



Why We Engaged

Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Health Services is developing an Environmental Sustainability Strategy to protect the environment and mitigate potential organizational risks associated with climate change, as outlined in the 2024-26 NL Health Services Strategic Plan. To ensure that individuals and groups could participate in the decision-making process, a public engagement strategy was initiated on January 28, 2025.

Decision Statement

Through engagement and collaboration, NL Health Services will develop an Environmental Sustainability Strategy by March 2025 to guide the organization's efforts to increase awareness about the impacts of climate change on overall health and well-being, reduce its environmental footprint, and enhance climate resiliency and sustainability.

Engagement Objectives

- To gather feedback from key informants on or before February 17, 2025.
- To use feedback to inform a visioning workshop with key decision makers.
- To inform identified publics about the development of an Environmental Sustainability Strategy for NL Health Services, on or before March 31, 2025, and to provide information on how to engage in the process.

Who We Engaged

A news release, social media and email were used to inform the public and key interest holders about the engagement opportunity. Engaged parties included NL Health Services staff, leaders, physicians, volunteers, Board members and Patient and Family Experience Advisors; municipalities; the Environmental Sustainability Steering Committee; the Provincial Adaptation & Mitigation Working Group; Medical educators and students, NL Health Services' vendors and suppliers; and climate influencers including the Climate Change Research Knowledge Exchange, CAPENL, ClimAtlantic, CASCADES, Choosing Wisely NL, and Quality of Care NL. On the advice of Indigenous representatives, more time will be taken to ensure meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities as the plan progresses.

- 416 users visited Engage.NLHealthServices.ca during the engagement period.
- 82 individuals completed one or more of the online polls; 5 responded to the discussion forum; and 7 submissions ("contact us") were received.
- 549 individuals participated in a staff survey and 62 responded to a municipal survey.
- 3 consultations were conducted.
- 32 individuals participated in the Environmental Sustainability Visioning Workshop.

How We Engaged

Engagement was at the **Involve** level: we will work directly with key publics to ensure that their concerns and perspectives are understood and reflected in the action items within the plan.



What We Heard: Key Themes

There is strong support for the organization's strategic approach to climate change.

Most participants in the public engagement process were concerned about climate change and aware that it affects health and well-being.

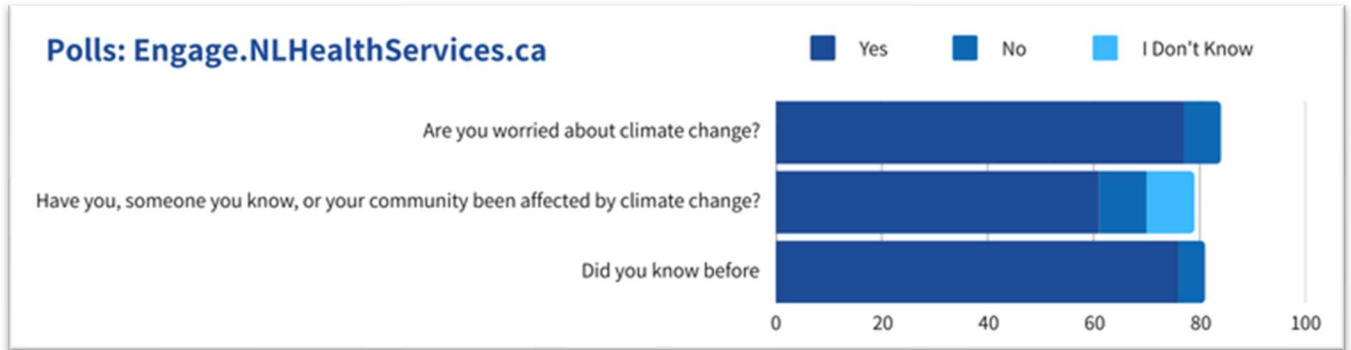
The Environmental Sustainability Strategy should include public awareness and information on climate change and how it impacts health and well-being, internally and externally. While most recognize that climate change affects the health and wellness of individuals and communities, significant portions of the engagement pool could not articulate how and why that is the case.

Exploring waste reduction strategies, energy efficiency plans and remote/virtual working /service delivery options would be seen positively by internal and external interest holders.

While NL Health Services does not have the jurisdiction to address all the concerns raised during the engagement process, the organization can facilitate discussion and collaboration, especially where climate-related issues have health-related impacts.

Key Findings

- 91% of poll respondents on **Engage.NLHealthServices.ca** said they are worried about climate change. 77% of respondents said that they, someone they know, or their community has been affected by climate change; and only 6% did not know that climate change affects your health and well-being.
- Respondents from the open engagement at Engage.NLHealthServices.ca worry about climate change, seeing its impacts, such as fire, flooding, and hurricanes, as a “constant source of low-level anxiety.”



- 93% of respondents to the **municipal survey** said their municipality was concerned about the effects of climate change on the health and well-being of their communities and residents. Housing, food security and mental well-being are ranked as their top concerns. Municipalities would like to see the health authority’s environmental sustainability plan focus on access to healthcare; strategies for those disproportionately impacted by climate change (such as aging populations in rural and remote areas); planning for extreme weather events; and public education.
- In the **staff and physician survey**, 88% of respondents expressed a strong to moderate understanding of the relationship between climate change and health and well-being; 72% were unsure or said they had not experienced the impacts of climate change; and only 7% said they strongly understood the relationship between climate change and the healthcare system. Of those who indicated they had experienced climate change impacts in their work, examples included workforce disruptions such as staff shortages during extreme weather events; impacts on workplace conditions, such as a lack of temperature control measures; exacerbation of health conditions like heat exhaustion and breathing problems for patients; and effects to the supply chain. 58% of respondents have a moderate to strong understanding of how the healthcare system contributes to climate change. Key areas for improvement include waste management and recycling, energy use, leveraging digital solutions and the need for climate education.
- From **Indigenous representatives**, we heard that true collaboration takes time and starts with a meaningful relationship with Indigenous partners and communities. This begins with more focused engagement with Indigenous partners and communities on environmental sustainability.

Visioning Day

On March 4 and 6, twenty-five staff and a Patient and Family Experience Advisor held a workshop to review the engagement feedback and other research and to begin mapping the Environmental Sustainability Strategy. Participants represented a wide range of NL Health Services’ teams, including Public Health, Health Emergency Management, Supply Chain, and Facilities and Support Services. Five priority areas for the strategy were proposed and explored during the workshop:

- Climate Action and Mitigation:** to lessen the organization’s environmental footprint.
- Climate Resilience and Adaptation:** to help the organization become more climate resilient.
- Governance and Leadership:** to develop organizational policies, structures and practices that support and shape the organization’s journey towards environmental sustainability.
- Climate Health and Well-being:** to address the impact of climate change on population health and well-being.
- Climate Culture and Engagement:** to increase the organization’s climate consciousness via education, participation and partnerships.

Next Steps

Using the feedback gathered, jurisdictional scans and other research, provincial Planning staff are drafting an Environmental Sustainability Strategy. It will be forwarded to the organization’s senior leadership for approval to begin implementation. Action items within the plan may require future public engagement and opportunities will be posted at [Engage.NLHealthServices.ca](https://engage.nlhealthservices.ca).

For further information on this project or the outcomes, contact Planning@NLHealthServices.ca.