

2024

Choose Green Municipal Leaders: Election Toolkit

For voters and stakeholders in Cape Breton Regional Municipality



Ecology Action Centre

Environment and CBRM

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, as is Cape Breton Regional Municipality, 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 ensures 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 and team of local experts

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.

Our team of local experts come from a broad scope of backgrounds with years of academic and hands-on experience. The ad-hoc committee who worked on this document represent sectors as diverse as health, environment, trails, housing, community growth and transportation advocating for a sustainable future. The organizations involved include ACAP Cape Breton, Cape Breton Climate Change Taskforce, Cape Breton University, Island Food Network, New Dawn, Velo Cape Breton and other supportive community members. The Ecology Action Centre is grateful to partner with such a knowledgeable team and is thankful for their input towards this document. Please see page 22 for more information on our partners.



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!

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 Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM). Each community in CBRM 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 living and housing

Everyone deserves a safe and affordable place to call home, which is becoming increasingly hard to do in CBRM. Our vacancy rate is less than 1 per cent (CMHC, 2024), over 1,000 households are waiting for a unit of public housing and we have much housing stock in need of major repair (Statistics Canada, 2024). There is also more and more homelessness (Roy et al., 2022), and many local residents face energy poverty (Colton, 2024). As municipalities change and grow, municipal governments must ensure they are taking strong action to make housing more affordable, accessible, safe and energy efficient for all, and that all local residents are treated with dignity.

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 and should use to improve affordability and safety, prioritizing the basic needs of all residents. Besides, as a recent report produced by the Federal Housing Advocate reminds us, all levels of government must recognize (and thus have obligations, policies and actions that are rooted in) the right to housing as established in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

CBRM's community planning has allowed for more residential density, greater mix of housing types, accessory dwellings and the development of affordable housing near amenities and services. A bylaw is also now in place so that shared dwellings (rooming housing) have to be licensed, and tax incentives are in place for affordable housing development. However, other municipal actions are urgently needed. Recommendations put forward by a recent local housing task force include having council petition the province to build 1,200 public housing units in CBRM, increasing the low-income property tax rebate, supporting the development of youth-focused supportive housing and other spaces for young people, developing a human rights-based housing charter (that, among other things, protects the rights and dignity of people who are unsheltered) and reducing energy poverty. Another group that is working on ensuring a safe and inclusive downtown Sydney has also discussed the urgent need for safe spaces where people experiencing homelessness can go after hours.

Affordable living and housing:

Questions to ask

- What do you see as the main barriers to building nonmarket, green, deeply affordable housing in the CBRM? 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, and in local housing development?
- How can the rights of people experiencing homelessness be better protected in the CBRM? How do you propose to strengthen these rights?
- African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw and newcomer communities have historically been left out of planning and governance processes. How are these communities involved in any initiatives related to housing development, housing affordability and homelessness?

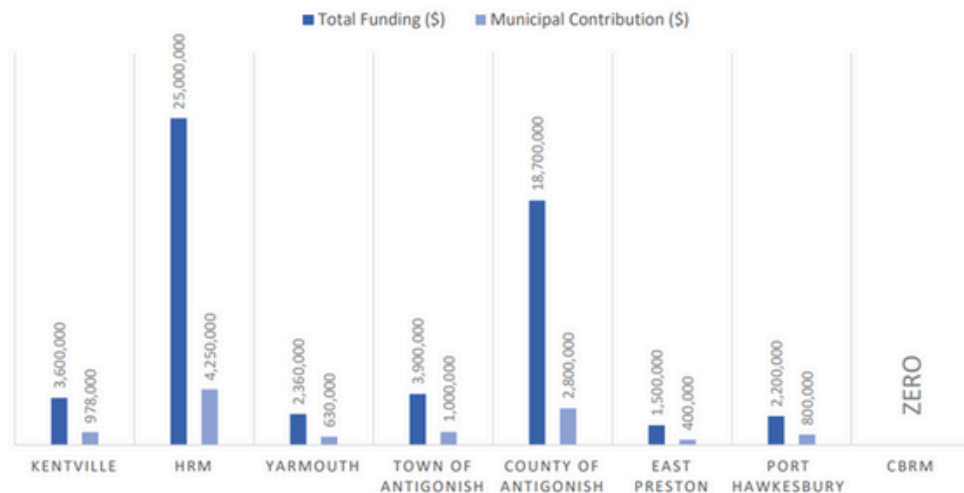
A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the relationship between CBRM and the province (they are governed by the Municipal Planning Act) and what challenges and opportunities this poses. • Convey an awareness of Canada's commitment to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

Transit and active transportation

In 2023 CBRM's population grew by 6.7 per cent. To sustain this growth the municipality has to increase its housing stock and rethink transportation. The current level of personal vehicle use in CBRM is 92 per cent, well above the national average of 79 per cent. If we continue to increase the use of personal vehicles, this ignores the impact of 25 per cent of municipal greenhouse gas emissions coming from vehicles. This option is the most expensive for the municipality in infrastructure costs, to the residents both in terms of taxes and vehicle operation costs and to the environment, while doing nothing to improve our quality of life, productivity or social cohesion. The other option is to vastly improve public transit and the options for walking, cycling or rolling (active transportation).

CBRM adopted an Active Transportation Plan in 2008 and updated it in 2022, spending \$1 million a year for 13 years, jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments. Key projects were completed but the infrastructure is not continuous and thus under-used. Recent census data notes a fall in active transportation use since the adoption of the 2022 plan. The council adopted the 2022 AT Plan but not the recommended increase of yearly spending from \$333,000 to \$500,000. The municipality also failed to obtain funding from the last round of federal/provincial funding for Active Transportation.

FUNDING FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA UNDER THE INVESTING CANADA INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM (ICIP)



Source: Crepeau, 2023

Transit and active transportation

CBRM has seen some major changes to the public transit system; Sunday service, new routes, increased service hours and a move to electric buses. These improvements increased the percentage of residents commuting by active transportation from three per cent to six per cent. But the current service is still inadequate with users complaining of overcrowded buses and lack of frequency. One of the problems facing transit is funding. Only ratepayers who are serviced by the current transit system pay taxes to support it, while all ratepayers pay taxes to support roads. Changing to a universal tax would increase funds for the system.

Recently, Cape Breton University secured provincial funding to study the use of current and unused rail corridors for a light rail system to connect the major communities in CBRM with a realigned bus service to feed the rail stations. If this option is financially viable and if the plan included active transportation it could radically change how people moved within the municipality and significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions. Alternative sustainable transportation options should be pursued if we want to sustain increased growth.

Learn more:

- CBRM's Active Transportation Plan: cbrm.ns.ca/images/CBRM_Active_Transportation_Plan.pdf
- Myth Busting Page: activeatlantic.ca/resources/mythbusting
- Standards for built environment accessibility: novascotia.ca/accessibility/built-environment/



Transit and active transportation:

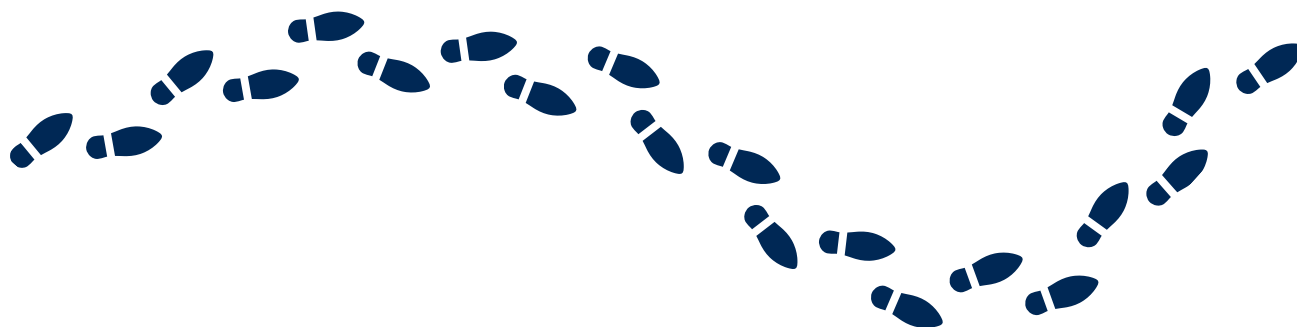
Questions to ask

- Funding is a barrier to providing a reliable transit system. How will you make sure transit remains a priority that you will invest in? How can we increase or develop transit options available to our community, especially for those with high priority needs, such as accessing medical support?
- Much of CBRM is designed for car dependence. How might you provide safe alternative transportation options so that your community members can age in place? What aspects of our municipal active transportation plan are set to move forward in the next four years?
- 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 CBRM's roads, and when applicable, the province's roads that pass through our 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"> • Recognize that many CBRM residents do not ride a bicycle because they do not feel safe. • Recognize connected, convenient and safe walking and cycling multi-use trails are needed to encourage more people to walk/bike for transportation. • Make a commitment to investing in transit by developing a community transit plan or increasing the size of a fleet over the next five years. • Commit to implementing municipal active transportation plans that already exist. • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths that there are not enough people cycling to invest in bike lanes/multi-use trails or that bicycle infrastructure is too expensive. • 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.) • Prioritizing parking* over the needs of people who walk, bike or take transit. (*With the exception of accessible parking). • Defaulting to police enforcement as the solution to making streets safe.



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 parks, forests, wetlands and watercourses is integral to human and environmental health, well-being and prosperity of a municipality.

Good land use planning by CBRM is essential to retaining green spaces and all the benefits these areas provide. All residents of CBRM 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. The new Municipal Planning Strategy, CBRM Forward, outlines the goal of preserving CBRM's wetlands as part of stormwater management.



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 CBRM 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"> • Acknowledge the importance of a protected network of green spaces and commit to safeguarding what the municipality has. • Show curiosity about how CBRM can assess their natural assets (most candidates may not know about this). • Realize that municipalities have jurisdiction over managing the land around wetlands, and not usually over the wetlands themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Claiming that only the province has the ability to manage and protect wetlands.

Learn more:

- Ecology Action Centre's Wetland Toolkit: ecologyaction.ca/our-work/coastal-water/wetlands-water#wetlands-toolkit
- Natural Assets Initiative: mnai.ca/
- Valuing Parks as Natural Assets: ccpr.parkpeople.ca/2021/sections/nature/stories/valuing-parks-as-natural-infrastructure
- CBRM Municipal Planning Strategy, CBRM Forward: cbrm.ns.ca/municipal-planning.html

Coastal protection

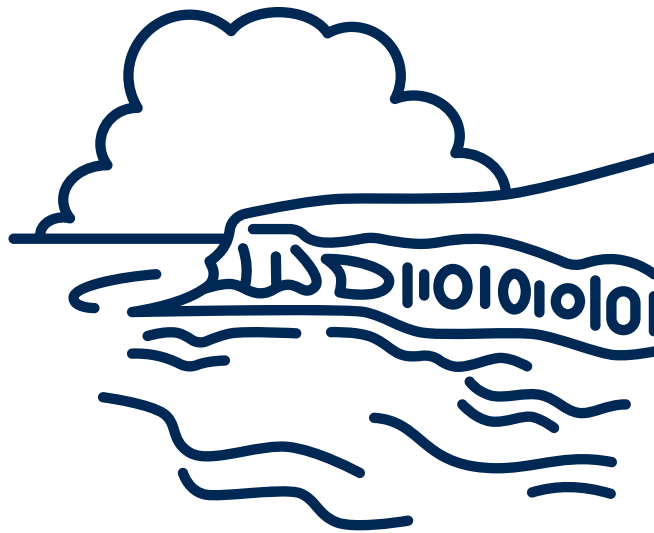
Another key government responsibility regarding climate change adaptation is protecting our coastline from inappropriate developments. For example, it does not make sense to build houses and businesses in areas that are vulnerable to sea level rise, coastal erosion and saltwater intrusion.

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
- Media resource about Coastal Protection Act - cbc.ca/1.7125745
- CBRM Municipal Planning Strategy, CBRM Forward - cbrm.ns.ca/municipal-planning.html



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?
- In the new municipal planning strategy, CBRM Forward, the section on Coastal Planning indicates that “Council shall follow the regulations and standards enabled by the Coastal Protection Act.” Now that the act has been shelved, what further municipal planning updates are needed to protect our coastal communities?

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



Action on climate

CBRM has already begun to experience the devastating effects of climate change, with the recent effects from Hurricane Fiona still impacting our community. 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.

Governments at all levels 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.¹ 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.

¹ 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
- Green Municipal Fund, with details on community energy systems and systems to recover energy from organic waste: greenmunicipalfund.ca
- Energize Bridgewater, an example deep-energy-retrofit program for homeowners and renters, to improve energy efficiency in homes: energizebridgewater.ca
- Executive summary: Mobilizing Public Health Action on Climate Change in Canada: canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/state-public-health-canada-2022/summary.html
- Climate-related resources for local governments: canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/canadian-centre-climate-services/local-government-resources.html

Action on climate:

Questions to ask

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize the need for swift action on climate change, understand the importance of achieving steep emission reductions and show commitment to taking mitigation actions. • 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. • Show a willingness to use available resources, including staff time and bylaws, to achieve objectives. • 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. • Show a willingness to use their position to be an advocate for climate mitigation work at other levels of government. • Show a little knowledge of and a lot of enthusiasm for renewables, electric vehicles and improved efficiency standards for old and new buildings. • Show an understanding of federal and provincial laws and regulations and funding sources to support clean energy transition in Nova Scotia. • Show an interest in regulating fossil fuel emissions and planning for the phaseout of fossil fuel plants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overemphasis on new technologies, instead of tried and tested energy efficiency and renewable energy. • 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." • Siding with a "business as usual" model that does not recognize the need to drastically reduce emissions. • Suggesting that more research is needed. (Caution: The research has been done, including by municipal staffers across Nova Scotia). • 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.)

Energy poverty

Energy poverty—defined as affecting households paying more than six 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
- A Way Forward: A Made-in-Nova Scotia Home Energy Affordability Program - 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 CBRM 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"> • 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. • 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. • Include an understanding of the pervasive trap of poverty that results in impossible choices between necessities like medicine, food and warmth. • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Dismissing energy poverty as a social (non-environmental) issue without recognizing the link between affordability and energy efficiency. • Assuming Nova Scotia has sufficient support already in place for people who are struggling with energy poverty.

Community food security

Across Canada, municipalities are providing more 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 and can do so most effectively when working with community groups that are closely connected to the shifting food needs of community members.

Recent data tells us that Nova Scotia has the highest rate of household food insecurity across all 10 provinces at 28.9 per cent.¹ 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. According to the Canadian Income Survey (2022), Nova Scotia's poverty rate has increased to 9.9 per cent, up from 6.4 per cent in 2021. Post-pandemic decreases in government transfers and increasing inflation are noted as factors. Unattached individuals, female-led one parent families, racialized groups and people with disabilities are the most impacted.

As the affordability crisis deepens, more households living above the poverty line are experiencing high levels of food insecurity (Food Counts 2023). According to the same study, 2,323 people in CBRM used food banks in March 2023 (which is used comparatively year over year by the Hunger Counts study). Feed Nova Scotia has reported that food bank usage in Cape Breton is up 50 per cent in the past year, with the cost of food being the top reason provided by clients. One study found that only 21 per cent of food insecure households access food banks (2019). When we factor this in, our local reality is much more dire than food bank usage indicates.

What is needed now are municipal candidates who will commit to enthusiastically funding and implementing comprehensive strategies and initiatives that target community food security and food access. 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.

¹ Data source: proof.utoronto.ca/2024/new-data-on-household-food-insecurity-in-2023

Community food security:

Questions to ask

- How will CBRM support community food access? More specifically, how will you: ensure all communities within CBRM have local access to the foods they want and need and/or adequate transportation to access food? support communities to access culturally relevant foods? support community spaces that allow communities to connect around food? support innovative responses to the food affordability crisis?
- How will you work to support a healthy, just and sustainable food system? More specifically, how will you: support local food producers, small-scale food retailers and local food production? support climate mitigation and adaptation in agriculture and fishing? promote food skills and literacy opportunities? work with community food groups to develop food system strategies and community informed policies?

A good answer may...	Caution tape; what to look out for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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? • Support innovative partnerships. A strong food system and equitable food access is not the responsibility of the municipality alone. It can only be achieved through partnerships with all levels of government, community partners, public health and the private sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recognition of food as a municipal issue. • Aspirational and theoretical responses that aren't rooted in actionable steps • Jargon or terms that the general public wouldn't understand. • Lack of acknowledgement of the current food insecurity crisis.

<p>Learn more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government levels & food systems: islandfoodnetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Levels-of-Government-and-Influence-over-Food-Systems.pdf • A shared food vision for Cape Breton-Unama'ki: islandfoodnetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IFN_SharedFoodVision_FinalReport.pdf • HRM JustFOOD Action Plan: justfoodhalifax.ca (This food strategy may be a relevant resource for other municipalities.) • Food deserts and food swamps: nccch.ca/sites/default/files/Food_Deserts_Food_Swamps_Primer_Oct_2017.pdf

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 CMRM 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 CBRM – 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

Who are your candidates and how do you vote?

- Find updates on [CBRM election details](#) and [district maps and information](#).
- Find your [candidates' contact information here](#) after Sept. 10, 2024.
- Each resident can vote for one candidate in a district, as well as for the position of mayor. Email/tweet all candidates in your district as well as the mayoral candidates to create more conversations!
- Information on [voter eligibility is available here](#).

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](#)

Additional resources

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



Thank you to our local partner organizations that contributed to this CBRM document. To learn more, please visit the links below:



[ACAP Cape Breton](#)



[Cape Breton Climate Change Task Force](#)



[Cape Breton University](#)



[Island Food Network](#)



[New Dawn Enterprises](#)



[Velo Cape Breton](#)