer's team and ClimateActionWR focused on integrating considerations of sustainability justice into Waterloo Region's community climate action plan, as well as a recently established partnership between VERiS, OCAD University, the City of Kitchener and REFOCUS, a not-for-profit co-operative that enables organizations to respond to climate change.

"We are excited to begin exploring opportunities for Kitchener to leverage new, leading-edge management innovations designed to address the increasingly complex and volatile future," said Randy Sa'd, executive director of REFOCUS and co-lead for the partnership.

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The first of three virtual workshops for the Toward Just Transitions project will take place on Sept. 24 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Anyone interested in participating in the workshops or following the project as it progresses is encouraged to contact Riemer at mriemer@wlu.ca or visit the [VERiS website](#) for more information.

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