

4th BARC IMPACT REPORT

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Winnipeg, showing a wide river with several bridges. The city buildings and green spaces are visible. A large, semi-transparent yellow map of Canada is overlaid on the right side of the image, partially covering the text.

Local Governments
for Sustainability
Les gouvernements locaux
pour le développement durable

CANADA

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As we prepare the 4th Building Adaptive and Resilient Communities (BARC) Impact Report, we reflect on 2023 as one of the wildest years in history. Every corner of Canada has been touched by climate change in some way — by storms, floods, heatwaves, and droughts — damaging infrastructure and, in tragic cases, claiming lives. The wildfire season alone broke records with nearly 18.5 million hectares of land burning resulting in mass evacuations. The IPCC has made it clear: the impacts of climate change we are experiencing are not unexpected. This is a new reality and one we need to prepare for now more than ever. At the same time, we must drastically shift towards a net-zero future to lessen these impacts and their tragic consequences.

In addition to marking one of the wildest weather years in history, 2023 also marks the 15-year anniversary of ICLEI Canada's BARC program. In this time, BARC has steadily been helping Canadian communities prepare for and address the risks of climate change. It has helped local practitioners understand present and future climate risk and what can be done locally to adapt and reduce our risk. It has also contributed to a national dialogue around the policy changes we need to realize a resilient and low-carbon future.

But how can we ensure we stay the course? We need specific objectives and targets to guide us and, on this front, *Canada's National Adaptation Strategy: Building Resilient Communities and a Strong Economy* (NAS) has served us well. The NAS has given us a collective plan from which we can act on. By outlining a vision, objectives, targets, and specific actions, the NAS represents a whole-of-society approach to preparing for climate change — one that communities will play a key role in implementing.

We need to focus efforts on collective implementation, with diverse partners, at various scales, and across sectors. Part of implementation is ensuring we have the metrics and indicators to track our progress and course correct when necessary. This is where we are turning our sights. Through various initiatives — including the 11th Livable Cities Forum scheduled for fall 2024 — we will continue to bring local practitioners together to support implementation and mobilize action at the pace required to address the climate challenge. Our focus on implementation also presents an incredible opportunity to prioritize low-carbon resilience to meet net-zero and resilience goals, as well as an opportunity to multi-solve and address equity, diversity and inclusion issues.

BARC Impact

Many will know BARC as a national capacity building program for municipalities focused on adaptation and resilience. Over 120 municipalities, large and small, have used the BARC framework, tools and resources to guide their adaptation and resilience building efforts; however, BARC has grown to become much more than a program. BARC is the window through which ICLEI engages in adaptation and resilience policy development, financing, applied research, resource development, capacity building, networking, and much more.

Building Adaptive and Resilient Communities

The open-source foundation established by BARC has become so widely used that it's impossible for ICLEI to track its uptake and application with the same degree of accuracy as we have in earlier BARC Impact Reports. However, that doesn't mean we won't try.

700+

Local Partners

3150+

Adaptation Actions Identified

2100+

Climate Impacts Identified

92+

Institutional Collaborators

55+

Funding Partners

120+

BARC Users

63% <50,000 Population

37% >50,000 Population

BARC Users



Ajax	Havelock Belmont Methuen	Ottawa
Baie-Saint-Paul	Hunstville	Parry Sound
Barrie	Huron-Kinloss	Peel
Beaconsfield	Iqaluit	Penetanguishene
Bonfield	Kawartha Lakes	Peterborough, City
Bracebridge	Kenora	Peterborough, County
Brampton	Kingston	Pickering
Burlington	Kitchener	Pincher Creek
Caledon	Lake of Bays	Port Alberni
Calgary	Laval	Port Moody
Cambridge	London	Portugal Cove, St Phillips
Campbell River	Longueuil	Prévost
Candiac	Loyalist	Prince George
Canmore	Meaford	Qualicum Beach
Capital Regional District	Metro Vancouver	Red Deer
Charlottetown	Mirabel	Repentigny
Colwood	Mississauga	Richmond Hill
Conception Bay South	Moncton	Rivière-du-Loup
Courtenay	Montreal	Saanich
Cowichan Valley	Mount Pearl	Saskatoon
Delta	Mont-Tremblant	Selwyn
Devon	MRC de Thérèse-De Blainville	Shawanaga First Nation
Dufferin	MRC Mirabel	St. Catherine's
Duoro Dummer	MRC Thérèse-De Blainville	Sunshine Coast
Durham Region	Muskoka District	Surrey
Edmonton	Muskoka Lakes	Thunder Bay
Edmunston	Nanaimo	Timmins
Esquimalt	National Capital Commission	Toronto
Essex	New Glasgow	Ucluelet
Fredericton	Niagara Falls	University of British Columbia
Gatineau	Nipigon	Vancouver
Georgian Bluffs	Norfolk County	Vernon
Grande Prairie	North Vancouver, City	Victoria
Gravenhurst	North Vancouver, District	Waterloo, City
Greater Sudbury	Oakville	Waterloo, Region
Guelph	Orangeville	Wawa
Halton Hills	Orillia	WDGPH
Hamilton		Windsor

Insights & Priorities

Over the last year, we have been in conversation with many adaptation practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and thought leaders — from national policy dialogues to local community-based workshops and everything in between. Through these conversations, we are constantly hearing about and learning from the challenges, opportunities, and possibilities that practitioners are faced with every day which informs how we approach capacity building. Here are a few of our latest insights and priorities.

Increasing the pace of implementation

We've said it before and we'll say it again: implementation is not keeping pace with the frequency and severity of impacts being felt by communities. We are seeing dozens of adaptation plans being created each year with the majority of these supported by robust vulnerability and risk assessment processes. However, there is a serious lag in the implementation of these plans. In order to help communities get beyond assessment and planning, we are committed to creating unique and tailored capacity building supports for implementation. Whether these are cohorts of local governments working together on financing or specific tools that address communication challenges, we will continue to focus our efforts on helping local governments implement adaptation in their communities.



Getting comfortable with failing forward

While we are seeing adaptation action happening across the country, our collective response has not been perfect — but there's a lot to learn from imperfection. If we agree we need innovation, then we must get comfortable with things not going exactly to plan and learn to rebound from that. Simply put: we must learn to fail forward. At ICLEI Canada, we are getting comfortable in that space of innovation where an idea is born, tested, pivoted, tested, and reapplied again and again. We are striving to fail forward in our work to build adaptive and resilient communities, having learned that some of our best ideas have come from the thoughtful processes of failing forward.

Unlocking innovative finance mechanisms for adaptation

Despite the strong economic case for investing in climate adaptation at a time when Canadians are experiencing increasing and worsening climate events, public funds are limited. This challenge is particularly acute for municipalities which own and operate 60 percent of Canada's public infrastructure, face limited capacity and revenue sources to address climate impacts, and are facing a large price tag for infrastructure adaptation — an estimated \$5 billion annually. Given the accelerating changes in our climate and the multi-billion-dollar loss events recently experienced in communities across Canada, a whole-of-society approach where private investors work alongside all levels of government is needed to achieve the scale and speed of construction required. We are focused on using this approach as we explore innovative opportunities to finance climate action and socialize these among local practitioners and investors.



Mainstreaming climate governance and accountability

It's time to shift from making promises to act on climate change to promising results from our actions on climate change — a subtle but very important distinction. This is where climate governance and accountability come in. Climate budgeting and climate-related financial disclosure build accountability and governance into our municipal climate planning and implementation processes. They create a culture of consistent, cross-departmental climate leadership — one that is more accountable and transparent towards official climate goals and targets. However, both climate budgeting and climate disclosure are in their infancy. We are committed to harnessing the creativity, ingenuity, and collaborative spirit of municipal practitioners to put climate budgeting to the test and help realize its full potential.

Addressing the climate and housing crises in tandem

We are currently bearing witness to two crises rising in tandem: the housing crisis and the climate crisis. Both of these are intrinsically linked. We need to simultaneously safeguard existing homes from extreme weather and build millions of new homes while reaching net-zero resiliency goals, not exacerbating them. At the national scale, Canada's new Task Force for Housing and Climate is tackling just that. Locally, we are supporting municipalities as they address both of these challenges by applying a multi-solving lens to new developments. With this approach, public investments can address affordability, reduce climate impacts, and contribute to a net-zero future.



Finding the climate action and biodiversity nexus

Taking action on biodiversity and nature conservation is taking action on climate adaptation. Enhancing green infrastructure, increasing tree canopy, and applying nature-based solutions all reduce the impacts of climate change while also bringing nature back into our cities. The NAS guides our collective efforts towards climate adaptation while the *2030 Biodiversity Strategy for Canada* guides our collective efforts towards halting and reversing biodiversity loss. Local governments have an important role to play in the implementation of both these strategies and we are committed to ensuring they continue to be engaged and empowered in their implementation.

Weaving together knowledge systems to advance climate action

Indigenous and local knowledge are central to understanding and adapting to the impacts of climate change. Drawing on multiple Knowledges (Indigenous, local, and Western scientific) provides a more holistic evidence-base for policies and decision making while also addressing underlying equity issues. Weaving together Indigenous and Western knowledge systems can improve our understanding of socio-ecological interdependencies and mechanisms while working towards reconciliation by building trust, promoting Indigenous agency and self-determination, and addressing ongoing issues related to power dynamics. Truth and Reconciliation is a fundamental component to achieving net-zero resilient communities that we are committed to working towards.



Connect with us online

Each year as ICLEI Canada develops the annual BARC Impact Report, we reflect upon the insights we've learned and set our priorities for the months ahead. We build these insights and priorities into our capacity-building efforts. We know that capacity building is about more than creating a funding program or specific tools — it's about providing direct support and nurturing a community of action where learning emerges from local experience and peer exchange. Consider this an invitation to stay in touch. It's as easy as signing up for our newsletter, coming to a webinar, or even just engaging on LinkedIn. To put it simply: don't be a stranger!



Website



Email List



LinkedIn



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ICLEI Canada's work happens across Turtle Island which has traditionally been and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples since time immemorial. We endeavour to listen to and learn from Indigenous Peoples in the process of our work.