



**City of Yellowknife Climate
Action Plan**

What We Heard Report – Phase 1

April 10, 2025

Prepared for:

City of Yellowknife

Prepared by:

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Overview

The City of Yellowknife (“the City”) has engaged Stantec to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP). The purpose of this project is to engage with City staff, interested parties, First Nations, and the public to inform the development of the CAP. The CAP will support the City’s vision for a sustainable future and managing growth for environmental responsibility and economic diversity. The CAP will be a comprehensive strategy and action plan that defines the City’s corporate and community-wide climate goals and creates an action plan for achieving short and long-term climate mitigation and adaptation targets. It will provide the background, modelling, justification, and impact evaluation of tactics for the City to act on climate change. The final CAP will be delivered to the City by the end of August 2025.

1.2 Engagement Purpose & Goals

Climate change affects all of us. It affects our environment, our infrastructure, our economy, and our social and cultural practices. When considering who to engage for this project, we considered who has the potential to be impacted, who the City can partner with, and who would be interested in contributing. Climate discussions are broad and multidisciplinary, and community buy-in is important for long term success.

Through the engagement process we aspired to:

- Raise awareness of the City’s Climate Action Plan Project.
 - Educate the community, Indigenous governments, and interested parties on climate hazards and the City’s vulnerabilities.
- Provide an opportunity for the City to strengthen their relationship with Indigenous governments
- Invite residents to share their perspectives on the City’s current and previous Energy Plans and help the City to establish vision and goals of the new CAP.
- Discuss possible mitigation and adaptation strategies, and collect feedback to understand the barriers and opportunities of each strategy.
 - Develop recommendations that will be effective in reaching the CAP’s visions and goals, and be supported by the City and the community.
- Demonstrate to the community how their input informed the development of the CAP.
- Engage with City administration to establish improved decision-making processes in the CAP.

Recognizing that parties have different interests, may experience different impacts, and have varying levels of technical knowledge, we used the IAP2 Engagement Spectrum to understand each parties'levels of influence and input on the project. The outcomes of this assessment were used to inform the engagement plan and to identify the specific engagement tactics that would be used with each party.



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Engagement Summary
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2.0 ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

2.1 Engagement Tactics

The first phase of engagement for the CAP project took place from December 2024 to March 2025. During this time, the engagement activities were focused on:

- Introducing the CAP project team and process.
- Providing the current climate action context in Yellowknife.
- Sharing information about the climate vulnerability assessment process.
- Reviewing existing and planned City of Yellowknife climate actions.
- Understanding resident concerns and their level of climate change preparedness.
- Outlining next steps for this project.

The input received during this engagement phase will be used to help the team develop the draft CAP. The following table provides a summary of the specific outreach activities and the number of participants.

Date	Method	Location	No. of Attendees
December 01, 2024	Project Website	yellowknife.ca	98 views (2024) 343 views (to date 2025)
December 02, 2024	Letters to Indigenous Governments		3 Letters
January 21, 2025	Public Roundtable	Yellowknife	8 Attendees
January 14, 2025	Public Website	PlaceSpeak	160 Connections 979 Views
January 14 – February 10, 2025	Public Survey	PlaceSpeak	149 Completed Surveys
February 14, 2025	Stakeholder Meeting – NAKA Power (formerly Northland Utilities)	Virtual Meeting	2 Attendees
February 20, 2025	Stakeholder Meeting – GNWT Energy	Virtual Meeting	2 Attendees
February 21, 2025	Stakeholder Meeting – GNWT Environment and Climate Change	Virtual Meeting	2 Attendees
March 5, 2025	Stakeholder Meeting – Local Non--governmental Organizations	Virtual Meeting	9 Attendees
March 6, 2025	NWT Climate Change Youth Council	Virtual Meeting	2 Attendees
March 7, 2025	Stakeholder Meeting – Local Non--governmental Organizations	Virtual Meeting	8 Attendees



2.2 Public Website

A public website was set up using yellowknife.ca and PlaceSpeak to introduce the project, advertise opportunities to get involved, and provide a broad timeline of engagement for the project.

2.3 Letters to Indigenous Governments

A letter from the Mayor of Yellowknife was sent to three Indigenous Governments: Yellowknives Dene First Nation, Tłıchǫ Government, and North Slave Métis Alliance. The letter presented the project and notified that a member of the Stantec engagement team would reach out to arrange a meeting to discuss how the organization would like to be involved.

At the time of this report the only government to respond was the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. Two members of the Stantec engagement team met with the Nation's Chief Executive Officer to discuss how the Nation would like to be involved. Preliminary ideas were shared with the City and discussions are in progress regarding options for involvement.

2.4 Public Roundtable Discussion

As part of the CAP development, a 2-hour public roundtable discussion was held on January 21, 2025. The roundtable was hosted by project team members from the City of Yellowknife and Stantec, and eight members of the public were in attendance.

The goal of the public roundtable discussion was to present the following topics to the Yellowknife public:

- The importance of climate adaptation and mitigation
- The function and scope of the Climate Action Plan (CAP)
- The benefits of developing a CAP
- The status of climate action in the City
- Next steps in the CAP process

Roundtable attendees were encouraged to ask questions and provide comments throughout the discussion.

2.5 Survey

A survey was open to the public through PlaceSpeak from January 14 to February 10, 2025 and 149 participants completed it. The survey results are provided in Section 3.0.

The goal of the public survey was to:

- Raise awareness of the Climate Action Plan and encourage people to get involved.
- Provide information on how the City's climate is projected to change in the coming decades, the impacts of this changing climate and preliminary solutions.



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Engagement Summary

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- Get feedback on:
 - How climate change is affecting residents and businesses
 - The future impacts of climate change residents and businesses are most concerned about
 - How we can best prepare the City to be resilient to the impacts and reduce GHG emissions
 - What residents are doing to adapt to current and future climate change
 - Which of the City's existing/planned climate actions residents support

2.6 Government of Northwest Territories Engagement Session

Stantec staff facilitated two 1-hour engagement sessions with representatives of the Government of Northwest Territories Department of Infrastructure Energy Division and Department of Environment and Climate Change on February 20 and 21, 2025. The goal of the sessions was to identify connections with territorial climate and energy goals and areas for collaboration and to discuss interconnected infrastructure and services that may impact action development for the CAP.

City staff met with GNWT Climate Change staff a second time on March 11, 2025 to discuss the GNWT's draft 2025-2029 NWT Climate Change Action Plan and opportunities for alignment.

2.7 Non-Governmental Organizations Engagement Sessions

Two 1-hour engagement sessions were held with Non-Governmental Organization representatives on March 5 and 7, 2025. Representatives from NWT Association of Communities, Housing NWT, Arctic Energy Alliance, , Alternatives North, Ecology North, Seniors for Climate, St. Pats Green Team, Yellowknife Education District No. 1, and YK Catholic Schools were in attendance. Representatives from YK Car Share, a local cooperative, were in attendance as well. The sessions were led by project team members from the City Planning and Environment Division and Stantec. An online engagement platform, Miro, was used to gather input and notes from these sessions.

YWCA NWT did not attend the sessions, but they provided a letter to share their perspective on actions to include in the Climate Action Plan. Some of the organizations listed above also provided further input in letters. .

The goal of the NGO engagement sessions was to present and discuss the following topics:

- The objective and scope of the CAP.
- Analyses completed to inform the CAP (climate vulnerability assessment and GHG emissions inventories).
- Existing / planned climate action in the City of Yellowknife.
- Gather NGO thoughts and feedback on climate change, climate actions, and the development of the CAP including how the City might be able to support their organization's efforts related to climate change.



2.8 Other Stakeholder Meetings

Other stakeholder meetings included a 1-hour meeting with representatives from NAKA Power (formerly Northland Utilities) on February 14, 2025 and a 1-hour meeting with the NWT Climate Change Youth Council on March 6, 2025. Project team members from the City Planning and Environment Division and Stantec were present. The goal of the meeting with NAKA Power was to discuss impacts and service disruptions the utility is seeing from climate hazards, and any existing adaptation measures they may have in place. The goal of the meeting with the NWT Climate Change Youth Council was to present the project, discuss impacts the group is seeing from climate hazards, concerns the group has about climate change, and ideas they may have for adaptation and mitigation actions. Notes from these meetings are provided in Appendix F.

3.0 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Summary of Survey Results

The survey was available for completion from January 14 to February 10, 2025 and was completed by 149 participants. The majority of participants are very concerned about the impacts of climate change in Yellowknife and they are most concerned about an increased risk of wildfires and increased risk of wildfire smoke. Wildfires and wildfire smoke are the climate hazards that have most impacted residents. More than half of the participants replied that they are “somewhat prepared” and the majority of the rest replied they are either “not prepared” or do not know how prepared they are, with only 6% confident that they are “very prepared”.

The top three actions that participants have already taken or are planning to take to prepare for climate change impacts are developing an emergency preparedness plan and kit, FireSmarting their property, and installing energy efficient windows. Recycling, switching to LED lightbulbs, and doing laundry with cold water are the top three actions that participants are already taking or planning to take to reduce energy consumption.

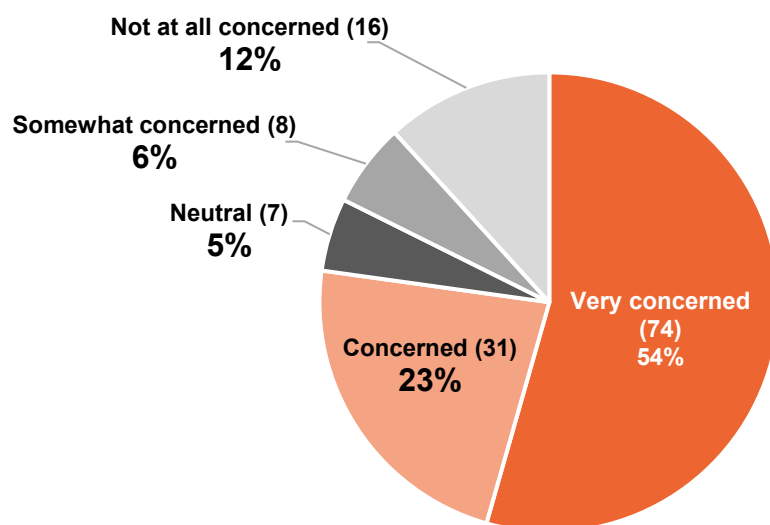
Participants chose strong political or non-governmental leadership as what would help them most to make educated decisions to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. Accessible information on municipal and territorial climate change mitigation initiatives and financial incentives and grants were the second and third choice.

Participants were asked to specify their response if they selected “other” as a response to the survey questions. Comments are summarized below each question and a full list of comments can be found in Appendix C.



3.2 Results of Survey Questions

Question 1 - How concerned are you about the impacts of climate change in Yellowknife?



The majority, 77%, of respondents are very concerned or concerned about the impacts of climate change in Yellowknife.



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Survey Results

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Based on current weather patterns, Yellowknife is projected to experience an increase in extreme hot days, heatwaves, heavy rainfall, high winds, and wildfires.

In the winter, cold days and cold snaps are projected to decrease and winter freeze-thaw cycles are projected to increase. Snowstorms are projected to increase in frequency. These changes will impact our daily life if we do not build capacity to respond and adapt.

Question 2 – In thinking about your day-to-day activities, which impacts of climate change are you most concerned about? Select all that apply.



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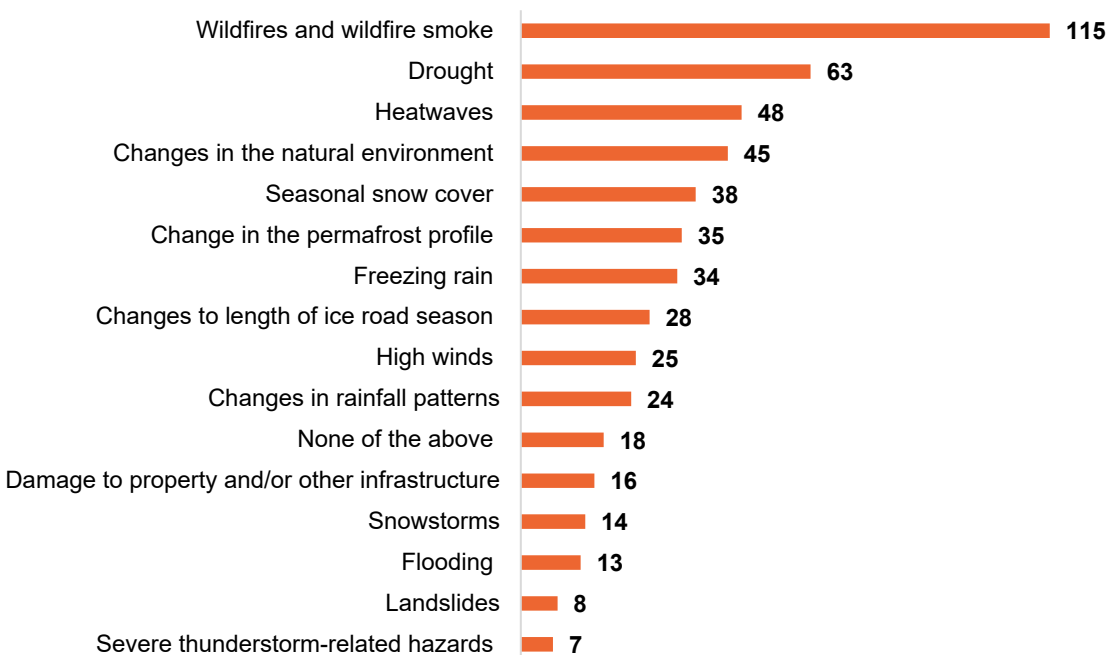
Survey Results

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Residents are most concerned about the increased risk of wildfires. The increased risk of wildfire smoke and of drought were the next impacts that residents are most concerned about. “Other” was selected by 20 respondents and comments included concerns regarding:

- Economic impact and increased cost of living
- Changes to local species and an increase in new invasive species and plant diseases
- Changes in Winter Temperatures (fluctuating), and Snow Conditions in winter which directly impact peoples' accessibility
- Food and disruption of supply chains and access to sustainable food
- Decreased length of safe ice season for hunting
- Changes in water levels and impacts to reliability of hydro-electricity
- Impacts on mental health from of climate change impacts
- any future evacuations due to wildfires
- Impacts to community events such as the Snowking's Winter Festival and the Snowcastle melting early
- Further isolation from the rest of Canada
- Increases in the spending of public funds and restrictions related to climate action policies

Question 3 - Which climate impacts have already affected your day-to-day activities? Select all that apply.



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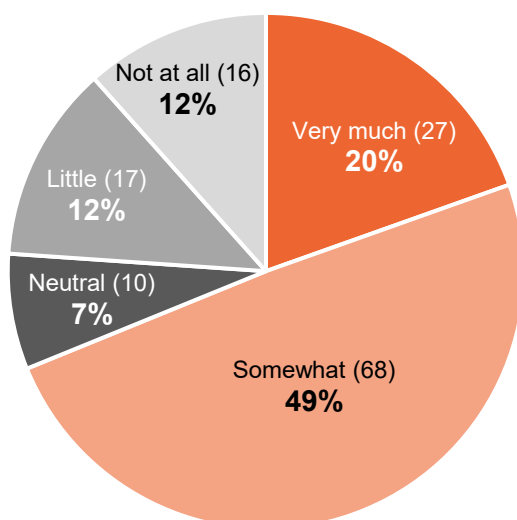
Survey Results

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Of the climate hazards listed, residents have been most impacted by wildfires and wildfire smoke. Nine participants selected “Other” and comments included impacts related to hazards such as:

- Disruptions to power supply
- Impacts to active transportation
- Changes in wildlife presence and migration
- Impacts to residential gardens

Question 4 - To what degree have your day-to-day activities been affected by climate change?



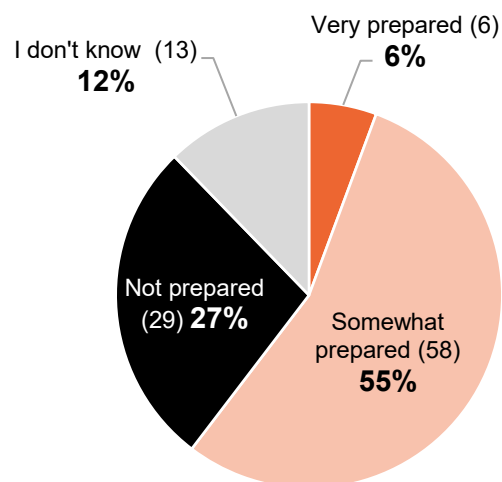
The majority of participants feel that their day-to-day activities have been somewhat or very affected by climate change.



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Survey Results
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Question 5 - How prepared are you for the impacts of climate change?



Efforts could be made to help residents better prepare for the impacts of climate change. More than half of the participants replied that they are “somewhat prepared” and the majority of the rest replied they are either “not prepared” or do not know how prepared they are, with only 6% confident that they are “very prepared”.

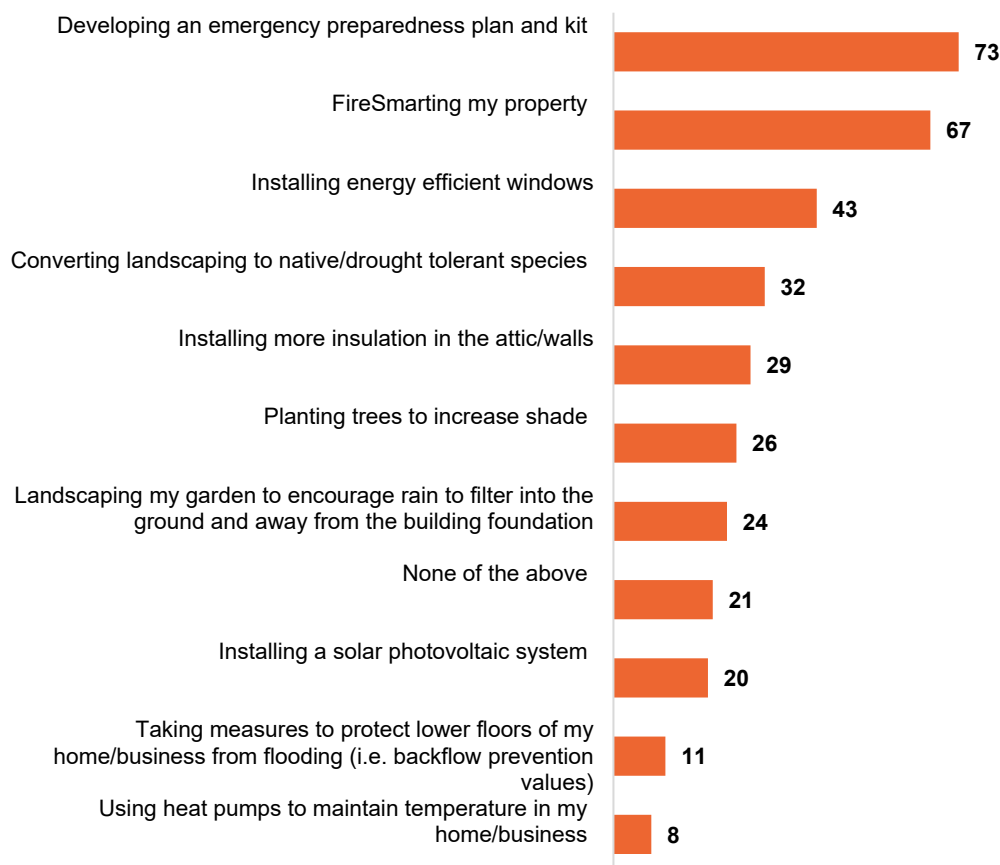


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Survey Results

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Question 6 - Which actions have you already taken or are planning to take (if any) to prepare for climate change impacts? Select all that apply.



Twenty-four participants selected “Other” and comments included:

- Installing a backup power source such as a wood stove or generator
- Purchasing air purifiers and filters
- Purchasing air conditioners and fans
- Installing insulating curtains
- Growing their own food (yard, balcony, indoors)
- Replacing wood siding with metal siding and installing a metal roof
- Considering relocation out of territory

Some participants commented on potential barriers to participating in actions to prepare for climate change. Barriers noted include not being the property owner and being a renter and a lack of information on what to do.

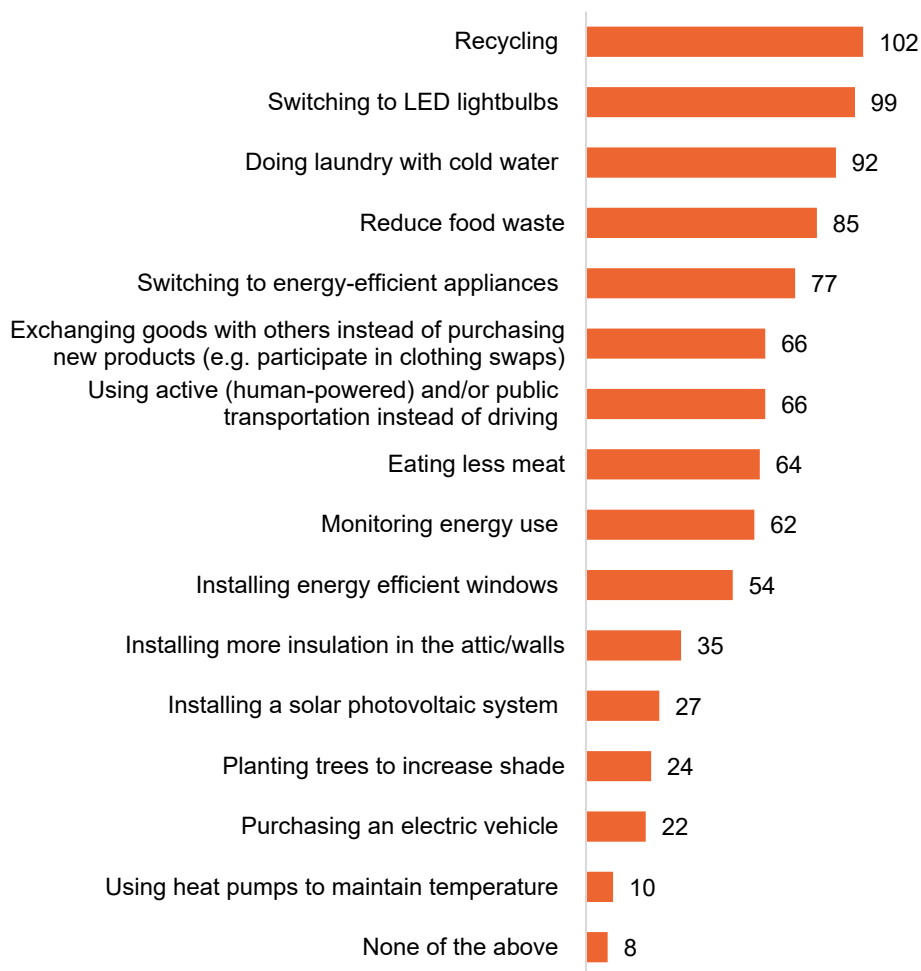


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Survey Results

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Question 7 - Which actions have you already taken or are planning to take (if any) to reduce energy consumption including greenhouse gas emissions? Select all that apply.



Twenty-two participants selected "Other" and comments included:

- Reducing waste by shopping at and donating to thrift stores
- Reducing fuel consumption through less travel by airplane or car
- Consuming local food including fish and foods from local gardens
- Hanging laundry to dry
- Replacing oil heating with pellet heating (boiler)
- Reducing waste by composting
- Use an electric bike



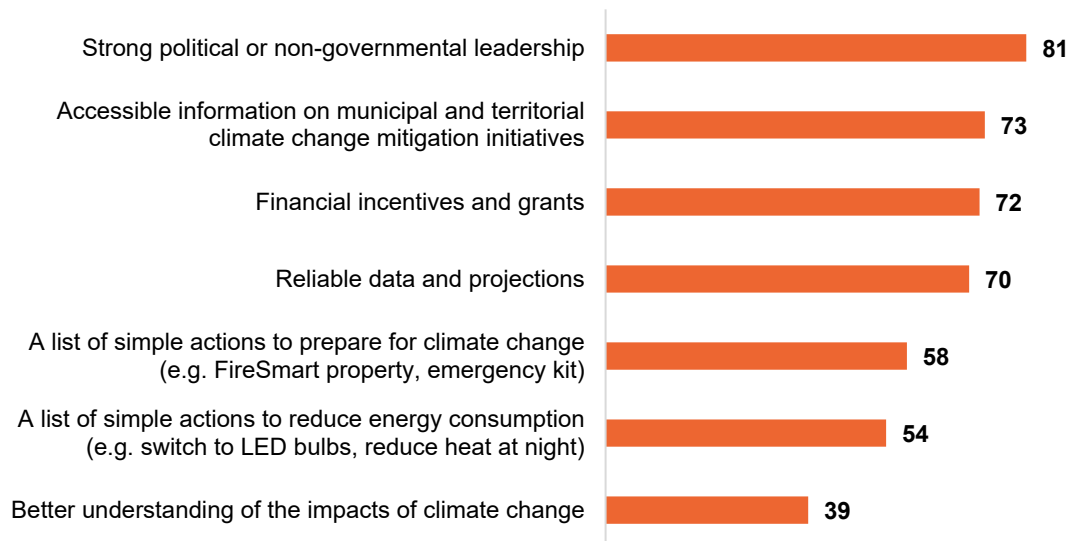
CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

Survey Results

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Some participants commented that they would participate in more actions if they had access to EV chargers in their apartment building, more information on ways to reduce energy and on financial incentives such as rebates for electric bikes or solar panels.

Question 8 - What would help you make educated decisions to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate? Select all that apply.



Most participants selected that “Strong political or non-governmental leadership” would help them make educated decisions to prepare for the impacts of a changing climate. Twenty-two participants selected “Other” and comments included:

- Financial incentives and policy changes directed at residential rental building owners to encourage changes such as electric vehicle chargers, air conditioning, and air filters
- Financial support for specific products or technology that reduce energy consumption
- Changes to maintenance and street design to encourage more people to choose active transportation

A number of comments were related to information and what should be included, who it should be targeted at, or how it should be presented:

- Accessible information on energy consumption beyond personal housing and transportation such as consumption related to communications and online shopping and deliveries
- Accessible and transparent information on the outcomes and impacts of existing initiatives such as recycling
- Information or actions tailored to Yellowknife and the North
- Information or actions tailored to multi-unit buildings (e.g., condos and apartments) and owners, condo boards, or renters



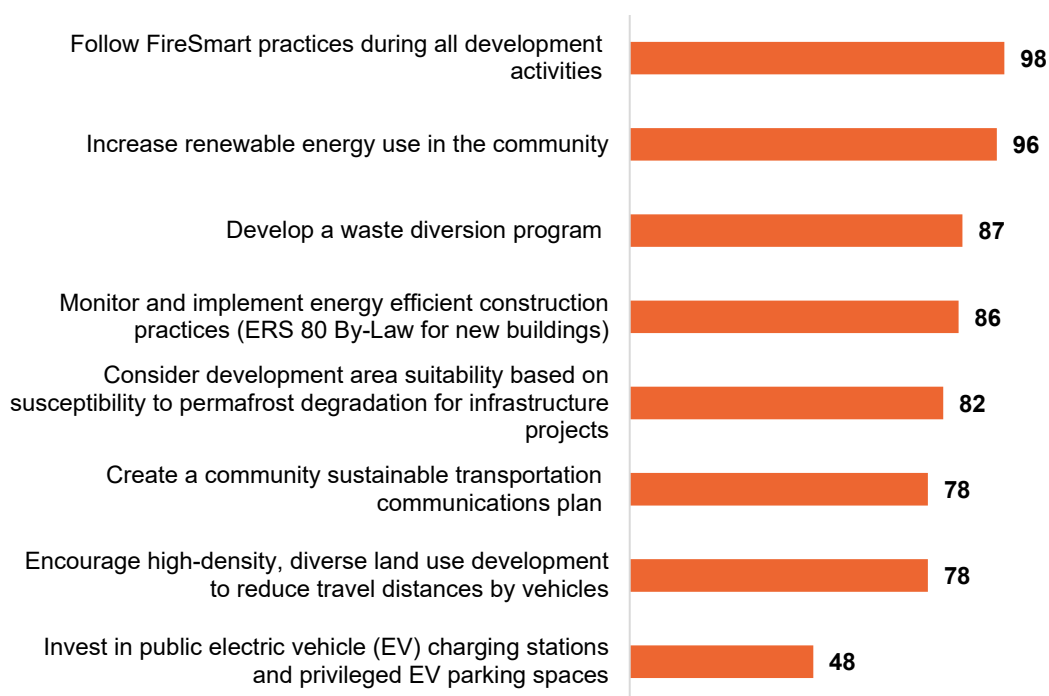
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- Information related to daily activities or simple actions and their impact (e.g., fast food, packaging, food waste)
- Inclusive, transparent, and well-rounded information

Question 9 - The City of Yellowknife's Community Plan and Corporate and Community Energy Action Plan 2015-2025 include the climate actions below. Which of the existing/planned climate actions do you support? Select all that apply.



Participants most strongly support the actions: “Follow FireSmart practices during all development activities” and “Increase renewable energy use in the community” with almost 100 responses each. Participants least support the action “Invest in public electric vehicle (EV) charging stations and privileged EV parking spaces” which received half as many responses.



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Survey Results

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Question 10 - Do you have any other information to share that could help the City develop the 2026-36 Climate Action Plan (i.e. other ways you are impacted by climate change or areas of concern that should be considered in the plan)?

Participants provided 84 comments which have been summarized here, and a full list is included in Appendix C.

Participants strongly expressed the importance of transparent communication from the City regarding climate actions and reporting on progress and outcomes. Communication related suggestions included:

- Importance of providing information to avoid the spread of misinformation
- Education opportunities and materials, including suggestions such as supporting educational booths at community events like the Farmer's Market
- Information on what people can be doing themselves and how their actions support adaptation and mitigation efforts for Yellowknife
- Promoting eco-tourism as a means of education and working climate initiatives into business opportunities
- More engagement opportunities as the CAP is developed and for the City to be involved in existing events organized by non-government organizations
- Community involvement in the implementation of the CAP either through a committee that would be involved in the implementation of and reporting on the CAP or through opportunities to be involved in actions
- More communication about emergency planning and emergency shelters or support for extreme weather events
- Removing barriers such as making online forms easier to use (including removing requirements for a username and password), accepting online payment methods, allowing for digital solutions to avoid the need for printing

Many comments included concerns related to wildfire prevention and emergency planning. Participants noted areas of concern including Old Town and maintenance of natural areas and fire breaks. Comments included requests for support during wildfire smoke events including providing 'clean air' areas for the public such as access to the field house walking track or other facilities and support for residents related to fire smarting their property.

Participants expressed strong support for improvements to waste management and diversion including:

- Suggestions to improve and expand the composting program such as providing bins at all City facilities and involving businesses and multi-unit residential buildings
- Curb-side pick up for recycling and more recycling depots
- Bylaw changes or incentives to guide changes to packaging or products
- Transparent communication related to waste including the outcomes of recycling and composting efforts



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Participants wanted to see a strong focus on mitigation with the City acting as a leader and the City fleet or other municipal services (even if contracted) using alternative fuel sources such as electric vehicles or renewable diesel. Suggestions included changes to building standards and bylaws to enforce or incentivize development that supports the City's adaptation and mitigation goals.

Participants expressed a desire to see more investment in active transportation planning and infrastructure (including bike lanes and trail network connection) and year-round maintenance, in particular snow removal.

Participants requested that the CAP prioritize:

- Ensuring there is a reliable power supply and exploring alternative energy sources at both City and resident levels including a district heating system, wood and biomass heating, solar panels, and heat pumps
- Infrastructure maintenance and operations and maintenance activities such as fire-smarting and snow clearing
- Maintaining green space and trees and Tin Can Hill was highlighted as a good example and an area of importance

Participants want to ensure that social impacts are accounted for in the CAP and that vulnerable members of the community and social equity is considered when developing actions.

Participants expressed concern about increases to the cost of living in Yellowknife (including insurance costs) that they are seeing already and possible future increases either from climate impacts or related to taxes and the cost of implementing the CAP. Concern included impacts to businesses and residents.

Food security was an important topic for participants, and they suggested exploring ways to support growing food locally including education, tax breaks, grants, reduced hydro rates, bylaw changes, finding areas to support agricultural use within city limits, or exploring public access to a year-round greenhouse (the Old Ruth Inch Memorial Pool was put forward as a potential location).

Several participants raised concerns about electric vehicles and that the full life span of electric vehicles from production to disposal needs to be accounted for as well as how the energy used to charge them is being produced. Though participants generally expressed support for EV's, they want to see solutions beyond EVs.



4.0 COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS

This section provides an analysis of the comments received through all engagement methods. A detailed list of all comments received can be found in the appendices.

4.1 Summary of Engagement Themes

Leadership

Stakeholders see the 2026-2036 CAP as an opportunity for the City of Yellowknife to act as a climate action champion for the Territory and for residents within the city by setting strong targets, such as net zero by 2050, and leading by example in the city with compost and recycle bins at City facilities, using electric vehicles for the City fleet, increasing the energy efficiency of municipal buildings, and investing in alternative energy sources and active transportation. Residents are looking to the City for guidance on how to prepare for emergencies, including wildfire, and strong emergency management planning.

Communication

Participants requested reporting or updates on the status of actions set out in the CAP as well as a central place where residents can find information about climate data, emissions data, and climate action initiatives.

Reporting back to the community on outcomes of initiatives such as the work that was done to explore district heating. Residents want to know what is working and what isn't, what has been explored and what is being explored. They also want to celebrate successes and would like to see statistics on how much waste has been diverted or energy saved by existing initiatives.

Stakeholders see an advisory committee, which could include representatives from GNWT, residents, businesses, and local organizations, as an important way of keeping lines of communication open, providing support, and exploring funding opportunities. Exploring partnerships with First Nations could also lead to solutions to achieve climate action targets.

Educate and Inform

Businesses and residents are looking for guidance on how to prepare for climate impacts like wildfire and poor air quality (guidelines on FireSmarting and air filters or cooling options) and guidance on how to be more energy efficient and reduce their emissions as renters, homeowners, and businesses. Stakeholders expressed interest in being involved in public education opportunities and the City could look to partner with stakeholders such as NAKA Power, the GNWT, and local organizations to create educational material, guidance documents, and host events.



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Improve Waste Diversion

Improving waste diversion is very important to participants. People want to see more communication and education about the waste management systems including composting, recycling, and opportunities for reuse. Participants suggested that more investment in waste diversion could include looking for ways to turn waste into energy and expanding the composting program to include businesses and multi-unit residential buildings.

Food Security and Local Production

Food security, mitigating supply chain disruptions, and investing in local production is important for participants. Suggestions included:

- Exploring ways to support growing food locally including community gardens, education, tax breaks, grants, reduced hydro rates, and bylaw changes,
- Finding areas to support agricultural use within city limits, or exploring public access to a year-round greenhouse
- Partnering with the GNWT to look into local food production opportunities
- Refining plans related to food hubs and distribution during emergencies

Active Transportation

Participants expressed concern with the current state of active transportation in the City. They would like to see investment in network connectivity, maintenance (in particular snow removal), and improvements. Participants suggested including actions in the CAP that will encourage residents to shift to active transportation and finding ways for City planning and development to support active transportation.

Emergency Preparedness Planning and Wildfires

Emergency preparedness planning and knowing the City is prepared, particularly for wildfires, is important to participants. People want to see the emergency management plans and have a clear understanding of what support is available to them and what is expected of them during climate related events and emergencies.

Wildfire prevention including actions related to FireSmarting, areas of concern, and maintenance of natural areas and fire breaks is something participants want to see in the CAP.

Priorities to Keep in Mind

Participants expressed a desire to see an increase in mitigation efforts and suggestions included:

- Changes to building standards and bylaws to enforce or incentivize more energy efficient development



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- Ensuring there is a reliable power supply and exploring alternative energy sources at both City and resident levels including a district heating system, wood and biomass heating, solar panels (potential co-ops), wind, and heat pumps
- Working land stewardship into the climate actions including maintaining green space and trees, protecting natural spaces such as wetlands as carbon stores, including water protection

Participants want to ensure that social impacts are accounted for in the CAP and that vulnerable members of the community and social equity is considered when developing actions.

Participants expressed concern about increases to the cost of living in Yellowknife that they are seeing already and possible future increases either from climate impacts or related to taxes and the cost of implementing the CAP. Participants also want to see affordable electricity remain a priority as energy alternatives are explored and actions are developed.

4.2 Conclusions and Next Steps

The main takeaways from our engagement are that communication, education, and engagement are key to creating an effective CAP for Yellowknife.

Information for staff and decision-makers to consider as they move forward with developing the CAP is that guidance on emergency preparedness planning and adaptation measures are important ways to help the Yellowknife residents prepare for the current and future impacts of climate change. Investment in improving waste diversion and active transportation is a focus for residents and could encourage more residents to support mitigation efforts.

4.3 What's Next

Preliminary discussions for engagement with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation are in progress and it will be important to follow up as the planning moves forward.

City staff will continue to work with Stantec on developing the draft CAP and future public engagement opportunities include:

- City staff will host a booth at the 2025 Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce Spring Trade Show
- Draft climate actions online public survey
- Public open house

After incorporating public feedback on the draft CAP, the project team will present the CAP to Council and a final CAP will be posted on the City's website.

