



Subject: *2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey*
To: Corporate and Residential Services Committee
Date Prepared: January 14, 2026
Related Motions:
Prepared by: Galen MacLeod, Business Development Officer
Graham Scott, Manager of Economic and Business Development

Approved by: Adam Clarkson, Director of Corporate Services

Summary

The 2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey was a collaboration between East Hants Economic and Business Development Division and the East Hants Chamber of Commerce. This was a project identified through Council's Strategic Plan as part of growing Economic Prosperity and working to attract, retain, and support businesses and was also identified in Council's Economic Development Plan as part of Objective 2 to Support Local Businesses. By gathering and analyzing information on the local business climate both organizations will be able to use this information to work towards improving factors and services that support business. This project was part of the Department's 2025 approved business plan.

The Business Climate Survey provides a snapshot of the local business environment. The Survey focused on gathering information on business characteristics, recent performance, future outlook, and key challenges. The survey asked participants 41 questions across five categories: Business Characteristics, Performance and Outlook, Trade and Supply Chain, Labour Market, and Technology and Connectivity.

Going forward this survey will be delivered annually. This will enable monitoring of the local business climate over time and will help to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges for the business community.

Financial Impact Statement

There is no financial impact associated with the report.

Recommendation

This report is present for information purposes.

Recommended Motion

This report is present for information purposes.

Background

The 2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey was a collaboration between East Hants Economic and Business Development Division and the East Hants Chamber of Commerce. The Survey was delivered in 2025 and was

accessible to all businesses and not-for-profits in East Hants. Postal codes were gathered as part of the survey to verify operations within East Hants. 76 local businesses or not-for-profits voluntarily completed the survey. This response rate is representative of 11.5% of all registered and established businesses and not-for-profits in the Municipality (Statistics Canada, Business Establishment Counts, July 2026).

East Hants Economic and Business Development Division partnered with the East Hants Chamber of Commerce to conduct this business survey to gain further insight into the local business environment and help guide future efforts to support and grow the business community.

The 2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey - Summary Report (attached) presents a selection of the questions and responses contained in the Business Climate Survey. The report focuses on providing insight into the local business community, the characteristics of the businesses that operate in the Municipality, their operations, their challenges, and their outlook on the future.

Discussion

Results from the 2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey highlight a resilient and entrepreneurial business community with a generally positive outlook. While cost pressures, labour challenges, and other business factors continue to affect operations, businesses remain confident and adaptable. Key findings of the Survey are summarized below:

- The local economy is driven primarily by small businesses with fewer than five employees and has a diverse and healthy mix of ownership and operational models.
- Businesses are largely stable and confident in future growth but remain cautious due to rising costs and external pressures.
- Local businesses identified cellphone and internet services, housing availability and affordability, taxes (Federal, Provincial, and Municipal), and the availability of commercial land and buildings as key factors or services that need improvement in the region.
- Rising wages, benefit costs, and employee turnover remain key concerns. However, many businesses are actively providing training for employees and the business to build resiliency.
- Businesses show strong adoption of core technologies and openness to innovation, while current internet and cellphone connection challenges are impacting operations and efficiency.
- Tariffs, duties, and regulations are expected to be some of the biggest challenges in the future for businesses.

Understanding the opportunities and challenges local business are facing will help to inform and shape future efforts in business support. Aggregated data and analysis from this survey will be shared publicly and used by both organizations.

The attached summary report presents a selection of the questions and responses contained in the Business Climate Survey. The report focuses on providing insight into the local business community, the characteristics of the businesses that operate in the Municipality, their operations, their challenges, and their outlook on the future.

Attachments

2025 East Hants Business Climate Survey - Summary Report