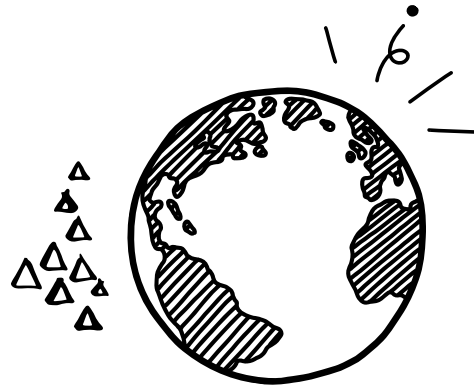


Report Outline



1. Project story

2. What we heard

2.1 Cross-cutting themes

2.2 What climate impacts are we seeing in the municipality?

2.3 Climate actions we want to see

- Slowing climate change
- Preparing for climate change

2.4 Key questions

3. What this means

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Appendix: Banner content and questions for each engagement



Project Story

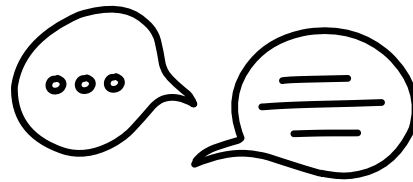
HalifACT: Acting on Climate Together is one of the most ambitious climate action plans in Canada. It is our community response to the climate crisis. The plan was informed by consultation with key stakeholders and the public in 2019. In the winter and spring of 2023, the HalifACT team and the Climate Strategy team of Halifax Public Libraries collaborated on a three-part series of pop-up community engagements in library branches across the Halifax Regional Municipality to learn how people are currently experiencing climate change, what questions they have and what climate actions matter to them.

The in-branch pop-ups were set up in all 14 library branches for at least one week. Each pop-up included a pull-up banner with information about an aspect of climate change and a board with questions on it, which members of the public could respond to with sticky notes. For people who could not participate in-branch, there was a survey on the Shape Your City website. The municipality and the library's social media accounts were used to invite people to visit the branches and the survey.

After each engagement, the overall themes were shared in 'What We Heard' documents on the Halifax Public Libraries website. Key learnings and quotes were displayed on digital screens in each library branch. The library's resource page for climate action was updated after each engagement to include content that responded to questions from the public engagements.



What we heard



2.1 Cross-cutting themes

Certain themes appeared across each of the three engagement sessions. Outlined below are some of the main preoccupations residents shared when asked probing questions about the effects of climate change and the actions that could be taken to address it.

AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS

Regardless of the questions asked in the three engagements, residents expressed concerns with affordability and access to climate actions. From heating and cooling homes, to renewable energy, to public transit and electric vehicles, residents insisted that they need to be able to afford controlling the temperature of their homes, they need equitable access to electricity and they need to be able to easily travel throughout the municipality in a way that is not carbon-intensive.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Residents of the municipality have a keen understanding of the role that corporations play in the production of greenhouse gas emissions and want to see the for-profit sector taking responsibility for climate action. Residents across library branches asked what the municipality is doing to hold corporations accountable for their contributions to the climate crisis.

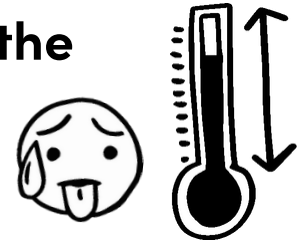
COMMUNITY GARDENS AND LOCAL FOOD

Food security and having a more local and sustainable food system are important to residents. Residents expressed a desire for more public education and resources, including community gardens so that people can grow their own food. Several residents also emphasized the positive environmental impact of going vegan.

PROTECT AND RESPECT NATURE

In every engagement session, residents voiced concerns about the municipality cutting down trees and insisted that we “save our trees.” It was also very common to see people express their sense that aquatic ecosystems like wetlands were not being protected enough. Residents proposed proactive solutions like tree planting, rain gardens and rainwater collection systems.

2.2 What climate impacts are we seeing in the municipality?



DRY AND HOT

“It becomes difficult to work for weeks at a time due to heat.”

Quote from resident

Residents are noticing that it is a lot drier in the municipality throughout the year due to a lack of rain and snow. Wells and lakes have very low water levels, with some residents reporting that their wells are entirely dry.

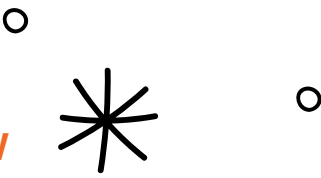
In terms of the effects of increasing temperatures, residents are noticing changes to growing seasons in the municipality. The growing season is longer and the frost is coming later in the fall. Plants are blooming and trees are budding at unusual times of year. Residents are noting that because of hot, dry conditions, plants are not growing as expected and can be hard to grow at all.

Because of increasing temperatures, animals are more common in the winter months than they have been in the past. Birds do not appear to be migrating as usual and ticks are more common.

“Dry Spells, Dry Wells”

Quote from resident

LITTLE TO NO SNOW



“There used to be snowbanks taller than my head. Now we are lucky to get snow taller than my boot.”

Quote from resident

Winters are warmer than they used to be, and as a result the people we engaged with across library branches are noticing there is a lack of snow. Residents also shared that there was no ice skating during the winter and not enough ice in inlets to fish.

MORE UNPREDICTABLE AND DESTRUCTIVE WEATHER

“In our community garden we are consistently seeing damage from extreme weather events.”

Quote from resident

Participants talked about the increasingly common “volatile weather” they’re seeing and the fact that storms are more frequent and more destructive than in the past. In their experience, storm surges are causing worse flooding and road washouts, higher winds are now more common across all seasons and hurricanes are occurring with more frequency and intensity than ever. Some residents pointed out that these phenomena are causing coastal erosion and bank erosion in lakes.



2.3 Climate actions we want to see

Slowing climate change

A notable trend in the data was a strong association between “modal shift,” or changing the way that transportation happens in the municipality, and climate action. Many respondents said we need to reduce our reliance on cars and that we need a clear plan for achieving this transition.

CONVENIENT, AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE BUS SERVICE

“As someone who uses the bus every day, getting to university by bus is barely accessible to a large part of HRM”

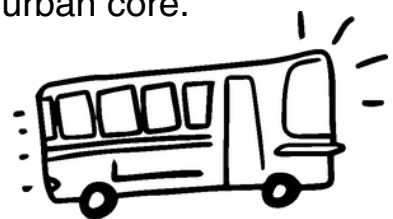
Quote from resident

“Reliable and accessible transit for all of HRM! Reliable please! (It still isn’t so I can’t take it.)”

Quote from resident

Residents asked for improved public transit across the municipality, stating that they want to use the bus system, but they do not because the transit system is currently unreliable and unaffordable.

Many people think that communities would benefit from a rapid transit system to prevent buses from getting stuck in traffic. Participants suggested bus-only streets, light rail, streetcars and subways to solve this issue. Respondents also suggested forward-thinking fixes for the problem of rural and urban areas being disconnected from each other, including a system like GO Transit in Ontario. One resident in Musquodoboit Harbour, for example, asked for an affordable shuttle to get to “at least Dartmouth” so that they can access the urban core.

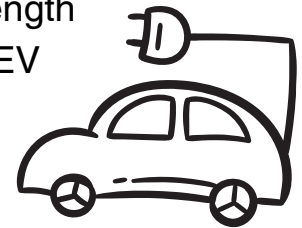




ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Many residents think that electric vehicles (EVs) are not a solution to the abundance of fossil-fueled cars, and that marketing EVs is a form of “greenwashing.” Concerns included the environmental impact of using a coal-powered grid to power EVs and the exploitative labour and environmental practices involved in the mining of lithium.

While there was support for the use of EVs and a desire for all cars to be made electric, people conveyed the sense that some important barriers, like affordability and the availability of charging stations, stand in the way of making the switch happen. Still, people expressed curiosity about things like the length of time it takes to charge an EV’s battery and what happens to EV batteries at the end of their lifespan.



GREEN THE GRID AWAY FROM COAL

“Get off coal and electrify!”

Quote from resident

As we shift to electric solutions, residents want to “green the grid” and shift away from coal-powered energy to renewable sources of electricity. Ideas included publicly-owned renewable energy like solar and wind, and district energy systems that could power affordable housing.

ACCESSIBLE RENEWABLE ENERGY

Residents want more government assistance and intervention to guarantee that renewable energy is easy to access for everyone. Suggestions included incentives to switch private homes to solar energy and renewable energy rebates.

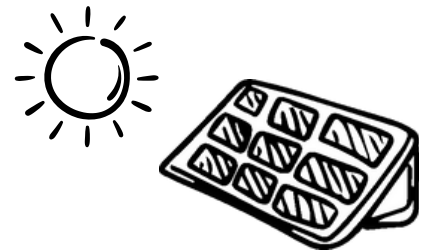
Solar City helps make renewable energy accessible for homeowners in the Halifax region. Find out more at halifax.ca/solarcity.

IMPROVED WALKING AND BIKING INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants were invested in the idea of better walking and biking infrastructure that is adequately maintained (especially during the winter), properly lit and connected to schools. They want more connected multi-use pathways with maps and signage, and widely available safe cycling routes.

Another key area of concern that respondents identified was walkability in rural communities. More sidewalks and paths are needed in these areas to allow for safe active transportation.

Preparing for climate change



ACCESS TO HEATING

“Are we going to see lower heating costs?”

Quote from resident

Residents are concerned with being able to afford heating their homes in the winter months with a heating system that can handle extremely low temperatures. Some residents are struggling to balance heating their homes affordably and finding the most “environmentally friendly” way to do it. They are also frustrated that rebates for heat pumps take a long time to process.

ACCESS TO COOLING

“Is there a way to have AC that is powered by renewables?”

Quote from resident

Participants discussed how they need accessible air conditioning and heat pumps to keep cool in the increasingly hot summer months. It was noted that this access is especially important for vulnerable populations as temperatures rise.



STORM PREPAREDNESS

“Electricity outages are very common.... Please do something about that.”

Quote from resident

Residents expressed the need for a plan to adapt to the increasing number of hurricanes and serious storms. They emphasized the need for access to backup power sources in an emergency and the need for community shelters during hurricane season. There was a clear sense in the feedback that residents need to be able to access information on climate adaptation and resilience. These resources were seen as potentially life-saving.

It is important to note that these engagements took place before the wildfires of May 2023 and flash flooding of August 2023. These concerns are likely even more prominent now that we have experienced disasters made worse by climate change that displaced thousands in the municipality.



2.4 Key questions raised by residents

What are the municipality and other levels of the government doing to fight climate change?

- Where have we succeeded in making change?
- Where is the money from taxes going?
- Are governments and officials being held responsible for all the harm from fossil fuel consumption and environmental pollution they permit?
- Are we moving away from focusing on individual action to create immediate change at the systemic level of cities, provinces and the country as a whole?

What can I do? / How can I get involved?

Some concerned residents wanted to know how to make their communities more aware of climate change and bring people who are not already aware into the conversation about climate. Some residents wanted to know if there are individual steps or actions that can counteract climate change.

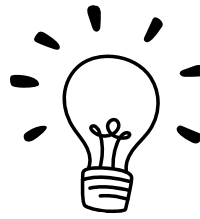
Is it too late?

Residents admitted they are afraid that there is now not enough time to make the changes needed to prevent the worst effects of climate change. They communicated their feelings of heartbreak in response to the present and future impacts of climate change both locally and globally.

There was a deep concern among participants that leaders are not acting urgently enough to address the crisis.



What this means



The public feedback outlined above indicates that residents are concerned about climate impacts and would like to see more public investment in equitable climate action. Residents are trying to do their part to reduce their emissions, but encounter barriers such as inconvenient transit service or unsafe active transportation infrastructure. Residents also feel limited in the scope and impact of their individual actions and want to know what governments and businesses are doing to achieve change at the systemic level.

The results of the community engagement show that more opportunities for meaningful dialogue between government, industry and local communities around climate action are needed.

On the topic of natural areas and local food, significant concern and care was expressed for the municipality's natural areas, including forests, wetlands, lakes, parks and community gardens. This presents an opportunity for municipal environment specialists to engage with community members about existing programs like LakeWatchers. More program funding may be needed to help protect and promote the health of our natural areas.

There was interest in gardening and buying local food to help reduce “food miles” and to build community connection. This presents an opportunity for further engagement around local food and community gardens. With some library branches providing kitchens and community gardens already (e.g. the Sackville Public Library), there is an opportunity for and potential interest in additional programming that focuses on food, resilient food systems and climate change.

In terms of sustainable transportation, many questions and concerns were received regarding electric vehicles, transit service and active

transportation routes. The volume of questions and concerns with electric vehicles shows the need to better engage local communities regarding the Municipal EV Strategy. Questions and concerns were also expressed about the reliability and convenience of transit service, with particular emphasis on transit improvements for rural areas. The lack of safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, especially in rural areas, was also raised as a concern.

These transportation-related concerns mean that more opportunities for two-way dialogue are needed to fully understand how the municipality can address issues. The feedback received is being shared with other departments to facilitate this process.

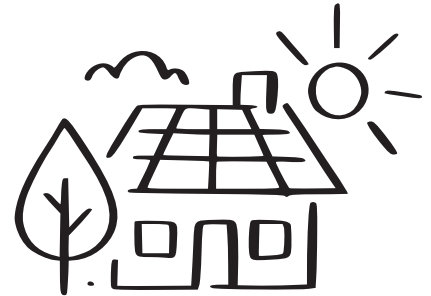
As noted above, residents want more government assistance and intervention to provide access to renewable energy. There are currently incentive programs to support renewable energy, including the Municipal Solar City Program which helps citizens install rooftop solar collectors. This feedback demonstrates support for initiatives like Solar City and indicates that incentives are an area the municipality could explore and develop further.

Finally, the many questions received about how the Climate Action Tax is being spent suggests that more public communication is needed to clarify the Environment and Climate Change department's budget expenditures.



Where we want to go

The data received through this engagement means that residents are concerned about climate change and show support for the municipality taking action to reduce emissions and help prepare for climate impacts.



Environment & Climate Change staff will be sharing the feedback received with other municipal departments, so that public input can inform their projects and related communications. Public feedback will be shared with the department of Public Works, the Integrated Mobility Planning (IMP) team, Halifax Transit and the JustFOOD planning team.

Public input will also be shared with existing climate leaders through a “road show” style presentation taken to various groups. These include member organizations of the HalifACT Network, Library Senior Management, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources & Renewables (NSDNRR) and members of the JustFOOD network.

Clear communication is needed about the relationships between local systems, like our transportation system and food system. Six major areas of outreach are pictured on the next page of this report. These will be the primary audiences for sharing what we heard from these engagement sessions.







More collaboration between Halifax Public Libraries and HalifACT to encourage community engagement with the climate crisis will take place as a result of this project. Events and workshops that focus on local climate actions and impacts are being planned to provide opportunities for dialogue and community connection. For example, the EV test drive outreach project could include more information related to battery recycling, resource extraction and charging stations to create space for open dialogue around the benefits and drawbacks of going electric.

Public feedback and input will be used to inform future communications and programming both for the HalifACT team and Halifax Public Libraries. You can learn more about what's happening at [HalifACT & the Library's Climate Engagement | Halifax Public Libraries](#)



Banner content and questions for each engagement

Banner Text: All engagements

In response to the climate crisis, the Halifax Regional Municipality has adopted an ambitious climate action plan - HalifACT: Acting on Climate Together. HalifACT lays out how we'll reduce emissions, switch to clean and reliable energy sources, grow our green economy, and show leadership from local government.

Halifax Public Libraries and HalifACT are partnering to learn from you. We are committed to making deep change, but success relies on all of us being supported to engage and take action.

We need to learn about how you are experiencing impacts of climate change already and what you need to take action and thrive in a changing climate. We will share what we hear from you and use your feedback to create climate resources, programs and supports for effective climate action.

Engagement 1: Climate 101

The devastation caused by Hurricane Fiona in September was an alarming reminder of the growing climate crisis. Climate change poses risks for people, buildings, nature, economies, livelihoods, and safety. There is an urgent need for all of us to take action to fight climate change (mitigation) and prepare for climate impacts (adaptation).

Appendix

Engagement Questions:

How are you seeing climate change in your community? Winter? Spring? Fall? Summer? What do you want to know about climate action?

Engagement 2: Slowing Climate Change

Banner text:

We can slow climate change by reducing the amount of carbon we're putting into our atmosphere by changing how we produce and use energy. **NOW IS THE TIME.** Halifax is taking action by moving to:

- Green energy sources
- Zero emission buses and fleet vehicles
- Low carbon (net zero) municipal buildings and more

Government and companies play a big role and so can you by decisions you make every day. Slowing (mitigation) and preparing for (adaptation) climate change are two important parts of taking climate action. Mitigation reduces harm while adaptation prepares us for the effects of climate change.

Engagement Questions:

What do you think will help slow climate change?

Electric vehicles and charging stations?

Public transit?

Walking and cycling routes?

Green buildings?

Renewable energy



Engagement 3: Preparing for Climate Change

Banner text:

Preparing for climate change will help us adapt, protect ourselves and our communities and respond to climate impacts. Heatwaves, wildfires, flooding, hurricanes and blizzards can lead to power outages, damage to buildings, roads, communications equipment, and water / wastewater systems. Supply chains may be interrupted, making it difficult to get everyday products and materials. People we love may experience physical and mental health impacts increasing demand on emergency services. Financial impacts may reduce our collective ability to respond effectively. By planning ahead and working together we can strengthen our communities, ecosystems and economy and be ready for the events that climate change brings.

Engagement Question:

What do you need to feel prepared for the impacts of climate change?



HALIFAX