

What We Heard - Executive Summary

A key objective of the Climate Strategy and Action Plan Update was to ensure that equity is considered and embedded into the plan. The engagement process focused on strategic tactics and communication to ensure that we successfully heard from equity deserving Calgarians, who are typically harder to reach in City engagement projects. As a result, a diversity of voices, perspectives and ideas were collected.

Impact from severe weather events and the capacity to recover from them are quite different for low income, and equity deserving Calgarians, compared to the general public. Indigenous individuals also reported unique impacts. Barriers to action that these individuals experience are also unique. However, cost is the most significant barrier for all Calgarians who participated in the engagement, regardless of income. The nuances of impact and barriers should be carefully considered when designing resources and programming to ensure that City climate action does not leave anyone behind.

For many Calgarians, perception of severe weather risk and how they reported personal impact of events is not aligned. For example, flooding was rated highly for risk on the online engagement page, but most comments regarding personal impact were about extreme heat and smoke from wildfires. Wildfires were rated relatively low for perceived risk.

Similarly, the general public believe their ability to recover is relatively high. The accuracy of this perception is likely limited however, as without previous experience of each specific severe event, one does not know exactly what will be involved, how they will respond or what they will need. This highlights a need for education about impacts of specific climate related events to Calgarians and accessible tools to help Calgarians proactively prepare and recover. This is especially important for those who have additional considerations, such as being a newcomer to Calgary and its climate, and language barriers.

Regardless of income or background, respondents agree on what action areas they would like The City to prioritize, for both adaptation and mitigation. For adaptation, the two action areas prioritized highest were:

- Build, restore and protect natural infrastructure
- Manage water resources

The mitigation action areas prioritized highest were:

- Improve the greenhouse gas and energy performance of new and existing buildings
- Increase the number of renewable energy projects in Calgary (solar or wind energy projects)
- Expand low-carbon transportation modes (like transit, walking and wheeling)

However, when discussing these action areas, we heard Calgarians do not view them as isolated areas that require unique action plans. Instead, the realities of their day to day lives, weave these areas together and highlight the interconnected and holistic nature of inequity and climate action. The reality of people's lives take place in the connective tissue between action areas and these realities need to be fully understood to ensure that climate action and programs consider these interconnections. This will have implications for alignment across City of Calgary departments and what actions are defined as climate action. As one workshop participant said about inequity and ability to access public transportation, "Snow plowing may not seem like a climate action, but it is."

The most obvious areas of inequity that online and workshop comments uncovered were:

- **Basic needs-** Getting by day by day supersedes ability to act, and meeting basic needs is the foundation of equity.
- **Time freedom-** This refers to an individual's free time to participate in climate action or increase their quality of life. Increased travel time, the need to work multiple jobs to afford rent, and being a single parent all result in reduced time freedom.
- **Transportation access and disruption-** Equity deserving individuals report increased issues related to transportation and disruption during severe weather events. This impacts their ability to get to work and school and presents a safety issue when faced with possible evacuation.
- **Home upgrade agency and benefits-** Many equity deserving individuals rent their home and therefore are not able to make decisions about their home or even have a choice about the building standard in which they can afford. Benefits of upgrades are not always transferred to the renter and in some cases the cost of rent is increased to pay for the upgrades.
- **Program eligibility-** Many renters and condominium owners do not have programs available that are designed to benefit them specifically when it comes to emission reducing home upgrades.
- **Affordability-** Many climate actions are just not affordable for many Calgarians, regardless of income level. Some actions, like taking public transportation, can also add additional burdens.

Climate change can feel like a polarizing topic for some, however the majority of Calgarians we heard from are concerned about climate change and are supportive of action to address it. In this engagement, some Calgarians showed a lack of understanding or empathy for how climate related weather events and action could exacerbate inequity. Climate action taken by The City should be framed in a way that builds empathy and communicates how achieving equity for some leads to collective benefits for all. There are some common values and needs that few dispute, including increased building standards, having a safe place to live, food security, affordable and accessible transportation, and personal health and wellbeing. These needs and values are universal. Framing climate action around shared common values and needs may be a positive way to manage lack of support for this work.

While this engagement provides a high-level view of equity considerations, building measures in the Climate Strategy and Action Plans that are equitable will require a deeper understanding of how each equity deserving group of Calgarians experience different weather events, barriers they face, the risks that are unique to them and their specific needs. These lived experiences and personal impacts should be further explored to design specific programs in which all Calgarians can participate.

In the design and implementation of climate action areas, target program participants need to be at the table to speak on behalf of their own needs and how programs could be designed to maximize benefits and minimize unintended harm. Therefore, more thorough engagement is recommended over a longer period to support relationship building and safe sharing spaces for equity deserving groups.

A detailed overview of the findings from this engagement process can be found in the [What We Heard Report](#). For a verbatim listing of all the input that was provided, please see the separate [Verbatim Responses](#) document.