

# 2024

## Choose Green Municipal Leaders: Election Toolkit

*For voters and stakeholders throughout municipalities in Nova Scotia*



Ecology Action Centre

# Environment and municipalities

All Nova Scotia municipalities will be holding elections on Oct. 19, 2024. The results of these elections will set the tone for local environmental action for the next four years. Our province is growing faster than ever before, resulting in more pressure on our housing, services and the environment. In addition, Nova Scotia is facing more frequent and intense storms, increased risk of flooding and forest fires, warmer temperatures and sea level rise – all impacts of our changing climate. Municipal climate action plans are crucial for addressing these challenges and effective local leadership can ensure these plans are implemented. Now is the time to be ambitious and committed in building our communities around sustainability. This election season, you can help make climate and environmental justice top election issues.

## Introduction to the Ecology Action Centre

The **Ecology Action Centre** is a member-based environmental charity in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Since 1971, we've taken leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. Learn more at [ecologyaction.ca](https://ecologyaction.ca).

## How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to help you, as a community member or representative of a community organization, to engage your candidates in your municipality's environmental issues. The toolkit provides background information and key facts for top issues with corresponding questions to ask your candidates. We have also included a sample email for you to use or you can keep a copy of this toolkit on your fridge to engage with candidates!

# How to use this toolkit

This toolkit contains:

- Top environmental issues for the 2024 municipal elections
- Key background information and facts for each issue
- Questions to ask candidates related to each issue
- Tips to identify good answers; and
- Sample emails to connect directly with candidates.

This toolkit is not a complete summary of all environmental and community issues in Nova Scotian municipalities. Each municipality in Nova Scotia is unique and may encounter distinct challenges. These are simply a handful of topics and issues that we would like to hear from candidates on. We highly encourage you to work beyond this guide and ask candidates about the issues most relevant in your community!

## Election issues in this guide

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# Affordable and complete communities

Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home. Our province is growing, with more people moving to Nova Scotia than ever before. As municipalities change and grow, municipal governments must ensure they are taking strong action to make housing more affordable and accessible for all. Affordable housing is primarily the responsibility of the provincial government, and municipal planners are restricted by the Municipal Government Act, but municipalities still have many tools they can use to improve affordability and build complete communities.

Prioritizing complete communities means building towns and villages that aim to meet the basic needs of all residents. Community planning should incentivize building diverse housing types, including options for renting, owning and aging in place. Complete communities should also have safe roads for walking and biking, connect major hubs for shopping and services, offer public transit where possible and be close to parks and places for recreation. Community planning should also protect our valuable greenspaces and natural resources, including farmland and cultural landscapes.





# Affordable and complete communities:

## Questions to ask

- What do you see as the main barriers to building affordable housing and complete communities? How do you propose to address these barriers?
- How are environmental factors and environmental conservation being considered in the planning and development of our communities? What is important to consider as we grow?
- African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw and newcomer communities have historically been left out of planning processes. How are these communities involved in the planning process for housing development? What mechanisms are in place for public feedback?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the relationship between the municipalities and the province (they are governed by the Municipal Planning Act) and what challenges and opportunities this poses.</li> <li>• Express an understanding of the housing crises and need for more diverse housing options in all types of communities for all people.</li> <li>• Consider current infrastructure (e.g., transportation, utilities) needs or challenges to community building.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the importance of protecting our natural assets as we grow.</li> <li>• Make tangible commitments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aspirational and theoretical responses that aren't rooted in actionable steps.</li> <li>• Jargon or planning terms that the general public wouldn't understand.</li> <li>• Refusal to take on responsibility for housing issues at the municipal scale.</li> </ul>

# Transit and active transportation

Municipalities throughout Nova Scotia need to encourage the use of clean transportation and improve the safety, reliability and efficiency of our transportation network. As demographics change, municipalities should invest in sustainable transportation options to accommodate the needs and preferences of their communities.

Municipalities that have developed active transportation plans are responsible for following through on these plans. Road safety is a critical part of all communities across Nova Scotia. The design and maintenance of our roadways should be based on the needs of our most vulnerable road users, making sure that municipalities will advocate for and implement proper infrastructure to support safe options for active and sustainable transportation.

Communities with transit opportunities (public or community-based) should support Nova Scotia's Accessibility Act, which recommends removing barriers to public transportation and safe mobility options.

## Learn more:

- Does your community have an AT Plan? [ecologyaction.ca/nova-scotias-active-transportation-future](https://ecologyaction.ca/nova-scotias-active-transportation-future)
- Active Transportation Myth Busting Page: [activeatlantic.ca/resources/mythbusting](https://activeatlantic.ca/resources/mythbusting)
- Standards for built environment accessibility: [novascotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment/](https://novascotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment/)



# Transit and active transportation:

## Questions to ask

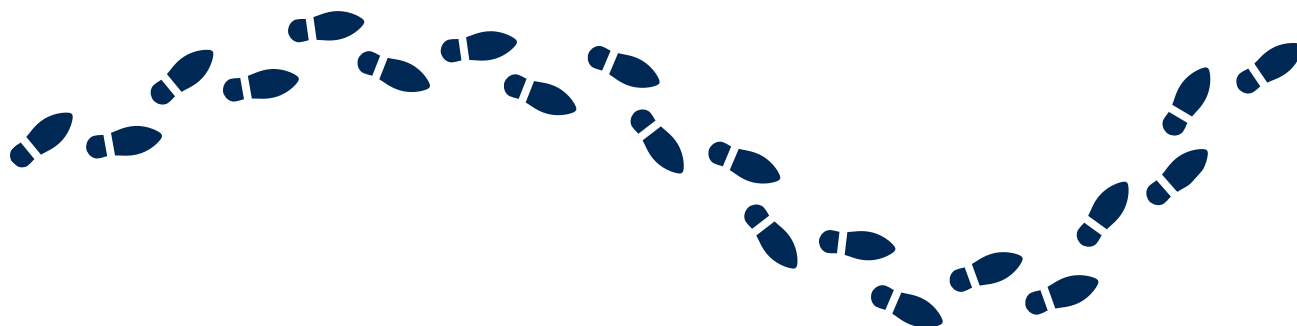
- *For municipalities with public transit options:* Funding is a barrier to providing a reliable transit system. How will you make sure transit remains a priority that you will invest in?
- *For municipalities with community transit options or no transit options:* How can we increase or develop transit options available to our community, especially for those with high priority needs, such as accessing medical support?
- Many communities are designed for car dependence. How might you provide safe alternative transportation options so that community members can age in place? What municipal plans or strategies are in place to develop a core active transportation network?
- How will you support or advocate for rural active transportation projects?
- What will you do to ensure collaboration with communities and underrepresented groups for sustainable and active transportation infrastructure development?
- What will you do to improve the safety of your municipality's roads, and when applicable, the province's roads that pass through your municipality?
- Changing our transportation usage means improving our systems but also changing our habits. How will you demonstrate leadership to change both systems and habits?



# Transit and active transportation:

## Questions to ask

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize that many Nova Scotia residents do not ride a bicycle because they do not feel safe.</li> <li>• Recognize that connected, convenient and safe walking and cycling multi-use trails are needed to encourage more people to walk/bike for transportation.</li> <li>• Commit to investing in transit by developing a community transit plan or increasing the size of a fleet over the next five years.</li> <li>• Commit to implementing municipal active transportation plans that already exist.</li> <li>• Consider social equity as an essential part of transportation planning. This means recognizing that some planning practices have affected certain communities more than others, prioritizing certain neighbourhoods to make sure all community members' needs are met and using equity maps (showing income, visible minorities, disability, education levels and other factors) in decision making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myths that there are not enough people cycling to invest in bike lanes/multi-use trails or that bicycle infrastructure is too expensive.</li> <li>• Thinking the need for transit is not proven. (Caution: With an aging population that may not have access to vehicles, our communities need sustainable transport options.)</li> <li>• Prioritizing parking* over the needs of people who walk, bike or take transit. (*With the exception of accessible parking).</li> <li>• Defaulting to police enforcement as the solution to making streets safe.</li> </ul>





# Protecting green space

Green spaces, such as parks and other protected areas, offer essential environmental services like reducing pollution, adapting to climate change, maintaining biodiversity and providing spaces for recreation.

Many beloved wild places are not actually protected under the law and can therefore be converted to another purpose. Municipalities need to make strong commitments to conserving these assets as communities grow. Environmental conservation of a green and blue network – including parks, forests, wetlands and watercourses – is integral to human and environmental health, well-being and prosperity of a municipality.

Good land use planning by a municipality is essential to retaining green spaces and all the benefits these areas provide. All members of a community should have opportunities to enjoy and benefit from public parks and green spaces.

Wetlands are also an important part of climate change resiliency for our communities. They store carbon in their soil, filter and replenish groundwater and can help to safeguard our homes and communities during extreme weather events such as floods, storms, and fires. Protecting these natural assets, particularly in communities where they are vulnerable to destruction and degradation from development, is key, and the responsibility of all levels of government.



# Protecting green space:

## Questions to ask

- What current municipal initiatives or policies are in place to protect our important green spaces and natural assets?
- Does the municipality do an inventory of the natural assets we depend on, such as using the Natural Assets Initiative approach?
- What can the municipality do to improve the protection of wetlands?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge the importance of a protected network of green spaces and commit to safeguarding what the municipality has.</li> <li>• Show curiosity about how municipalities can assess their natural assets (most candidates may not know about this).</li> <li>• Realize that municipalities have jurisdiction over managing the land around wetlands, and not usually over the wetlands themselves.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking that the job is done. There is often not enough green space truly protected in municipalities, and municipalities often don't have a handle on the natural assets, like forests and wetlands, in their municipalities.</li> <li>• Claiming that only the province has the ability to manage and protect wetlands.</li> </ul>

### Learn more:

- Ecology Action Centre's Wetland Toolkit - [ecologyaction.ca/our-work/coastal-water/wetlands-water#wetlands-toolkit](https://ecologyaction.ca/our-work/coastal-water/wetlands-water#wetlands-toolkit)
- Natural Assets Initiative - [mnai.ca/](https://mnai.ca/)
- Valuing Parks as Natural Assets - [ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2021/sections/nature/stories/valuing-parks-as-natural-infrastructure](https://ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2021/sections/nature/stories/valuing-parks-as-natural-infrastructure)

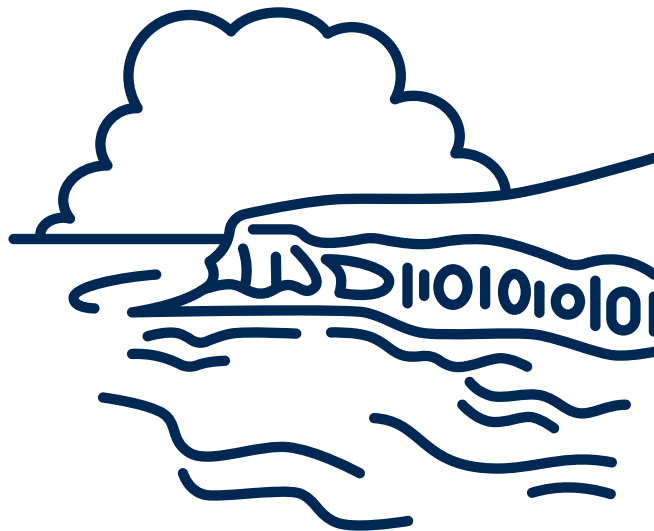
# Coastal protection

Another key government responsibility regarding climate change adaptation is protecting our coastline from inappropriate developments. For example, it does not make sense to build houses in areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion.

The Coastal Protection Act (CPA) is a highly anticipated piece of provincial legislation that would have been the first major step in Nova Scotia, and first of its kind in Canada, for coastal climate change adaptation. The CPA would: provide protection for our vital coastal ecosystems, eliminate inappropriate coastal development and preserve the dynamic and resilient nature of our coasts to better withstand climate change. While the CPA received full party support in 2019, it was shelved by the province at the end of February 2024. As a consequence, much of the responsibility of coastal protection has now been downloaded onto municipalities.

**Learn more:**

- Context regarding Coastal Protection Act - [ecologyaction.ca/cpa](https://ecologyaction.ca/cpa)
- Media resource about Coastal Protection Act - [cbc.ca/1.7125745](https://cbc.ca/1.7125745)



# Coastal protection: Questions to ask

- What will you do to act on coastal protection at the municipal level?
- Will you push the province to implement the Coastal Protection Act?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Commit to pushing the province to implement the Coastal Protection Act and regulations, while also working towards passing municipal bylaws on coastal protection.</li><li>• Explore additional ways to build climate-resilient coastal communities, including working with natural environments, like wetlands and vegetated coastlines, to protect coastal homes and communities.</li><li>• Recognize the important role that coastal ecosystems play in protecting biodiversity and acting as a buffer between coastal communities and the rising ocean.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Claiming that private landowners should have the sole responsibility to prepare for and address coastal climate change on their land.</li></ul>



# Aquaculture

Seafarming oysters, mussels, scallops and seaweed can contribute significantly to our local economies while delivering environmental benefits. With appropriate government support, sustainable forms of aquaculture could offer tens of millions of dollars to local communities, help diversify our seafood economy, improve regional food security, provide small-business ownership opportunities and contribute to healthy marine ecosystems. Municipal leaders can support these good jobs and small-scale shellfish and seaweed farms that are appropriately placed in their communities.

For more than a decade, consecutive provincial governments have instead focused on expanding sea-cage, industrial salmon farming around our bays, despite significant opposition in coastal communities. The negative environmental impacts of sea-cage salmon aquaculture have been well documented in Canada and beyond, and the benefits mostly flow to the pockets of multi-national corporations.

While the province is responsible for aquaculture administration and regulation, municipalities have a big role to play in supporting constituents who have organized to resist industrial salmon farming at the local level. Municipalities can also vocally support a transition away from open-net pen salmon farming altogether in the province (which is happening in British Columbia). This election season represents an opportunity for municipal leaders to push Nova Scotia to stop salmon farming and instead work with municipalities to build sustainable, family-owned shellfish and seaweed farms – a better fit for Nova Scotia's coastal communities.

## Learn more:

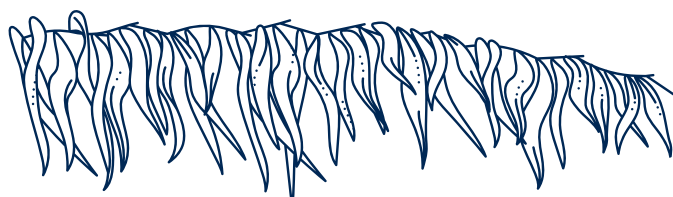
- Ecology Action Centre on sustainable aquaculture: [ecologyaction.ca/our-work/marine/sustainable-aquaculture](https://ecologyaction.ca/our-work/marine/sustainable-aquaculture)
- Environmental group pushing for N.S. government to shut down open-net pen fish farming: [cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-37-mainstreet-ns/clip/16078083](https://cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-37-mainstreet-ns/clip/16078083)
- Video: Push to shut down N.S. open-net pen fish farming continues: [cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6435107](https://cbc.ca/player/play/video/9.6435107)
- Groups call for end to open net pen aquaculture in Nova Scotia: [halifaxexaminer.ca/government/province-house/groups-call-for-end-to-open-net-pen-aquaculture-in-nova-scotia/](https://halifaxexaminer.ca/government/province-house/groups-call-for-end-to-open-net-pen-aquaculture-in-nova-scotia/)

# Aquaculture

## Questions to ask

- Do you support a transition away from open-net pen salmon aquaculture in Nova Scotia?
- Would you commit to providing support for sustainable shellfish and seaweed sea farming as blue economy options for your municipality?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clearly support a transition away from open-net pen salmon farming in Nova Scotia.</li><li>• Support the growth of small-scale, family-owned shellfish and seaweed farms that have right-sized ecosystem protections in place.</li><li>• Show concern about the impacts of open-net pen salmon farming on ecosystems, wild Atlantic salmon and global fish populations.</li><li>• Commit to working with the province to move open-net pen salmon farms out of the water.</li><li>• Recognize that municipalities can lead on Aquaculture Development Areas, which are areas that only allow shellfish and seaweed farming, as a community economic development tool.</li><li>• Support a moratorium on the development of new open-net pen salmon farming sites until the province consults Nova Scotians on whether they support the continuation of salmon farming.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Claiming that sea cage salmon farming provides vast revenue and many good jobs for coastal communities in Nova Scotia.</li><li>• Claiming that salmon farming is part of the solution to feeding the world and reducing carbon impact.</li><li>• Supporting all types of aquaculture without differentiating between shellfish and seaweed farming and salmon farming, which are vastly different in terms of practice and impact.</li><li>• Passing responsibility to the province for deciding the vision for aquaculture in Nova Scotia.</li><li>• Showing blanket support for all types of shellfish and seaweed development, regardless of ownership, size, scale or impact.</li><li>• Claiming that Nova Scotia has 'gold standard regulations' for aquaculture globally.</li></ul>





# Action on climate

Communities across Nova Scotia have already begun to experience the devastating effects of climate change. In the summer of 2023, the government of Nova Scotia spent \$122 million more than planned on extreme weather events, which included unprecedented wildfires covering significant tracts of the province, and what one mayor called “biblical” flooding, which killed four people. This tragic loss of life was accompanied by uninsured property damage worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

All levels of government are responsible for enacting adaptation and mitigation plans to address the risks that climate change poses to health, the economy, community safety and natural areas. As Nova Scotia works to get off coal and to power 80 per cent of our grid with renewables by 2030, municipalities have an important role to make the transition away from fossil fuels fair and accessible for all. Effective municipal climate change policy must address the most significant sources of greenhouse gas emissions, including buildings (new and old) and transportation.<sup>1</sup> Municipalities must also prepare to manage the impacts of climate change. These can include increasingly frequent and severe weather events such as hurricanes, flooding, heat waves and cold snaps.

<sup>1</sup> Useful measures can include:

- An official, public commitment that any new municipal buildings will be built to the highest possible energy efficiency standard.
- An official, public commitment that any new municipal vehicles will be electric.
- A detailed plan for Community Energy Systems.
- Guidance services for residents of all income levels to help them get provincial and national heat pump rebates. Heat pumps and modern HVAC systems are efficient tools that both reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality, comfort and ventilation during heat waves.
- Working with developers to ensure new buildings meet the Net Zero Energy Ready standard at minimum. A Net-Zero Energy Ready building is designed to produce as much energy from on-site renewable energy sources as it consumes, but it does not have the renewable energy source installed and may never have it installed. These buildings can be more affordable than Net-Zero Energy buildings (which produce, each year, as much energy from on-site renewable energy sources as they consume) and can still be very energy efficient.
- Minimum and maximum temperature bylaws for landlords, protecting residents from extreme temperatures.
- Timelines for replacing diesel buses with electric buses.
- Ramping up electric vehicle (EV) charging-station availability so that EV users have the same access to fueling as gasoline users.
- A system to recover energy from organic waste.

## Action on climate:

# Questions to ask

- What will you do to ensure long-term, predictable funding to improve energy efficiency in old and new buildings?
- How will you use municipal resources to help residents navigate provincial and federal funding for energy retrofits in their homes?
- How will you support continued purchase of electric buses and public education on their importance?
- What should the municipality do to incentivize builders to build to the highest possible standard of efficiency?
- How do you think your municipality should use federal and provincial supports for climate planning, particularly around community energy systems such as thermal energy, district heating and cooling and shared renewable sources like solar farms?
- How will the municipality support federal and provincial net-zero targets and keep us on-track to get off coal by 2030?

### Learn more:

- The Green Jobs Report highlights how Nova Scotia can boost the economy by funding employment strategies for green job sectors: [ecologyaction.ca/our-work/energy-climate/just-transition#green-jobs](https://ecologyaction.ca/our-work/energy-climate/just-transition#green-jobs)
- Green Municipal Fund, with details on community energy systems and systems to recover energy from organic waste: [greenmunicipalfund.ca](https://greenmunicipalfund.ca)
- Energize Bridgewater, a deep-energy-retrofit program for homeowners and renters, to improve energy efficiency in homes: [energizebridgewater.ca](https://energizebridgewater.ca)



# Action on climate:

## Questions to ask

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the need for swift action on climate change, understand the importance of achieving steep emission reductions and show commitment to taking mitigation actions.</li> <li>• Recognize that municipalities of all sizes have a role to play in solutions, and that there are supports including funding available from other levels of government.</li> <li>• Show a willingness to use available resources, including staff time and bylaws, to achieve objectives.</li> <li>• Show an interest in promoting the benefits of building efficient buildings, and retrofitting for improved efficiency. Benefits include creating new and interesting jobs, especially for youth, women, African Nova Scotians, newcomers and Mi'kmaw tradespeople.</li> <li>• Show a willingness to use their position to be an advocate for climate mitigation work at other levels of government.</li> <li>• Show a little knowledge of and a lot of enthusiasm for renewables, electric vehicles and improved efficiency standards for old and new buildings.</li> <li>• Show an understanding of federal and provincial laws and regulations and funding sources to support clean energy transition in Nova Scotia.</li> <li>• Show an interest in regulating fossil fuel emissions and planning for the phaseout of fossil fuel plants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overemphasis on new technologies, instead of tried and tested energy efficiency and renewable energy.</li> <li>• Assuming climate commitments are only under a national or provincial scope, with the attitude that "We're too small to make any difference on that issue."</li> <li>• Siding with a "business as usual" model that does not recognize the need to drastically reduce emissions.</li> <li>• Suggesting that more research is needed. (Caution: The research has been done, including by municipal staffers across Nova Scotia).</li> <li>• Considering hydrogen, natural gas, oil, coal and uranium 'green jobs.' (Caution: All produce greenhouse gas emissions when used for energy production. Any job relating to biomass that is not sustainably harvested and efficiently burned is also not considered green.)</li> </ul>

# Energy poverty

Energy poverty—defined as affecting households paying more than 6 per cent of their income on energy bills—is a serious issue across Nova Scotia, where nearly half of households can't afford electricity, heating and cooling of their home. Rural communities tend to have a higher percentage of households living in energy poverty compared to urban areas. The high rate of energy poverty is the result of two related factors: high (and spiking) energy costs and high rates of overall poverty. A new report commissioned by the Energy Poverty Task Force proposes a universal service program that would subsidize home energy costs for households under a certain income, help households in arrears pay them off, create a crisis intervention fund for those with significant arrears and ensure access to energy efficiency supports for all households in energy poverty.

## Learn more:

- A Dartmouth case study using an affordable multi-unit residential building. The case study focuses on panelized retrofits, an innovative method of deep energy retrofit to reduce emissions from existing buildings - [ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2024-03/PanelizedRetrofitToolkit\\_March2024v2.pdf](https://ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2024-03/PanelizedRetrofitToolkit_March2024v2.pdf)
- A Way Forward: A Made-in-Nova Scotia Home Energy Affordability Program - [ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2024-05/AWayForward\\_FullReport\\_May2024.pdf](https://ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2024-05/AWayForward_FullReport_May2024.pdf)



# Energy poverty:

## Questions to ask

- How will you work to address energy poverty in the municipality?
- How do you think HRM should work to ensure that renters are supported in long-term energy affordability solutions such as installing heat pumps, better insulation and building envelopes?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate an understanding of the barriers preventing low-income households from accessing efficiency programs. Barriers might include having to pay for programs up front, ongoing high maintenance costs, a lack of information or time and programs that are designed for middle-income households.</li> <li>• Demonstrate familiarity with the Property Assessed Clean Energy Program and other municipal initiatives such as Energize Bridgewater, and a can-do attitude that if Bridgewater can do it so can we, especially given the level of provincial and federal supports available.</li> <li>• Include an understanding of the pervasive trap of poverty that results in impossible choices between necessities like medicine, food, and warmth.</li> <li>• Demonstrate awareness of provincial programs addressing energy poverty (Home Warming, Heating Assistance Rebate Program, Affordable Multifamily Housing Program, Your Energy Rebate Program, Home Energy Assistance Top-up, etc.) and their strengths and limitations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assuming all housing issues are the jurisdiction of the provincial or federal governments, without imagining a role of a municipality in creating and implementing solutions.</li> <li>• Dismissing energy poverty as a social (non-environmental) issue without recognizing the link between affordability and energy efficiency.</li> <li>• Assuming Nova Scotia has sufficient support already in place for people who are struggling with energy poverty.</li> </ul>

# Community food security

Across Canada, municipalities are providing increased support for strategies and policies that support healthy, just and sustainable food systems. This includes developing and funding community and municipal plans that strengthen the food system; building on municipal assets like libraries, community centers, and transit systems to promote food access and literacy; providing support for urban agriculture; and adopting healthy and sustainable procurement practices and waste recovery initiatives. Municipalities are well positioned to foster collaborations within and across sectors.

Recent data tells us that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of household food insecurity across all 10 provinces at 28.9 per cent. The same source shows that 40.9 per cent of children under 18 in Nova Scotia live in food insecure households, the second highest rate across all 10 provinces. What is needed now are municipal candidates who will commit to enthusiastically funding and implementing comprehensive strategies and initiatives that target community food security. Dedicated municipal support is a critical step to ensuring that Nova Scotia has a food system where no one is hungry, where people and food are celebrated, where the local economy is strong and where the environment is protected for generations to come.

## Learn more:

- Data source: [proof.utoronto.ca/2024/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2023](https://proof.utoronto.ca/2024/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2023)
- JustFOOD Action Plan [justfoodhalifax.ca](https://justfoodhalifax.ca) (Note: Although this plan is a food strategy for Halifax Regional Municipality, it may be a relevant resource for other municipalities that do not have a food strategy and/or that are planning for a stronger, more equitable food system.)





# Community food security:

## Questions to ask

- How will you work to support a healthy, just and sustainable food system? More specifically, how will you (pick one or multiple options to ask!):
  - support rural producers?
  - support climate-friendly agriculture?
  - promote food skills and literacy opportunities?
  - support communities to access culturally relevant foods?
  - support small-scale food retailers?
- How will the municipality support community food access?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show an understanding of the breadth of food issues. For example, are candidates considering protection of farmland, food waste, procurement practices, healthy food initiatives, urban agriculture and access to food for all residents?</li> <li>• Support innovative partnerships. A strong food system and equitable community food access is not the responsibility of the municipality alone – it can only be achieved through partnerships involving all levels of government, community partners, public health and the private sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of recognition of food as a municipal issue.</li> <li>• Aspirational and theoretical responses that aren't rooted in actionable steps</li> <li>• Jargon or terms that the general public wouldn't understand.</li> </ul>



# Additional resources

## Sample email from a citizen:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

[Introduce yourself – if you are a community volunteer, an avid gardener, hiker, cyclist, or a concerned resident of their district, etc. add it here]. One of the most important things to me as a voter is to elect a council that will prioritize making [our municipality] a healthy, just and sustainable place to live. This is a crucial time where we need to be ambitious and committed in building our community around sustainability. For me, this means developing strong plans and policies to protect nature, build affordable and inclusive housing, provide safe and clean transportation options, address community food security and act on climate. If elected to council, how will you work to support a healthy, just and sustainable community? [Pick a few questions from the lists throughout this guide and/or add your own.]

Sincerely,  
[Your name]

## Sample email from a community organization:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

[Introduce your organization – you can include your mission statement and/or vision here as well as who you represent]. Across Canada, municipalities are increasingly engaging in strategies and policies that support healthy, just and sustainable places to live. We know that now is the time to be ambitious and committed in building our community around sustainability. This includes developing strong plans and policies to protect nature, build affordable and inclusive housing, provide safe and clean transportation options, address community food security and act on climate. [Introduce your organizations concerns and/or members' needs as they relate to your municipality – there may be a particular focus that you want to highlight, such as access to nature, housing or food security]. If elected to council, how will you work to support a healthy, just and sustainable community? [Pick a few questions from the lists throughout this guide and/or add your own.]

Sincerely,  
[Your name and position] on behalf of [your organization]

# Additional resources

## Voter information

Municipal and school board elections are governed by the government of Nova Scotia: [About Municipal Elections](#)

Send questions to the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing:  
[municipalelections@novascotia.ca](mailto:municipalelections@novascotia.ca)

**Each municipality should have information for voters and candidates. For example:**

[Cape Breton Regional Municipality](#)

[Town of Pictou](#)

[Municipality of the County of Kings](#)

[Municipality of Cumberland](#)

[Municipality of Colchester](#)

[West Hants Regional Municipality](#)

[Municipality of the District of Lunenburg](#)

[Municipality of the County of Annapolis](#)

[Municipality of East Hants](#)

[County of Antigonish](#)

Find your municipality's website at [nsfm.ca/membership-directory.html](http://nsfm.ca/membership-directory.html)



# Additional resources

## Thinking about running?

Running for local municipal council offers a unique opportunity to directly influence the quality of life in your community by shaping policies and initiatives that address local needs and priorities. It allows you to advocate for positive change, engage with residents and contribute to the growth and development of your area, all of which make a tangible impact on the lives of those around you.

Here are some resources if you are thinking about running:

- Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing – [Candidate's Guide to Municipal and School Board Elections](#)
- Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities – [Inside the Civic Chamber: Insights from Municipal Leaders on Serving and Running for Office](#)
- After the election: [Guide for New Municipal Councillors](#)

## Get in touch!

Did your candidate commit to action? Let us know: tag us on X (formerly known as Twitter) and Instagram @EcologyAction and on Facebook @EcologyActionCentre and tag #hfxvotes2024 #nspoli #nselections

Stay in the loop on municipal elections issue and how you can take action at [ecologyaction.ca/municipal-elections-2024](https://ecologyaction.ca/municipal-elections-2024)

