



Environmental Goals and Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth:

What We Heard Report

Disclaimer

The following report was prepared by the Clean Foundation. Findings and opinions expressed in this report are those of respondents and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Clean Foundation or the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2021

**Environmental Goals and Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth:
What We Heard Report**

Department of Environment and Climate Change
October 2021

ISBN: 978-1-77448-245-2

Contents

- Executive Summary 1
- Introduction 6
- Focus Area 1 – Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity 9
- Focus Area 2 – Cleaner Energy 15
- Focus Area 3 – Climate Change 26
- Focus Area 4 – Circular Economy 29
- Focus Area 5 – Inclusive Economy 35
- Focus Area 6 – Natural Assets & Biodiversity 40

Executive Summary

Negative environmental impacts are no longer 'a could happen' in Nova Scotia, they are already being felt. Like others across the globe, we are witnessing the impacts of climate change. As part of Nova Scotia's response, the province has developed environmental goals and is creating a new climate plan. Together, the goals and plan will serve as a roadmap to a cleaner and healthier place for all Nova Scotians.

The Clean Foundation was contracted by Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change to host a public engagement process between May 27 and July 26, 2021. The purpose was to ask Nova Scotians what should be considered as new environmental goals and what should be included in the new climate plan. The engagement was mostly online to comply with public health guidelines. The feedback in this report is organized around six focus areas:

1. **Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity** - the demonstration of leadership in sustainable prosperity;
2. **Cleaner Energy** - the support of the transition to cleaner energy, more sustainable sources for electricity generation, improved energy efficiency and cleaner transportation;
3. **Climate Change** - climate change mitigation and adaptation;
4. **Circular Economy** - the creation of conditions supporting a circular economy;
5. **Inclusive Economy** - the creation of conditions supporting an inclusive economy; and
6. **Natural Assets and Biodiversity** – the conservation and sustainable use of natural assets and support for biodiversity.

Nova Scotians provided feedback by participating in virtual workshops, sending emails, uploading content or answering questions on cleanfuture.ca, leaving voicemails, submitting ideas by mail, and engaging in discussions on an interactive online platform. In total, 1,478 individuals and organizations responded, 136 people attended workshops, and 1,342 submissions containing more than 5,600 individual ideas were shared.

Overarching Themes

Nova Scotians know climate change is real and is affecting the things we care about – our lands and coastlines, our natural resources and biodiversity, our food systems, our homes, communities, and businesses. Many respondents told us they are afraid of what the future will bring, especially for future generations and for those who are most at-risk – those experiencing low incomes, are physically or mentally unwell, and those who have been excluded from full participation in society due to ongoing systemic racism and discrimination.

With the fear we heard anger, frustration, and impatience at the pace of change to date. As much as we can cite our province's success in areas like cutting greenhouse gas emissions, protecting land and managing waste, Nova Scotians know how much more we have to do. We cannot rest on our past accomplishments; we must act quickly and decisively because our future depends on it.

There was also concern expressed with the process, the Act, and the overall direction that Government is charting. Respondents worried having an online engagement left out those without reliable computer or internet access. There was concern that the timeline was too short, that the engagement was not promoted as widely as it should have been, and that the global pandemic may have reduced Nova Scotians' ability to focus on the engagement amongst so many other concerns. We appreciate the honest feedback and will use it to continuously improve future engagements.

Nova Scotians also wanted to know if the engagement was meaningful. Would their input truly be heard and reflected in the goals that are created and the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth? Would government be as brave and bold as is needed respond to the climate change emergency or would partisan politics get in the way? Would this process result in real action, or just more reports? Will the government be transparent and accountable in this process, but also in the implementation, measurement and reporting on progress toward goals and under the Plan? Would it set real targets and abide by them?

Despite concerns, the feelings we are left with most strongly are those of deep hopefulness, inspiration, and gratitude. No one is giving up. Nova Scotians know what we need to do, and they are ready to roll up their sleeves to do it. They want to be part of the solution. They can see so much promise on the horizon, not only to take meaningful action to stem environmental perils, but to use this time of disruption as an opportunity to build back better. They shared visions of a better future born from the way we respond to the challenges of today. They asked if the time has finally come to re-examine what we mean by “economic growth” and “sustainable prosperity”, and to imbue those concepts with ideas that put the well-being of people and the planet first. They see the chance to break down systemic racism and discrimination, to reduce income inequality and to ensure that all Nova Scotians live affordably in healthy, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Focus Area 1: Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity

There was underlying sentiment from most respondents that 'all roads taken' by government, businesses, organizations, and the public should help lead Nova Scotia to sustainable prosperity.

For this to happen, respondents suggested we need to start with education and retraining opportunities and through fostering an appreciation for our environment and generating general awareness of the effects of climate change. There were calls to end inequality of wealth distribution so that a vast majority of the province's wealth is not held by a small minority of the population. Respondents told us that for us to move forward towards a path of sustainable prosperity it is imperative that strong governance and policy are in place such as supporting the Coastal Protection Act. It was felt that combating climate change will not be possible without first ensuring existing, and current, laws and policies have an environmental lens. Improved compliance with all existing policy and legislation will be key to making sure everyone is in alignment with our province's shared goals. Recommendations were made to establish an Environment Equity Working Group in 2021 to help review and address inequities in climate action. Many felt the measurement of our goals, and the climate actions we take collectively, will be key to ensuring we are making the right choices for our future sustainable prosperity.

Focus Area 2: Cleaner Energy

There was strong support for the current goal of 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's electricity coming from renewable resources by 2030. There was also general alignment that achieving a net-zero future requires substantial increases in building energy efficiency in tandem with a decarbonized electricity grid and significant electrification of our built environment and transportation sectors. There was particular concern for homeowners experiencing low incomes and those living in communities that have been marginalized due to systemic racism, and for whom the clean energy transition will be especially challenging without government support. Other themes included: changes to regulatory oversight over the electricity system, enhancing regional collaboration between the Atlantic provinces around energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy development and storage, increasing opportunities for district energy systems and community-owned energy projects, and increasing municipal capacity to develop innovative community-based clean energy projects.

Focus Area 3: Climate Change

Because of the overlap between the Climate Change and Cleaner Energy focus areas, respondents provided similar ideas under both headings. Ideas relating to electricity generation, improved energy efficiency and transportation were captured under the cleaner energy heading. Most feedback focused on ways to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Many respondents supported the goal of achieving net-zero by 2050 and advocated strategies to lower emissions like changing personal behaviours, tightening industrial regulations, and updating Nova Scotia's cap-and-trade program. There was particular concern that the new goals and the Climate Change Plan include robust accountability processes to ensure regular evaluation and revision of goals if targets are not met. Many respondents also signalled the importance of viewing climate change policy through an equity lens, as marginalized residents and communities and individuals experiencing low-income are at higher risk from climate change impacts.

Focus Area 4: Circular Economy

Key themes included greater investment in research and development, incentives for businesses aligned with circular economy principles, and education and awareness for consumers. There was strong support for reducing the provincial solid waste disposal rate by 50 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030 and achieving zero plastic waste by 2030. Two ideas with broad support were expanding bans on single-use plastics and enhancing Nova Scotia's extended producer responsibility (EPR) framework to include paper and packaging, mattresses, mercury-containing lamps, lithium batteries, sharps (needles), propane cylinders, and other difficult-to-manage hazardous household wastes. Respondents also highlighted the confusion around different sorting rules across the province as a barrier to improving solid waste diversion rates. They called for uniform sorting rules for the whole province and the streamlining of curbside pick-up programs to help realize efficiencies for municipalities.

Focus Area 5: Inclusive Economy

Respondents wanted equal opportunities and services available to all Nova Scotians. Some of the recommendations were: including Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian history in the school curriculum, ensuring all communities across the province have access to the same level of education, providing free post secondary education, eliminating bias in hiring processes, and supporting people as they transition into the clean economy. Affordable housing being available for all was another common theme. Communities should represent a mixture of ages, income, genders, and races who all interact to support each other. Everyone should have easy local access to food no matter their income or employment status.

Focus Area 6: Natural Assets and Biodiversity

Most of the respondents who commented on this focus area felt that appropriate action must be taken to help save and protect our land, biodiversity, our coastlands, and waters. There were calls of support around investing in sustainable forestry measures, looking to the Mi'kmaq for advice and guidance gained from their traditional, cultural, and historical knowledge of the land. There were calls to ban open-pen fin fish farms and agricultural practices that tend to pollute and to find more cleaner and sustainable options. There were multiple submissions from respondents that emphasized the need to implement the Lahey Report immediately, to restore the Biodiversity Act to its original intent, and to reverse the sale of Owls Head Provincial Park along with implementing other legislation that aims to protect our natural resources and help strengthen our actions against climate change.

Introduction

Process Overview

The Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Climate Change worked with the Clean Foundation to host a public engagement between May 27 and July 26, 2021. The purpose was to ask Nova Scotians what should be included as new environmental goals and what should be included in the province's new climate plan. The engagement was mostly online due to the ongoing concerns around the COVID-19 pandemic.

The public engagement included different ways to participate. Respondents could join one of seven English workshops or one French workshop over Zoom. They could share their ideas online via email, upload documents or answer questions on the cleanfuture.ca website (French: cleanfoundation.ca/fr) or post on the engagement site. Respondents also had the option to leave a voicemail message at a toll-free number or mail their comments in.

The engagement process was organized around six focus areas:

1. **Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity** – the demonstration of leadership in sustainable prosperity;
2. **Cleaner Energy** – the support of the transition to cleaner energy, more sustainable sources for electricity generation, improved energy efficiency and cleaner transportation;
3. **Climate Change** – climate change mitigation and adaptation;
4. **Circular Economy** – the creation of conditions supporting a circular economy;
5. **Inclusive Economy** – the creation of conditions supporting an inclusive economy; and
6. **Natural Assets and Biodiversity** – the conservation and sustainable use of natural assets and support for biodiversity.

In total, 1,478 individuals and organizations responded. We received 1,342 submissions from respondents and had 136 respondents join us in the online workshops. Of the submissions we received, 167 of them were form letters. Overall, there were more than 5,600 individual ideas shared through these feedback mechanisms. We heard from individuals, academics, community groups, non-profit organizations, industry associations, municipalities, universities, and private businesses. Most comments were received via the website, followed by email (Table 1). Prior to and during the engagement period, the Department of Environment and Climate Change also held an additional 31 meetings with stakeholders.

Table 1: Summary of submissions by mode.

Mode	Number of Submissions
Website: short-form answers, comments & uploads	899
Email	385
Engagement via engagecleanfuture.ca	44
Voicemail	13
Mail	1
Total	1,342

There were eight virtual workshops, held using Zoom, where respondents were able to share their ideas and thoughts on the two public engagement questions:

- 1) What does success look like, and
- 2) What can we do to encourage change?

Respondents' feedback was captured live using Jamboard, a digital interactive whiteboard. A summary of the number of attendees for each workshop is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of virtual workshops participation.

Workshop Topic	Registered	Attended	Workshop Date
All Focus Areas (English)	56	22	10-June-21
Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity	22	14	13-June-21
Natural Assets and Biodiversity	41	16	17-June-21
Cleaner Energy	61	22	22-June-21
Climate Change	63	26	24-June-21
Circular Economy	65	18	06-July-21
Inclusive Economy	49	9	08-July-21
All Focus Areas (French)	22	9	13-July-21
Totals	379	136	

It was truly a privilege to listen to our fellow Nova Scotians. The comments we read and the discussions we listened to were moving and inspiring. We were impressed by the breadth of knowledge, depth of concern, and the commitment to the well-being of our province. We know many people took time away from families, jobs, and other commitments in the midst of a global pandemic to share their thoughts with us, and we are deeply grateful. All feedback was valued.

All submissions were read, viewed, or listened to, and considered as part of this summary. There were over 5,600 individual sentiments expressed during the engagement. Given a broad diversity of input and range in areas of concern, there were very few topics on which there was full consensus. In this report, we have tried to capture the strongest sentiments, the areas of greatest support, and the topics of most overall concern to respondents. Extensive and detailed submissions from sectoral experts cannot be fully reflected here; however, respondents should know that all feedback was shared with the Department of Environment and Climate Change.

Focus Area 1 – Leadership in Sustainable Prosperity

What does success look like?

There was a clear consensus among respondents that success in sustainable prosperity will only be reached if we collectively act now to protect our environment and combat climate change. We must ensure that no one is left behind. Vulnerable and historically minimized voices need to be amplified and heard. All decisions made by government must be aligned with protecting the environment. Nova Scotia needs to be sustainability focused. Measuring our climate actions using scientific data will help us in future decision making. Success means prioritizing our collective well-being, which includes protecting the communities and natural spaces we rely on.

What can we do to encourage change?

Comments received on this focus area were broad reaching with a particular focus in the following six areas: supporting local, development and planning, law and policy, education and awareness, training and workforce development, and government leadership.

Supporting Local

There was strong sentiment that supporting local endeavours is critical; this means emphasizing local supply chains for sources of food and energy and reducing how much we import goods from outside of the province. Businesses, no matter their size, should feel empowered to lead the way and receive the same support from government that is given to foreign companies. Municipalities should be engaged and driving their own economic and environmental well-being. Collaboration with local community groups is also needed to help our economy thrive.

Development and Planning

Many respondents agreed that government should lead in developing and planning for a sustainable future, with the input coming from residents.

Develop sustainable processes and pathways. There were several comments shared around the need to establish processes and pathways to help guide decision making to support a future of sustainable prosperity. Some of these ideas included:

- Forming partnerships between social and formal organizations that can help centralize communities and act as one strong voice.
- Offering provincial incentives for businesses and municipalities who demonstrate sustainable and zero waste practices.
- Developing decision-making criteria and values that ensure the environment is considered across government when policy and programs are being developed.
- Creating a set of values that focus on protecting the environment.
- Creating consistent approaches across government departments to review the costs and benefits of environmental impacts.

Sustainable planning. Many respondents had ideas for ensuring that planning for all development and emergency response is done with an environmental lens on sustainable prosperity. A few of these ideas included:

- Having strong emergency plans in place for natural disasters.
- Reviewing every government program to see its impact on climate change.
- Measuring the impacts associated with the consumption of goods and services by Nova Scotians.
- Creating a public scorecard for climate change to assess proposed policies and legislation.
- Ensuring all planning policies account for the value of the natural environment and the services it provides, such as air quality control and its positive impacts on mental health.

Law and Policy

Respondents shared several ideas for new or strengthened fairer fiscal policies. Several submissions received called for greater transparency and fairness around policies related to taxation and the environment.

Equality in taxes and regulations. Establishing fair taxation practices and regulations amongst all levels of wealth.

- Increasing taxation on corporate entities and having stricter penalties for violations.
- Implementing additional import taxes on products bought outside of the Atlantic region.
- Having wealth distribution that provides more for those with the least, and increasing regulation (e.g., taxes) on those who are most wealthy, including big businesses.
- Implementing policies that encourage greener living habits and discourage environmental destruction.
- Adopting a measure of well-being as the standard of economic success versus the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- Establishing a fairer tax system that is a flat tax and higher property taxes for residents that own two or more homes and/or properties

Fairness among societal and environmental policies. Creating and implementing equitable policies for all Nova Scotians.

- Strengthening policies for community-based housing, clean water, and community development.
- Ensuring that policies protecting the environment are given equal or greater priority than the economy.
- Ensuring that each government department has clear instructions about the actions they must take to fulfill the government's sustainability requirements.
- Strengthening policies for community-based housing, clean water and community development.

Education and Awareness

Many respondents felt the need to inform the greater public about the environmental crisis we are in.

Equity in education. There is a strong call to make education more accessible and affordable to everyone. Education on climate change, ecosystems, biodiversity, and circular economy principles should be included in curriculum for all grades so that everyone graduates with a comprehensive understanding of these topics. Other suggested actions included having easily accessible data that provides up-to-date information on greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reduction and climate adaptation processes and creating promotional campaigns for all ages that generate awareness on a variety of environmental topics.

Fostering care. A few respondents expressed the need to find ways to get people to care about the climate crisis. One respondent emphasized that it is difficult for people to care about climate change when they face many challenges in their everyday lives. Respondents shared ideas for getting residents to care about climate change including developing programs to increase residents' exposure to nature and providing workshops and eLearning options for various demographic groups.

Employment and Training

One common theme with broad support was the need for the province to create more green jobs and more opportunities for training and retraining programs associated with the shift to a low carbon economy. Many respondents strongly felt that the government should ensure that the transition to a low carbon economy is fair, and support should be given to persons who are transitioning to new jobs or careers. They felt that the government, moving forwards, needs to speak directly to residents about the security of their jobs and creating a welcoming environment for all people with equal access to job opportunities.

New jobs could be created through sustainable job opportunities such as alternative energy options, retrofitting existing buildings, sustainable agriculture, creating mass public transit alternatives, and civic action in anti-racism and decolonization.

Respondents called for retraining workers to support a new clean economy. Some areas listed for retraining included renewable energy projects, civic action in anti-racism and decolonization, and agricultural workers. There were calls that all members of the legislature receive training on climate change risks.

Respondents felt that we need to pay workers in agriculture, healthcare, long term care, and childcare more money. It was also suggested that financial incentives be used to encourage youth to take jobs in the clean economy. It was raised that skills needed for the clean economy should be delivered to youth to start the transition.

In addition to careers in the clean economy, it was recommended that co-op courses regarding healthy managed harvested food and forests be placed at the high school levels.

Investing in education. A few respondents shared the idea that the government needs to invest more in educating Nova Scotians about the environment and climate change. Some specific ideas include:

- Hiring more educational personnel who specialize in climate change.
- Appointing a high-level government official to lead Education for Sustainability.
- Establishing a provincial Education for Sustainability Working Group to address informal, non-formal and formal education.
- Fostering a cultural change toward a sustainable future.

Government Leadership

There were many calls for collaborative, communicative, diverse, and transparent government leadership. Government needs to be accountable and use performance indicators that are reviewed by nonpartisan committees to evaluate its performance. Respondents felt that public trust has been broken by the government for failing to take a firm stance on files such as the Biodiversity Act, the Lahey Report, and the prospective sale of Owls Head Provincial Park. Respondents want to see climate crisis being treated like a true emergency. Partnership with all levels of government is key.

Another strong theme heard was around ensuring government accountability is a priority. Many respondents called for government to take full accountability of their environmental oversight. Some of the ways suggested to do this were:

- Ensuring transparency in government.
- Employing more people to enforce laws and regulations.
- Ensuring that policies protecting the environment are given equal or greater priority than the economy.
- Ensuring that each government department has clear instructions about the actions they must take to fulfill the government's sustainability requirements.
- Ensuring the Premier and Ministers are accountable for setting the tone, asking for collaboration, and minimizing barriers between departments within government.

Respondents had many ideas on sustainable practices that would help guide the province to a more sustainable future. Key themes included prioritizing conservation, creating a long-range vision (such as by embracing a seven generations approach to planning), and redefining the meaning of prosperity by creating new measures that put the health and well-being of all citizens at the forefront.

Additional ideas include:

- Creating new performance indicators that put the health and well-being of all citizens at the forefront.
- Changing the voting system to proportional representation to allow for more voices, including more green voices, in the Legislature.
- Working with municipalities to ensure that planning strategies and development policies respect the need for balanced, compact and complete communities with equitable access to built and natural environments.
- Publishing each department's annual carbon budget alongside its financial budgets.
- Setting up a sustainability office in the Premier's Office to lead the work and innovation needed to support collaboration with other levels of government.
- Creating a new government department called Climate Change Transition.
- Prioritizing the active participation of Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities and coastal fishing communities in decision making, recommendations and actions.
- Setting requirements for repairable or recycled content in procurement and eliminate the purchase of single-use plastics.
- Leading by example by electrifying the provincial vehicle fleet, transitioning government buildings to become non-emitting, and adopting novel clean energy technologies to support the demonstration of their feasibility.
- Putting an end to inequality so that the majority of the province's wealth is not held by a small minority of the population.
- Making sure everyone has access to what they need to live – the economy should help many not a certain few.
- Growing the economy through environmental tourism.

"I hope that we can finally do away with the descriptive and exploitative status quo, and learn to build a new way where we actually care for each other and the earth, of which we are a part."

Focus Area 2 – Cleaner Energy

What does success look like?

Success looks like vibrant communities around the province powered by renewable energy, much of which is generated within the communities themselves. The province could have amongst the lowest per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada, and one of the highest renewable energy percentages. Municipalities could be empowered with the authority and resources needed to make decisions that best advance sustainability and well-being for their residents. All buildings could be highly energy efficient and return as much power as they use back to the grid.

All residents would enjoy safe, accessible, climate resilient and affordable housing. Neighbourhoods could host key amenities within easy distance for users of all ability levels and their streets feature more rollers, walkers, and public transit users than cars—all of which are zero-emission. Travel between communities could be enabled by affordable province-wide transit networks. Those who want to work from home can get many key health services within their community, or through telemedicine, so rush hours are relatively quiet.

What can we do to encourage change?

The feedback for this focus area – which received a large number of comments – has been organized into eight topics: buildings, transportation, electricity generation, regulation of the electricity system, district energy systems, supporting municipal clean energy capacity, the role of fossil fuels in the clean energy transition, and innovation.

There was strong support for the current goal of 80 per cent of Nova Scotia's electricity coming from renewable resources by 2030, though many respondents suggested earlier deadlines, or that the goal should be increased to 90 per cent. There was also strong agreement that achieving a net-zero future requires substantial increases in building energy efficiency in tandem with a decarbonized electricity grid and significant electrification of our built environment and transportation sectors (e.g., heat pumps and electric vehicles).

Buildings

Most feedback under the topic of Cleaner Energy was received on the theme of buildings. Comments have been organized under five sub-themes: changes to the Nova Scotia Building Code; funding and financing requirements; supports needed to transition industrial, commercial and institutional buildings; supports needed to transition residential buildings; and ensuring safe, healthy, and affordable housing for all. Several goals were suggested by respondents to guide the overall decarbonization of the building sector, including:

- Reducing embodied carbon emissions in the building sector by at least 45 per cent by 2025, at least 65 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2040.
- Reducing oil usage in homes and businesses with 39,000 homes coming off oil by 2030, 101,000 homes by 2040 and 100 per cent of homes by 2050.
- Transitioning at least 20 per cent of existing building stock away from on-site fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy sources by 2025 and eliminating all on-site fossil fuels from existing buildings by 2030.

The strongest support by far was for achieving decarbonization through a combination of electrification and increasing energy efficiency, but some industry associations included a greater role for lower-emitting fossil fuels like propane and natural gas.

Changes to the Nova Scotia Building Code. Many respondents called for rapid changes to the Nova Scotia Building Code to set ambitious standards for energy efficiency and renewable energy for new and existing buildings. Most wanted to see these changes implemented immediately, with requirements becoming progressively stringent through 2030. Respondents also wanted to see requirements for climate resilience, mandatory energy labelling, electric vehicle charging capability in new construction, a ban on new fossil fuel hook-ups, limiting building heights to mid-rise for natural shading and requiring that new buildings be situated to maximize passive solar potential.

Funding and financing requirements. The most mentioned barrier to decarbonizing the building sector was access to affordable financing to support building retrofits for all types of structures. Many respondents wanted government to provide increased financial support for this work through a combination of grants, incentives, retrofit programs, and low-cost and no-cost loans. There were also calls to see government work with financial institutions to create low-interest bank loans to support clean energy adoption.

Respondents also called for the expansion of property assessed clean energy (PACE) programs, along with changes to exclude secure energy-related municipal borrowing from the calculation of the municipal Debt Service Coverage Ratios.

Support needed to transition industrial, commercial, and institutional (ICI) buildings. In addition to the lack of financial support, several respondents noted that there were policy and regulatory barriers that impede the clean energy transition to on-site renewables, batteries, and combined heat and power for ICI buildings. In addition, many ICI buildings are left out of current clean energy funding programs.

Respondents offered ideas to remove barriers that impede the integration of solar technology, including requiring Nova Scotia Power to simplify and streamline the connection process and create a guide and commercial market outlook study to support commercial adoption of solar energy.

Supports needed to transition residential buildings. Many respondents wanted to see incentives for energy audits and retrofits to increase energy efficiency, install heat pumps, and integrate on-site renewable energy. These incentives ranged from rebates to low-cost/no-cost financing to zero-cost, non-repayable grants, especially for households with lower incomes. Several respondents also supported the conversion from oil to sustainably harvested wood for space heating, and one supported fuel switching from oil to propane, based on the lower emissions profile of propane versus oil.

Ensuring safe, healthy, and affordable housing for all. There was particular concern for homeowners experiencing low incomes and those living in communities that have been marginalized due to systemic racism, and for whom the clean energy transition is especially challenging without government support. On a hopeful note, many respondents felt the coming transition presents an opportunity to address inequities through transformational policy measures that aim to “eliminate energy poverty and ensure equal access to healthy, comfortable indoor environments and affordable access to clean sources of energy.”

Respondents recommended several goals and strategies to achieve these outcomes, including:

- Reducing the percentage of Nova Scotians experiencing energy poverty (from a 2016 baseline) by 30 per cent by 2030, 45 per cent by 2040, and 55 per cent by 2050.
- Expanding the HomeWarming, Affordability Multi-Family Housing and Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency programs and broadening their eligibility thresholds to assist more low-income households.
- Quickly resolving historic land title issues in African Nova Scotian communities to ensure that this is not a barrier to accessing funds for energy efficiency retrofits.
- Making all Mi'kmaw, co-operative and social housing Net-Zero Energy Ready by 2030.
- Requiring all new housing built with public funding and intended to be affordable to low- and modest-income households to meet Passive House or equivalent standards.
- Requiring that all homes owned or rented by low-income households have no-cost deep energy retrofits.

Transportation

Second to buildings, the most comments were received on the topic of transportation. The breadth and depth of the feedback was impressive; we have organized the comments into the following topics: active transportation; public transit; and reducing vehicle emissions.

Active transportation. There was widespread support for increasing active transportation. A primary concern was the absence of accessible, equitable, and safe active transportation infrastructure for users of all modes and ability levels. Many respondents were also concerned about inequities in access for rural residents and those from Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities. Respondents suggested a range of actions to address these barriers. One common theme was the need for significantly increased funding for active transportation. Some also felt the province needed a provincial active transportation strategy to guide strategic investment decisions. There were many calls for the creation of a province-wide active transportation network, both within and between communities, and the expansion of the Blue Route bike network. Some respondents wanted to see concrete goals relating to increased cycling uptake, such as having ten per cent of Nova Scotia residents commute through cycling for shorter trips.

Promoting safe active transportation was also a key concern. Respondents called for more public education around active transportation, including general awareness, anti-idling, and driver education on how to operate vehicles safely around walkers, rollers, and cyclists. There was a broader trend in feedback calling for the province to allow municipalities more flexibility to pilot initiatives such as lower speed limits, traffic calming, and new active transportation infrastructure like advisory bike lanes and bike signals.

Public transit. There were many calls for investment to increase efficient, accessible, equitable and zero-emission public transit access across the province, and particularly in rural areas. Several respondents supported a goal of 90 per cent of Nova Scotians having access to transit or active transportation within 400 metres of their homes and destinations by 2030. Many comments focused on the importance of making public transit available to communities whose access has historically been low or non-existent, including rural communities and those whose residents were majority Mi'kmaq or African Nova Scotian. Respondents wanted to see expansion of community-owned rural transit services like Kings Transit. Some supported reducing or eliminating the cost of transit services to support increased use. There were also calls to support innovative and community-based solutions like community-owned car shares.

Several respondents felt there were many benefits to be gained from developing an inter-provincial rail system for commuter, commercial, and leisure use.

Reducing vehicle emissions. Many comments focused on the importance of rapidly decarbonizing the transportation sector. Many commenters saw zero-emission vehicles¹ as a key transitional technology to enable the province to achieve its 2050 net-zero goal but argued strongly for a longer-term vision of reducing the total number of cars on the road.

There was strong support for establishing a time-phased zero-emission vehicle mandate (ZEV mandate), but respondents had different suggestions for the timeline. The greatest support was for a requirement of 10 per cent of sales being zero-emission vehicles by 2025, 30 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2040. Several municipalities, organizations, and individuals supported a higher level of ambition, aiming for 100 per cent of sales being zero-emission vehicles 2030, or even by 2025. Respondents wanted this mandate to include corporate, provincial, and taxi vehicle fleets, marine fleets, public transit, and school buses.

There was a great deal of support for electric vehicle and electric bike rebates. Some respondents wanted to see rebates offered for more expensive vehicles, an increase in the rebate levels, the addition of rebates for non-electric bicycles and mobility scooters, and/or the introduction of rebates for home charging stations. However, some respondents wanted rebates to only be available to those experiencing low incomes. Others objected to rebates entirely on the belief that zero-emission vehicles are not lower-emitting than traditional gas-powered cars because the electricity grid that powers them continues to rely on fossil fuels.

To support electric vehicle adoption, respondents wanted to see government investment to increase charging infrastructure. Several noted that the lack of charging infrastructure was a key barrier to increased electric vehicle adoption. Others felt the transition to zero-emission vehicles and the development of the provincial charging network should be guided by a provincial electric vehicle strategy.

Respondents offered recommendations for reducing emissions through decreasing private vehicle use, such as a progressive taxes or registration fees on gas-powered cars that increase with horsepower and/or vehicle price and/or emissions rating, charging for gas-powered vehicle parking, fines for single-occupant vehicle use during rush hours, tolls for vehicles entering downtown areas, stricter emissions limits on gas and diesel vehicles, banning advertising of gas-powered vehicles, and banning drive-throughs.

Several respondents wanted more support for research and development of hydrogen fuel cell technology, especially for commercial traffic, as well as for other lower-emitting fossil fuels such as propane. One respondent suggested a technology-neutral transportation emissions reduction goal, which called for reducing GHG emissions from road transportation by 10 per cent by 2030, 40 per cent by 2040, and 75 per cent by 2050.

¹ Respondents variously used the terms electric vehicles, EVs, zero-emission-vehicles and ZEVs. When respondents were commenting specifically about vehicles powered by electricity, we have used electric vehicles. Where they were using broader terminology that would encompass other zero-emission technologies like hydrogen fuel cells, we have used the term zero-emission vehicles.

Many respondents felt that we need to change how our communities are designed to reduce sprawl and create neighbourhoods that prioritize safe, efficient, and convenient active and public transportation.

Respondents also suggested actions to reduce car commutes and/or increase active transportation commutes. These included supporting workplaces to provide remote work options, exploring reduced work schedules such as four-day work weeks, providing safe and secure commuter bike storage, and expanding access to telemedicine services, especially for rural residents.

Electricity Generation

The third most common type of feedback under the area of Cleaner Energy related to the fuel sources used to generate electricity. There was strong consensus that more renewable electricity is needed as soon as possible. The main difference in the comments was the timeline for phasing out fossil fuels. Most respondents wanted to see short timelines, but several submissions argued for a longer transitional or permanent role for lower-emitting fossil fuels. There was a lot of support for the goals of increasing renewable energy 90 per cent by 2030,² and increasing total electricity system efficiency to 3 per cent per year by 2030.³

Biofuels and biomass. Most of the comments on this topic concerned forest biomass, with a few comments on biofuels as a broader category. One university respondent submitted that biofuels are one option for institutions to reduce GHGs and wanted to see Nova Scotia explore and support business and job creation opportunities. This respondent noted that this should be accomplished without compromising agricultural land protections, improved forestry practices, the protection of natural assets, and increased limits on clear-cutting. Overall, there was very strong opposition to the use of forest biomass for electricity generation and many respondents called for an immediate ban. A few indicated they were okay with waste wood products, like bark, being used for generation and/or small-scale biomass projects.

Coal. There was near universal support for phasing out coal-fired generation. Many respondents supported the current government target of 2030, while others wanted to see the phase out completed earlier. Several also wanted to see coal mining banned.

²Other respondents suggested increasing this target to 100% renewable energy by 2025, 2035, or 2045.

³Other respondents suggested goals put the target at 2% per year, or 1.5% of forecasted annual Nova Scotia Power electricity sales for each year beginning in 2023 and running through 2050

Geothermal. Several respondents wanted to see more investment in the development of Nova Scotia's geothermal potential.

Hydrogen. Only a few respondents mentioned hydrogen, but those who did saw enormous potential for green hydrogen as a sustainable electricity source.

Hydropower. There was mixed support for hydropower, with some respondents wanting to see further development, and others objecting to any hydropower out of concern for its social and environmental impacts.

Natural Gas. Most of the feedback received supported the phase out of natural gas, while some respondents with industry linkages argued for its importance as an affordable, reliable backstop to the intermittency of renewable energy sources. A few respondents wanted to see greater support for the development of low-carbon gas projects, including renewable natural gas.

Nuclear. Nuclear power generation was referenced by several respondents. Most supported using nuclear power as a backstop for intermittent renewable fuel sources, while a couple of respondents objected to any nuclear power development.

Solar. There was very strong support for the development of solar generation resources, particularly small-scale solar, and community-owned projects like solar farms.

Tidal. Few respondents remarked on tidal power. Several felt it was important to pursue the development of this resource, while others were wary of the technical and social barriers to large-scale tidal power generation.

Waste. As was the case with feedback received for the Circular Economy focus area, there was no clear position on the use of waste as a fuel source. Some respondents were supportive of further research and development in this area. The use of waste methane from landfills received slightly more support.

Wind. There were strong calls for adding more wind power. Several respondents also wanted to see Nova Scotia develop its offshore wind potential.

Regulation of the Electricity System

Changes to regulatory oversight. Multiple respondents wanted to see environmental and social performance objectives imposed on the Utility and Review Board (UARB) and its regulated entities. One respondent recommended the appointment of an advocate role to ensure these interests are fairly represented in the decision-making process.

Other respondents identified the need to align community energy plans with energy utilities and recommended a framework to align planning processes, objectives, and outcomes. Another recommendation was for the province to conduct periodic independent integrated resource planning for the entire energy sector to complement the Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) performed by Nova Scotia Power.

Regional collaboration. Several respondents highlighted the need for and benefits of greater collaboration between the Atlantic Provinces on energy efficiency, electrification, renewable electricity development, and the ability to store and move energy around the region. A few respondents signalled their support for the Atlantic Loop. One pair of academic commentators noted that the completion of the Atlantic Loop will be essential for the government to meet its current emissions target as things stand today, and strongly recommended that the government develop alternative emissions reduction strategies in the event that the Atlantic Loop is not completed.

The role of Efficiency Nova Scotia.⁴ Though strongly supportive of the leading role that Efficiency Nova Scotia has played in reducing emissions from building sector, several respondents suggested a shift in its mandate to focus more broadly on GHG reductions, improving the efficiency of all energy sources, and supporting electrification.

The role of Nova Scotia Power. Some respondents were concerned about the role and structure of Nova Scotia Power and wanted to see changes such as de-privatization and elimination of its monopoly. Others felt that the company's role in the electricity system should be transitioned to focusing primarily on maintaining the province's distribution and transmission networks and sharing the role for electricity generation with independent renewable power producers.

⁴Efficiency Nova Scotia is an energy efficiency utility that helps Nova Scotian residents and businesses increase their energy efficiency. Efficiency Nova Scotia's activities are funded by supplying electricity efficiency and conservation services to Nova Scotia Power Inc. and by direct funding from the Province of Nova Scotia for some programs (i.e., HomeWarming).

Net metering. Many respondents wanted to see changes to make it easier for residents and businesses to integrate on-site renewable electricity generation and allow them to be paid fair rates for the power they produce. They called for the removal of the 100-kilowatt cap on net metering, the establishment of an inclusive and accessible framework for community ownership of net-metered solar, and the implementation of an online process for processing interconnection requests and net metering applications.

Feed-in tariffs and community choice aggregation providers. Respondents who wanted to see increased integration of renewable energy into the provincial grid called for the re-introduction of feed-in tariffs, enhancing opportunities to use Community Economic Development Investment Funds and assisting in the creation of locally run Community Choice Aggregation electricity providers that are committed to clean, renewable energy.

District Energy Systems

Many respondents wanted to see more district energy systems,⁵ micro-grids, and development of municipally or community-owned energy projects. They called upon government to provide subsidies, tariffs, incentives, and low-cost loans to assist with upfront capital costs for local renewable energy utility projects, especially for municipalities, co-ops, marginalized communities, non-profits, and local businesses. There were also calls to allow mandatory connection for all district energy projects and remove policy barriers to the adoption of alternative energy systems in new municipal developments.

Supporting Municipal Clean Energy Capacity

Respondents argued that municipal actions will play a critical role in meeting Nova Scotia's climate goals and that they need more funding to support the necessary capital investments, increases in staffing and project costs, as well as greater autonomy to make the right decisions for their residents. Recommendations included:

- Providing additional support for energy planning, staff hiring, and development to ensure the necessary technical expertise.
- Funding navigators to help communities access the expertise and funding they need to fully participate in the clean energy transition.

⁵A district energy system is one in which heating and cooling services for multiple buildings in a given location are provided from a centralized location and distributed (e.g., through underground piping) to residential and commercial consumers.

- Expanding Efficiency Nova Scotia's On-site Energy Manager program to focus on community energy management.
- Investing in programs to support community energy planning like QUEST's Smart Energy Community Accelerator.
- Excluding secure energy-related municipal borrowing (including PACE) from the calculation of the municipal Debt Service Coverage Ratios.

The Role of Fossil Fuels in the Clean Energy Transition

Overall, respondents strongly supported eliminating fossil fuels, but this was not a universal perspective. Some respondents, many from industry, provided arguments for various roles for fossil fuels as part of the clean energy transition.

Oil and gas exploration and development. Many respondents supported phasing out all oil and gas development by 2030 with a just transition for oil and gas workers. There were many calls for an immediate halt to oil and gas exploration and development in protected or sensitive areas, both on and offshore.

By way of counterpoint, other respondents supported continued development of oil and gas opportunities in the province. As one respondent observed, "Atlantic Canada's oil and gas sector continues to innovate and reduce its carbon footprint, while supporting regional economic activity. This sector is continually less carbon-intensive and is developing low and non-emitting transportation and heating fuels using hydrogen among other initiatives."

Natural gas and propane. Relatively few respondents mentioned specific fuel types such as natural gas or propane. Of those who did, most supported the transition away from natural gas for both electricity generation and building heating. A few respondents noted their opposition to liquid natural gas export terminal projects, fracking, and the Alton natural gas storage project.

In contrast, several respondents wanted to see the expansion of natural gas infrastructure to support increased access to natural gas for residential, commercial, and industrial use. Respondents made the case for natural gas as a reliable, affordable, and responsibly produced energy source that can play a key role in supporting the province's clean energy transition.

Innovation

Respondents wanted to see government support for clean energy innovation. Multiple targets for this funding were identified, including:

- Increasing emissions reductions from fossil fuel use, both through the transition from higher- to lower-emitting fossil fuels, and overall transition from fossil fuels to renewable fuel sources.
- Fostering early-stage development of new technologies, including piloting and demonstration projects.
- Evaluating the suitability of emerging technologies from other jurisdictions for use in Nova Scotia.
- Exploring energy storage technologies and processes.
- Building envelope retrofit systems such as the ReCover Initiative, which is deploying innovative strategies to increase the energy efficiency of existing buildings.
- Developing practical solutions to navigate agricultural equipment towards electrification, hydrogen, or natural gas.
- Enabling supportive policies that allow the above-noted strategies to be quickly and efficiently implemented. At the same time, one respondent cautioned that government should not lose sight of funding basic 'tried and true' climate actions that are not based on innovation.

"We need leaders with big visions who are not afraid to risk a little unpopularity in trying to achieve active transportation goals and cut greenhouse emissions. If we succeed, the greener economy and quite literally greener spaces could expand our local economies and attract more sustainable eco-tourism and more population growth."

– Email comment

Focus Area 3 – Climate Change

What does success look like?

Success looks like a future where Nova Scotia meets its targets of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and has climate change mitigation and adaptation plans in place for every community. Nova Scotia could achieve a climate literate society where youth, the public, and members of government are aware of the climate crisis and strongly support the actions that need to be taken to respond, adapt, and thrive. Research and data on the climate crisis can be easily accessible by all and the government supports municipalities, universities, and non-profits in conducting research about local ecosystem health. The government would listen to scientists, sustainability scholars, and engineers in creating policy. Industries and municipalities could be financially supported for retraining and transitioning to a low carbon future and there is a boost in clean economy jobs.

What can we do to encourage change?

Nova Scotians were deeply concerned about the changing climate and what it means for them, their communities, and future generations. Many respondents referred to the situation as an emergency, and there were numerous calls for rapid, decisive, and ambitious action to reduce provincial GHG emissions and support communities and businesses in adapting to new realities presented by changing temperatures and weather patterns. Many respondents also stressed the need for special consideration and supports for at-risk communities and industries, including residents experiencing low income, members of Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, and those whose livelihoods rely on natural resource extraction and processing.

Because of the overlap between the Climate Change and Cleaner Energy focus areas, respondents provided similar ideas under both headings. Ideas relating to electricity generation, improved energy efficiency, and transportation were captured in the Cleaner Energy section.

Adaptation and Mitigation

Barriers. Individuals, municipalities, and organizations identified barriers such as the lack of funding for climate adaptation and mitigation, the low level of climate literacy among residents and government staff, and the lack of municipal staff with the expertise to develop and implement strategies to respond to climate change. To this end, several respondents suggested developing new financing tools to support climate action through the Municipal Finance Corporation, such as green bonds and catastrophe bonds.

Lowering emissions. Most of the feedback focused on ways to reduce GHG emissions. Many respondents voiced support for achieving net-zero by 2050 (or earlier), with legal and monetary consequences for failure to comply. Many strategies were suggested to support this goal, including:

- Creating an energy and emissions model out to 2050 to determine the required pathways, targets, and timelines to succeed in mitigating climate change.
- Encouraging people to reduce high GHG diets by lowering consumption of meat and dairy and shifting to plant-based alternatives.
- Embarking on a low carbon tourism strategy that includes marine tourism with a focus on drawing visitors who use the marine environment by sailing, kayaking, paddle boarding, and surfing.
- Encouraging construction industries to transition away from cement and steel.
- Incentivizing all ocean industries to meet Canada's net-zero goal.
- Enacting stricter guidelines for industrial operations such as pulp mills, gold mines, etc.
- Collaborating with waste management stakeholders such as Divert NS to better define the role of waste management in climate change mitigation, especially how it can support mitigation.

Carbon pricing. Several respondents noted their support for various carbon pricing mechanisms, such as carbon taxes, carbon budgets, border carbon adjustments, and carbon offsets. A few respondents believed that a carbon fee should be charged for all air traffic landing in Nova Scotia, all commercial cargo vessels entering our ports and for the use of all non-commercial fertilizer and nitrogen products for residential use. Others expressed the need to review the current cap-and-trade program to ensure it aligns with more ambitious goals for reducing GHG emissions.

Meeting targets and accountability. There was great support for including robust accountability processes to ensure regular evaluation and revision of goals if targets are not met. A few respondents mentioned that an annual report should be made easily accessible to the public. Many respondents supported aggressive GHG mitigation plans for 2030 and 2050 with stepwise targets at five-year intervals, as well as a public action plan with detailed targets and measurement updates.

Equity in climate action. Many respondents signalled the importance of viewing climate change policy through an equity lens, as marginalized residents and communities and those experiencing low-income are at higher risk from climate change impacts. One respondent mentioned that the province needs to ensure that the burden of paying for mitigation, adaptation and our energy transition falls proportionately upon those with money and power. A few respondents mentioned that participation from Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, residents experiencing low incomes, and other marginalized groups should be prioritized in climate adaptation and mitigation policy and decision-making.

Planning for climate change. One common theme among respondents was the need to strengthen planning for climate change adaptation. Respondents felt that climate change impacts, including storm and drought preparedness and flood and wildfire prevention, should be at the forefront of provincial and municipal planning. Respondents also mentioned the need for the province to support all communities in adaptation planning, particularly those most at risk and those already impacted by the climate crisis. Respondents shared several ideas to advance planning, including:

- Supporting and strengthening of legislation to prevent development too close to shorelines.
- Prioritizing climate adaptation across every government department and updating policies and programs to prioritize mitigation and adaptation.
- Identifying all communities that are likely to be damaged by flooding and storms and providing data and hazard maps to municipalities to support response planning.
- Ensuring that all Nova Scotia municipalities have sufficient resources to take immediate and long-term action on their adaptation priorities.

Research

Respondents also expressed the need for up-to-date climate change research and data to be made freely and easily available to the public and supported greater collaboration between all levels of government and scientific experts in policy creation and decision-making. Policy decisions should prioritize scientific evidence over industry concerns. A few respondents felt that the government should support communities in accessing new research and development through partnerships with the universities.

Some shared their ideas for research projects that the province should undertake including:

- Setting up projects to monitor key indicators of ecosystem health.
- Creating a Nova Scotia Townships Climate Preparedness database or other easily shareable resource.
- Conducting a study to determine the amount and type of jobs required to successfully transition to a green economy, and then developing an education and retraining program to support the findings of this study and develop the new clean economy workforce.

“The generations after us won’t believe that we knew better and didn’t do absolutely everything in our power to stop it”

Focus Area 4 – Circular Economy

What does success look like?

Success looks like a future where landfills are much less important than they are today because little waste is generated. Nova Scotians would buy fewer consumer products, and those they do buy are high quality, long-lasting, recyclable or compostable and locally made where possible. Single-use consumer plastics would be an artifact of the past, zero-waste shopping is the norm, and recycling and composting are universally practiced. The appetite for fast fashion would have waned and thrift shopping is popular. Repair and re-use businesses could be thriving. Products could be recovered and recycled by the companies that make and sell them. Most goods would be purchased locally, making Nova Scotia's economy more self-sufficient and less dependent on imported goods. Every community could have an equipment sharing library and carshare access. More people can grow their own food, supplementing the products available from the many sustainable and low-impact farms throughout the province. Waste diversion and education programs would be easily accessible by all residents, regardless of income or demographic factors.

What can we do to encourage change?

The idea of a circular economy is a broad topic, so it's unsurprising that this focus area garnered a wide range of responses. We have organized the responses into seven categories: removing barriers, promoting the circular economy, waste diversion and reduction, plastics and packaging, extended producer responsibility (EPR), buildings, and regional coordination.

Removing Barriers

Municipal respondents in particular mentioned barriers facing solid waste management. These include aging infrastructure, rising costs, difficulty finding sustainable markets for many commodities, and changing package composition. One respondent from a rural waste management authority warned that solid waste management is increasingly financially unsustainable and too onerous for rural municipalities to manage, leading to privatization. Another commonly cited barrier was the confusion around waste sorting resulting from each waste region in the province having its own rules.

Promoting the Circular Economy

Respondents shared their ideas for how to encourage the development of a circular economy. Several stressed that achieving a circular economy requires that provincial policy follow the solid waste hierarchy, which favours waste reduction and reuse ahead of recycling, composting, waste-to-energy, and finally, landfilling.

Many respondents offered ideas for further research and development, including:

- Improving understanding of the benefits of the circular economy on Nova Scotia's achievement of its climate goals.
- Exploring innovative ways to incent people and businesses to follow circular economy principles.
- Conducting a systematic analysis of the key barriers by commodity that are preventing action to further the circular economy.
- Exploring how to implement the principles of industrial ecology, where one company's waste stream to become another company's input.
- Investigating best practices from other jurisdictions and evaluating how they could be implemented here.
- Conducting an economic and environmental impact study of the existing circular economy, including avoided resource inputs.

Other comments related to how government policy and spending could help stimulate a circular economy. Many respondents called for government to support businesses that are in alignment with circular economy principles. Several respondents felt that dedicated innovation centres or hubs would be impactful for driving the circular economy transition. There were also calls to foster skills training and apprenticeships in circular economy jobs.

Respondents also called for clear targets and accountability to guide the circular economy transition. These targets should help measure the growth of the circular economy, including job creation and greenhouse gas (GHG) reductions. One respondent wanted to see the establishment of tracking indicators for resource productivity and intensity, such as material use per unit of gross value added or waste per unit of gross value added. Several respondents recommended alignment with the National Zero Waste Council's work on circular economy and the Circular Cities & Regions Initiative of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

Many respondents felt that more education and awareness is needed to support the transition to a circular economy. They want to see campaigns for all ages promoting:

- General waste reduction information and behaviour change.
- Principles of a circular economy and the opportunities arising from the transition to this approach.
- Circular economy success stories, to help motivate and inspire.
- Importance of shifting consumer-buying patterns to focus on buying less, choosing local and/or second-hand items when possible, and avoiding single-use plastics and short-lived goods like 'fast fashion' items.
- Benefits of repairing products, when possible, rather than sending them to landfill.
- Opportunities to take part in the sharing economy, such as through car shares, tool/equipment libraries, and co-housing alternatives.
- Repair skills, particularly for school-aged youth.
- Zero waste retail shopping options, especially those that are run by local businesses.

Several respondents highlighted the overall need to encourage a society-wide values shift away from economic growth and conspicuous consumerism toward valuing nature and social relations.

Respondents also advocated for greater information resources to allow for informed consumer decision-making to stimulate demand for more resource efficient products through greater transparency on resource composition and use. Most of the suggestions related to mandatory disclosure of environmental impact information on consumer goods labels. One respondent wanted to see legislation that requires a transparent life cycle and supply chain assessment for all goods and services, along with a provincial Life Cycle Assessment database of goods and services. Another respondent also wanted increased transparency around what happens diverted waste.

Waste Diversion and Reduction

Most of the feedback focused on ways to reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the diversion of the remaining waste from landfills. Many respondents voiced support for the goals of reducing the provincial solid waste disposal rate by 50 per cent below 2020 levels by 2030 and achieving zero plastic waste by 2030.

Reducing consumption of new goods. Many respondents felt it was essential to reduce consumption of new goods through a combination of incentives and/or disincentives and education. Other suggested measures including introducing additional taxes on high-cost luxury items, like cars and electronics, and reducing taxes on local products and repair services.

Supporting zero waste retail. Respondents were inspired by the recent growth of zero waste retail options in Nova Scotia and wanted to see government investment to support the continued growth of this industry. One respondent called for the creation of a zero-waste retail strategy and certification system for businesses that sell zero-waste goods.

Increasing product durability, repairability and reuse potential. Respondents had many ideas for how to make products last longer and increase re-use:

- Ensure that all municipal landfills have diversion centres that allow individuals and businesses to recover items that they may find useful.
- Introduce legal requirements that products sold in Nova Scotia, whether produced locally or imported, are high quality, long-lasting, and recyclable, such as a minimum ten-year warranty on large appliances and electronics.
- Provide a combination of incentives and education to de-stigmatize buying second-hand products and encourage widespread waste reduction, repair, re-use, recycling, composting, and buying local and zero waste retailers.
- Make re-used and recycled items cheaper than new products, such as by taxing items that are not recyclable or compostable.
- Introduce 'right to repair' legislation.

Ensure equitable access to programs and services. Respondents called for increasing access to curbside recycling and waste reduction/diversion programs for all. They wanted the economic opportunities associated with the circular economy shared equitably among all residents. They called for guidelines around the siting of new waste management facilities that would ensure environmental racism has no influence over decisions and, more broadly, for proactive efforts to address the waste management challenges facing Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities. Respondents wanted to see support provided to those living with low incomes to participate equitably in diversion programs.

Investing in diversion infrastructure. Several respondents wanted to see more recycling in the province, rather than sending waste overseas. They also wanted to see an increase in the range of materials that can be recycled or composted. At the same time, one municipal respondent wanted the province to prohibit the approval of new "unnecessary" solid waste infrastructure to encourage municipal partnerships and improve efficiencies.

Supporting shared services. Many respondents wanted to see government support the expansion of shared economy services such as car shares and tool/equipment libraries.

Reducing food waste. Several respondents wanted to see more education and supports such as composting bins provided to residents to help reduce food waste.

Litter reduction. Some respondents were concerned about the amount of litter, particularly along shorelines and waterways, and called for more educational campaigns highlighting the harms caused by litter.

Waste-to-energy projects. One point that was also addressed in the feedback provided in the Cleaner Energy section, and on which there was no clear position, was the potential for waste-to-energy projects. Some respondents called for further research and government support development in this sector, particularly for construction and demolition waste products. Other respondents were against waste-from-energy projects, cautioning that such initiatives would remove the incentive to design products and packaging to remain in circular economy.

Plastics and Packaging

One common theme with broad support was reducing disposable packaging and plastics. Respondents offered a range of suggested strategies to accomplish this outcome. Many called for bans on all single-use plastic goods, while others focused on items like packaging, cutlery, beverage containers, take-out containers, non-compostable plastic garbage and recycling bags, and plastic packaging. Despite the variability in products mentioned, there was overall support for increasing the scope of the current provincial plastic bag ban to include other plastic items.

Rather than bans, a smaller number of respondents suggested either providing incentives for business to reduce these items or creating penalties for those that fail to do so. Others wanted to see legal requirements that would limit the amount of packaging and require it be easily recyclable or compostable. Many respondents also suggested that extended producer responsibility (EPR) approach was the best way to reduce plastics and packaging.

Several respondents noted that packaging is not easily sorted as it contains mixed materials that leads to confusion in what can and can't be diverted, leading to contamination and lower diversion rates. It was recommended that the province could enact additional regulations for packaging, especially those packages that are made of composite materials that cannot be separated at the point of disposal and are sent to landfill.

One respondent called on the province to support federal efforts to list plastic manufactured items as a toxic substance in the Canadian Environmental Protection Act and use the regulation-making powers under that Act to ban specified plastic waste products.

Additional comments related to the challenges some Nova Scotian industries are facing with plastics. Local farm businesses were flagged as needing special support to help reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. Another sector of concern to respondents was ocean plastics, especially in the fishing industry. There were several calls for more innovation in fishing gear design to reduce the threat of marine plastic pollution, as well as increased support for the recovery and recycling of these plastics.

Finally, several respondents also called for further research to address the challenge of reducing and safely diverting medical waste.

Extended Producer Responsibility

Of the many respondents that called for enhanced EPR, there was universal support for paper and packaging. Many municipal respondents also wanted to see EPR for other products such as mattresses, mercury-containing lamps, lithium batteries, sharps (needles), propane cylinders, and other difficult-to-manage hazardous household wastes. Several municipal respondents also wanted to see EPR for electronics expanded to include “everything with a plug.” There were also calls to implement EPR for fishing gear to help address concerns over ocean plastics.

Buildings

Several respondents focused their input on how to support a circular economy approach in the building sector. There were suggestions to introduce incentives to support the refurbishment of homes rather than new builds, and to require construction and demolition projects to meet targets for material reuse recyclability, and waste diversion. One respondent noted that changes to tipping fees and landfill bans are needed to prevent non-hazardous and hazardous construction and demolition being co-mingled and moved to municipalities where the tip fees for hazardous waste is less than solid construction and demolition waste recycling.

Regional Coordination

Respondents highlighted the confusion around different sorting rules across the province as a barrier to improving solid waste diversion rates. They called for uniform sorting rules for the whole province and the streamlining of curbside pick-up programs to help realize efficiencies for municipalities.

“Baddeck Library, for example, partnered with Victoria County to acquire skis, boots, poles, and snowshoes - and the vast majority of borrowers state that the program has enabled them to try winter sports they couldn't otherwise afford.”

– Email submission

Focus Area 5 – Inclusive Economy

What does success look like?

At a high level, success looks like equal opportunities and access to services for all. Economic and cultural barriers would no longer exist, putting all Nova Scotians on an equal playing field. One group would not have more or better. Education at all grade levels could include the province's complete history, including Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian histories, as well as environmental teachings. Post-secondary education could be free, or tuition has been reduced and education in trades is encouraged. Opportunities in the workforce would be open for all, including historically marginalized communities. Supports and training for jobs in the clean economy would be provided. Minimum wage could be increased, senior level salaries are capped, and universal basic income is introduced.

Government could lead by example in all aspects including fair hiring processes, creating policies that reflect the voices of all Nova Scotians, applying the Social Determinants of Health in all aspects of our lives, making climate a top concern, and ensuring all policies conform to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Recommendations would be implemented, and land is given back to the Mi'kmaq.

Services could be available and accessible across Nova Scotia including internet and cell phone coverage and government services. Housing can be affordable and available for everyone and is built close to job opportunities. New developments could all be environmentally friendly. The local economy would be supported over larger corporations. Success is where a transition to a clean economy not only recognizes and supports all Nova Scotians, but also reduces costs and waste and allows for growth.

What can we do to encourage change?

Commonalities were seen in the feedback received for this focus area. The input looked at issues from both community and provincial perspectives. Submission content was grouped into the following topics: inclusivity in education, inclusivity in workforce, affordable and inclusive housing, and inclusive communities.

Inclusivity in Education

Post-secondary tuition. Respondents indicated that tuition for post-secondary education is too high and that it should either be lowered or eliminated. Some feedback suggested eliminating student debt. It was felt that with free tuition and training, residents would be able to pursue careers that are sustainable with the right qualifications. Free schooling should focus in areas that will contribute to the clean economy. Respondents also highlighted the importance of including increased apprenticeship opportunities for those training in the trades industries.

Post-secondary institutions are also a place of great resources. The province should look to partner with them to collaborate to find solutions to environmental issues.

Education for all. Respondents recommended that education or awareness about what inclusivity is and why it is important be available for all. It was recommended that once all were educated, mandates for a cleaner economy and climate could be put in place.

Including a complete history in the curriculum. Respondents want to see the true history of Mi'kma'ki, which would include the histories of Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities, included in the school curriculum. This included Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian teachers leading these classes.

Curriculum style and education system. Feedback highlighted that a one size fits all approach to the school curriculum does not work. Instead, the system should allow for various levels of ability and interests allowing students to follow what works for them. This would support other points of 'no child falling between the cracks' of the school system.

Respondents voiced concern over the centralization of schools and that they should return to local communities. All schools, no matter the economic status of families, should have equal opportunities and services. Respondents supported smaller class sizes and increased staffing support, such as Reading Recovery teachers.

Inclusivity in the Workforce

Compensation. Respondents called for the minimum wage to be raised, as well as all wages. It was also highlighted that paid sick leave and vacation time is imperative in the workforce. An inclusive economy would see reduced hierarchy of pay and status beyond what is reasonable for the responsibility of the role.

Balance between clean economy and "traditional" roles. Not all individuals will be able to transfer to a clean economy. Traditional/current jobs should still be available.

Inclusive hiring and retention. Bias in hiring practices should be reduced. Government can lead by example in implementing an inclusive hiring process and bringing in local hiring requirements.

Opportunities created by the clean economy should be open to all, no matter what ability, geography, gender, race, income, sexual orientation, religion, or other diverse identities. This point was highlighted in several responses particularly for African Nova Scotians and Mi'kmaw communities to share in transition opportunities.

To support inclusion in the workforce, employers should be educated on inclusion and diversity in the workplace. This would then be expanded for employers to provide equity, diversity and inclusion programs for all employees.

Trades. Respondents indicated that there should be stronger awareness and training for trades and that the negative perception of trade careers should be less.

Transition to a clean economy. Some respondents mentioned that all employment opportunities should relate to the clean economy and those in the coal/oil/natural gas sectors should be retrained for the clean energy industry. Roles in the clean economy should be less extractive and destructive, taking less from the planet. One respondent suggested that a successful transition to the clean economy would see 80 per cent of the work force getting reskilled.

Jobs in the energy industries and sustainable sectors should be well paying union roles. There should be a transition to four-hour days and four-day work weeks.

In the transition to a clean economy, it's not only clean job sectors that are needed but childcare, elder care and health care sectors will also play a key role. There are many job opportunities in these sectors, and this will continue to grow—it will be important for these roles to be well paid.

In addition, submissions suggested that the transition to the clean economy be looked at more broadly, by exploring wider opportunities such as management of community gardens that feed communities and creating a civilian climate corps that will also offer an employment opportunity.

Increasing opportunities. Opportunities should happen in communities where there would be a great need to address climate change, with a balance between urban and rural communities. It was also highlighted that opportunities should be beneficial for well-being and the climate. The 2019 Ecology Action Centre's Green Jobs Report was referenced in this area, particularly for Nova Scotia to create 15,000 green jobs each year for the next decade.

Affordable and Inclusive Housing

Some respondents stressed the importance of housing in their vision of what success looks like in an inclusive economy: safe affordable housing is available for all, costs for rent or purchase of a home are fair, everyone has access to home ownership, and there is no more homelessness.

Subsidized housing. Safe subsidized housing should be available for all who need it across the province. This could be backed by a housing strategy that ensures adequate housing is available and that more units are available.

Housing development. Respondents felt that house prices are “ridiculously high”. It was also raised that there needs to be a transparent realty process. New builds should be built at affordable prices and in locations that are close to employment opportunities. In addition, affordable housing should be prioritized over luxury condominiums. Government should require developers to include affordable units in all new developments. Property buyers who are making multiple land purchases should either be discouraged, or they should be taxed at a higher level.

Inclusive Communities

Communities are the foundation of an inclusive economy. They are what builds and keeps an economy going. For respondents, community was one of the main priorities. These communities should be strong, resilient, and diverse. Communities should be able to share their ideas and feedback openly. Success will look like no disparities between communities across the province. Inclusion and support for historically marginalized communities was a point consistently raised by respondents. A key point for this theme was for government to listen during constructive discussions.

Support. An inclusive economy cannot include all without support for all. Respondents felt that this meant everyone should be given equitable opportunities regardless of where they live, gender, race, or income. For this to happen, there needs to be a fundamental shift. Support also needs to be provided through funding and facilitation to enable historically underserved communities to benefit in a sustainable way. Other feedback suggested that support can also come from within communities, by having all “classes” living together and not dividing people by income. This would also see all ages, genders, abilities, and races interacting. Residents should be able to stay and live within their communities to access the services they need so that they should no longer be required to travel for them. Respondents suggested that support for families and seniors be available.

To start, government could provide micro-investments for community projects. Targeted training and support for historically marginalized and underserved communities would be provided to ensure that they develop the skills and networks needed to enter the clean economy.

Indigenous Peoples. Many respondents felt that reparations need to be made to Indigenous Peoples, including the Mi'kmaq. Government should ensure the inclusion of Mi'kmaw traditions and practices into policies, programs, and services.

Climate. People and the planet must be prioritized over corporations and money, especially since climate change can create or exacerbate inequality.

Policy development. Respondents raised that policy development and decision making needs to include more involvement from Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) communities. This would mean that support systems are created by those who would access them, so that all communities and sectors are treated equally and fairly. When involving these communities, BIPOC leaders should be given well compensated positions in all sectors of society.

Living wages. A key theme in feedback received around this focus area was finances. Several respondents suggested that a living wage should be provided to all residents no matter their income.

Role of the environment. As the province looks to address climate change, communities should be encouraged to embrace greener practices. Community gardens were raised as an example of this. In addition to growing food, gardening courses and the benefits of fresh food would be shared.

Food security and access to clean water. As the cost of food rises but wages do not, food security is ever more of a challenge. An inclusive economy ensures everyone is well fed no matter their income or employment status. Residents should also have easy local access to food. Everyone in the province should have access to clean drinking water.

Community activities. Respondents encouraged inclusion in communities by sharing activities. These included community events, art projects, etc. These activities would welcome all ages, support cross cultural experiences and be accessible for all.

“Reach out; listen; have open and regular dialogues. Be respectful, empathetic, supportive partners in achieving change. Communicate clearly about the kinds of changes that we need to achieve, and support more vulnerable groups to help them overcome their barriers. We all need to come together and work together as best as possible, as equals. We can all learn with and from each other.”

- Email respondent

Focus Area 6 – Natural Assets & Biodiversity

What does success look like?

Success looks like a future where no government decision is made without having an environmental impact assessment completed alongside of it. Where the sustainability of our forests, waterways, and lands could be recognized for their vital importance in helping to sustain life. The use of chemicals, harmful pollutants, and practices that negatively impact our oceans, soil, forests, and air would be banned. Where transparency throughout all levels of government over Crown lands and water would exist and the voice of the community would be heard in the actions and decisions made. The strong sentiment echoed by many respondents is that a path to success of protecting our natural assets and biodiversity includes looking at all our environmental decisions under the traditional lens of the Mi'kmaw people.

Success looks like the rejuvenation and restoration of our biodiversity, coastlines, and land to the level needed to create carbon sinks and to help all species (endangered and rare) and human life to thrive. A future where our air, land, and water can be recognized and appreciated as the nurturers needed to help sustain life, in all forms, for future generations to come.

What can we do to encourage change?

There were many consistent themes among the feedback received from the respondents, but the overall sentiment was that action was needed now to protect our natural assets and biodiversity from the impacts of climate change. These comments were further broken down into seven key topics: protecting our land, implementing sustainable forestry, protecting our water and coastlines, engaging communities, protecting our biodiversity, and improving agriculture practices.

Protecting Our Land

Respondents clearly voiced that the time to act on the protection of our province's natural land assets is now. There was a strong sense of worry that if steps are not taken immediately, many of the province's vital land masses will be destroyed, making it difficult for Nova Scotia to fight climate change.

Specific ways in which the province can protect land are:

- Stopping the sale of Owls Head Provincial Park and leaving it as a protected land area. This point received a significant amount of comments.
- Forbidding the sale of Crown lands to corporate developers immediately. No land should ever be sold to foreign developers.
- Implementing more protected areas and parks—both municipally and provincially.
- Expanding Nova Scotia's protected lands to 17 per cent by 2025 and 20 per cent by 2030.
- Protecting landscapes that remove carbon from the atmosphere and act as sinks.
- Giving land back to the Mi'kmaq and making reparations to African Nova Scotians.
- Stopping the sale of coastal Crown lands for private use.
- Embracing programs, like those delivered by DivertNS, who use litter reduction work to help protect natural assets and biodiversity.
- Banning polluting extraction industries like gold mining.
- Stopping coal mining (although some respondents only called for it to not take place on protected lands).
- Looking to examples like the Seawall Trail and using that as a model for other protected areas.
- Restoring vital wetland habitats.

Overall, respondents were adamant about expanding the number of protected land areas and taking necessary measures to ensure they stay protected in the future.

Implementing Sustainable Forestry

Respondents propose that sustaining biodiverse forests is essential to building much-needed carbon sinks. Strong calls were made during the public engagement for government to immediately restore the Biodiversity Act to its full intention and implement the Lahey Report.

Additional sustainable forestry actions were suggested, including:

- Banning the practice of clear-cutting immediately.
- Using ecological forestry practices on Crown lands by 2030.
- Providing support for woodlot owners to transition away from clear-cutting and to get approval from the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC).
- Planting trees that are native to the land.
- Offering support to small woodlot owners to implement sustainable forestry practices.

- Managing forests as carbon sinks.
- Establishing a no cutting rule during bird nesting season (typically May – July).
- Protecting old forest growth and biodiversity.

Protecting Our Water & Coastlines

Deep concern was expressed around the protection of water as a natural and precious resource. Clean water in Nova Scotia's lakes, rivers, watersheds, and oceans was deemed essential. It was felt that immediate steps need to be taken to stop the threats attributing to the erosion of our province's coastline and the pollution of our water from contaminants and to protect riparian zones.

Stop coastal development. Rising sea levels are threatening Nova Scotia's shorelines and eroding coasts. Respondents asked that the government conduct environmental assessments on all coastal development on Crown and private lands to ensure coastline habitat and marine life are preserved. This is also to mitigate future damage to structures that might occur because of rising sea levels. There was a call to stop the practice of infilling of coastal waters for development.

Preserving coastal heritage properties. A couple of respondents noted that there are buildings that have been deemed both historical and in need of saving from the effects of coastal erosion. Action needs to be taken soon to help maintain them for future generations.

Harbour protection plans. One respondent introduced the idea of having laws and regulations set out under a harbour protection plan that could help govern the protection of the coastline and harbour from the harmful impacts of development and use.

Clean water for all. The sentiment relayed through several of the recommendations is that every Nova Scotian, including our Mi'kmaw communities, deserve access to clean drinking water. Calls were made to ensure priority was placed on clean water for drinking and clean technology used to get it into homes.

Provide solutions for effluent pollution. There is still ongoing concern about the effluent in the water that has been a byproduct of the Northern Pulp paper mill. A solution to this clean up needs to be found.

Encourage low carbon marine tourism. Suggestions were made for Nova Scotia to focus on drawing visitors to use the marine environment for recreation in low carbon activities such as surfing, paddle boarding, kayaking, and sailing.

Repairing the Canso Causeway. Some respondents deemed the Canso Causeway as having environmental, safety, and financial challenges. They'd like to see a more modern structure in place that would allow for sea-going ships to pass and allow for the restoration of habitat connectivity of the marine species. There is strong Mi'kmaw traditional ecological knowledge of this area that should be considered when exploring the future of the Canso Strait.

Banning open-pen net finfish farms. Open-pen net finfish farms in Nova Scotia's coastal waters are attributed to adding large amounts of waste into the water and setting conditions to breed diseases which could be harmful to marine ecosystems. There was a strong show of support for government to phase them out by 2025.

Suggestions were also made that:

- Government offer help to owners to help them transition from open-pen net finfish farms to more sustainable aquaculture practices.
- Stricter oversight over current practices and limiting expansion of open-pen net finfish farms.
- Supporting the Coastal Protection Act to help protect our expansive coasts.

Engaging Communities

A strong theme emerged that it is vital for government to engage with Mi'kmaw communities in all environmental conversations. It's an opportunity to access and learn from their wealth of knowledge and their ways of knowing that have been passed down for generations to help nurture and protect our land, water, air, and species. Multiple voices also echoed the need to consult with citizens on all environmental issues or concerns that directly impact their local communities.

Ways to do this are:

- Seeking advice and implementing guidance from the Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Using the practice known as "Netukulimk" to guide all decisions and actions.
- Providing financial support to non-profits like conservation and naturalist groups and others who steward and protect our land and waters.
- Seeking input directly from the local community on vital decisions such as development or new industries that may have a direct impact on the community and the wellbeing of its natural assets, biodiversity, and the people that live there.
- Operating with transparency. Many respondents cited that there was lack of transparency in current government decision making around environmental issues.

Protecting Our Biodiversity

Several suggestions were recommended during the public engagement to help protect, restore, and revitalize our province's biodiversity.

Some of those ideas shared by respondents are:

- Restoring the Biodiversity Act to its original state immediately.
- Reviewing the Species at Risk Act to ensure it's strong enough to protect our endangered and rare species.
- Encouraging people to stop mowing their lawns and allowing them to give way to weeds and wildflowers to help support pollinators.
- Creating spaces within provincial and municipal parks that are free from maintenance and are left to be wild.
- Encouraging incentives for people to turn their lawns into local food gardens for the community at large to benefit from.
- Banning the use of all pesticides, herbicides, and glyphosate immediately.
- Ending the practice of spraying chemicals on species and land.
- Growing urban gardens to help with food scarcity and to increase biodiversity within urban environments.
- Taking measures to protect marine biodiversity.
- Protecting wetlands, seagrass meadows and marshlands. There were many calls to ensure that these remain protected and free from development.
- Creating curriculum around programs such as seed saving, and the importance of healthy ecosystem for communities to learn from and how to use natural solutions to help combat climate change.
- Creating an educational series on the use of recreational all-terrain vehicles (ATV) in nature, the damage they can cause and to discourage use.
- Developing a comprehensive blue carbon framework and protocol that will support the restoration and protection of blue carbon ecosystems.

Improved Agriculture Practices

It's felt that efforts should be taken to move current agriculture practices to more sustainable ones. Respondents feel that this could be done through a series of subsidies offered to the industry, through education, and implementation of new farming practices.

Support organic. It was suggested that we need to move towards having 30 per cent of all food consumed by Nova Scotians be organically grown in the province by 2030. Government needs to support organic farmers and help promote organic and sustainable farming practices. There should also be continued promotion encouraging Nova Scotians to buy local.

Creation of incentives and subsidizes. It was felt by some respondents that incentives and subsidizes are needed to help the agriculture industry move towards more sustainable agriculture practices. Ideas include:

- Investing in moving towards indoor farming.
- Creating incentives for regenerative agriculture.
- Offering subsidies to new farmers, farmers hiring seasonal workers and those implementing sustainable food production.

Move towards a more-plant based diet. A suggestion was made to encourage people to eat less meat to help cut down on cattle greenhouse gas emissions and move people towards more eco-friendly food sources.

Law and Policy

Many respondents felt that very little has been done to date to ensure compliance of environmental legislation and that it was important for this to change immediately.

Mandatory compliance. Requests were made by several respondents to ensure companies, organizations, governments, and landowners comply with all environmental rules and regulations. There were many advocates who called for stricter penalties to be implemented for those that break the law.

More support. Some respondents felt that government needs to invest more in environmental staff to help educate and train the public about the environment and the legislation that governs them, to help conduct environmental assessments, and to help enforce mandatory compliance.

"Reverse course on the biodiversity act and protect private land as well as crown land. The connection between the health of our eco-systems and the health of the populace is inherent and critical to our resilience."

– Cleanfuture.ca submission