



Subject: “What We Heard So Far” - Municipal Climate Change Action Plan Community Engagement Update
To: Corporate and Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: February 5, 2025
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Summary

The Municipality of East Hants (“East Hants” or the “Municipality”) is updating the 2013 Municipal Climate Change Action Plan (“MCCAP”). The MCCAP Update will look at how prepared the Municipality is for climate and weather events, explore options for responding to risks, and suggest actions to make the community and municipality more weather-wise and climate-prepared.

The MCCAP Update involves cross-departmental collaboration, and is led by Corporate Services.

The goal of the MCCAP Update - what staff are branding the “Roadmap to Resilience” - is to help East Hants lessen climate and extreme weather risks. This will be achieved through an internal risk assessment process facilitated across all service areas. It will be completed in concert with the upcoming Plan Review, compliment and strengthen emergency management risk assessment processes, and align with Infrastructure and Operations planning.

The prioritization of climate hazard risks, identification of risk impacts, and ideas for action will be informed not only through staff workshops, research, and partnerships with subject matter experts, but also through community engagement.

In *preparation* for the MCCAP update and more thorough community engagement in 2026, staff conducted a preliminary General Public Survey (Survey) in fall 2025. The Survey aimed to establish a baseline understanding of:

- What climate risks residents are most concerned about;
- How ready households feel for extreme weather events; and
- What actions residents would support the Municipality taking to reduce these risks.

The attached “What We Heard So Far” report summarizes the results from the Survey. By analyzing the demographics of *who* responded, we now know where forthcoming engagement efforts need to be focused to ensure the MCCAP Update is representative of our entire population. As well, the survey results connect climate data to lived experiences and will help to ensure the relevance of the MCCAP Update for our communities.

The next phase of engagement (2026) will include, but not be limited to, conversations with youth, the business community, community service partners working with vulnerable populations, and community groups.

A final “What We Heard” report will include all engagement activities from 2025 *and* 2026, and will be included as an appendix in the MCCAP Update, to be brought to Council later in 2026/27.

Financial Impact Statement

There are no immediate financial impacts with this report. Engagement activities completed to-date were accomplished with existing resources: staff time, Survey Monkey subscription, website platform, and basic office supplies.

Recommended Motion

Corporate and Residential Services Committee recommends that Council receive as information the What We Heard So Far Report dated January 2026, which summarizes the results of engagement activities conducted in 2025 as part of the Municipal Climate Change Action Plan Update.

Background

Natural hazards and extreme weather events are expected to become more frequent and more severe as a result of human-driven climate change. Through climate-informed planning and adaptive management, the Municipality can better anticipate these risks, protect infrastructure, strengthen emergency response and public safety, and support long-term economic and social resilience.

Climate change and weather events do not affect all residents equally. Some groups may be more vulnerable and face greater challenges during extreme heat, flooding, wildfire smoke, or prolonged power outages caused by storms. For this reason, the MCCAP Update must consider how climate risks interact with social and demographic factors across the community.

To support this work, staff have developed, and started to implement, a community engagement approach that emphasizes equity and inclusivity, supports meaningful and ongoing dialogue, and builds trust and shared responsibility. This engagement will help ensure residents can contribute ideas and solutions that reflect local needs and priorities.

This inclusive and engagement approach also strengthens East Hants' ability to access Provincial and Federal funding, as demonstrating meaningful community input is often a key requirement in climate-related funding applications.

GENERAL PUBLIC SURVEY

Approach and Methodology

The General Public Survey was live between September 25th and November 30th, 2025.

To support accessibility and inclusion, the survey was designed in alignment with the Municipality's *Accessible East Hants Plan* and the *Equitable East Hants Plan*. It used plain, neutral, and culturally sensitive language, included multiple options for personal identification questions, and allowed residents to respond in different ways (online, print, etc.).

The survey was promoted through the East Hants website, social media, municipal communications, and printed flyers at events such as the Household Hazardous Waste and Paper Shred Days.

The survey included both multiple-choice and open-ended questions to gather broad and detailed feedback from the community.

Demographic Highlights

The General Public Survey received 323 responses, representing approximately 1.4% of East Hants' population. Responses were received from all East Hants districts. Key demographic highlights include:

- 65% of respondents were 45 years or older
- 63% of respondents were women

- While participation from Indigenous, racialized, gender-diverse communities, and persons with disabilities was limited, the survey results indicate their perspectives were captured in proportions similar to the broader community.

More information is provided in the attached “*What We Heard So Far*” report.

It is important to note that survey results reflect the perspectives of participants and may not fully reflect the views of all East Hants residents, including districts and/or demographics that were underrepresented. The findings shared in the report should be interpreted as a snapshot of early engagement, rather than a statistically representative assessment of community-wide opinion.

Response Highlights

The attached “*What We Heard So Far*” report summarizes key themes, but does not include results from every survey question asked - its purpose is to provide an overview of the main findings and trends from early engagement activities. Staff will review and consider all responses in full, to be reflected in the final “*What We Hear*” report, and in the recommended actions included in the MCCAP Update.

One of the goals of engagement is to understand early perceptions of climate risk in East Hants. Key survey results include:

- 76% of respondents are “concerned” or “very concerned” about climate change.
- 70% of respondents are motivated to take action, and want the Municipality to do so too.
- 34% of respondents feel prepared to protect their homes and communities from climate and weather impacts.
- The top climate risk concerns are:
 - Drought, with 74% of respondents ranking it as a top concern
 - Wildfire, with 62% of respondents ranking it as a top concern
 - Ecosystem Shifts, with 37% of respondents ranking it as a top concern
 - Inland Flooding, with 33% of respondents ranking it as a top concern

Another goal of engagement was to understand what actions the community would like to see. Respondents are interested in:

- Protecting natural assets, such as forests, wetlands, wildlife habitats and greenspaces, and using “green and blue” infrastructure to help manage stormwater and reduce heat.
- Protecting and conserving water, in relation to quality and supply.
- Accessing information and increasing education, including online maps and public information sessions.
- Improving energy efficiency, with the Municipality leading by example with energy-efficient building upgrades, and support for clean energy through programs like PACE.

More information is provided in the attached “*What We Heard So Far*” report.

Discussion

Review of engagement results received to-date has shown which geographic areas of the Municipality and which community groups are not yet fully represented in the climate conversation. Understanding these gaps is critical to ensuring that future engagement is inclusive and meaningful.

The demographic data and early findings will help guide the next phase of engagement in 2026. This includes identifying specific groups to involve, and tailoring outreach strategies to reach younger residents and other equity-deserving populations. Staff are actively scheduling facilitated discussions with specific groups and service providers, looking at opportunities to be more present in communities, and are in collaboration with the Clean Foundation to conduct youth-centered programming in local schools.

Insights from these activities will directly inform the development of the MCCAP Update, helping the Municipality prioritize adaptive actions that are both effective and aligned with how residents live and work. The results will also be used to:

- Inform risk assessments for infrastructure, emergency response, and community well-being;
- Identify innovative solutions and community-participatory initiatives;
- Strengthen funding applications; and
- Monitor and evaluate progress overtime.

By using engagement findings to shape planning and decision-making, the MCCAP Update will be more credible, equitable, and actionable, reflecting the diverse needs and priorities of East Hants residents.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Updating the MCCAP supports East Hants' key strategies:

- Sustainable Infrastructure - by informing resilient infrastructure investments.
- Corporate Excellence - by embedding climate considerations into planning and operations.
- Strong Community - by empowering residents and supporting community well-being through climate action.
- Economic Prosperity - by identifying opportunities for innovation, local growth, and risk reduction.

Community engagement is an important part of this work, reflecting the Municipality's values of being responsive, transparent, and accountable, and supporting informed, sustainable decision-making.

Attachments

"What We Heard So Far" Report