

# Climate Change

## Impacts and Adaptation Program

### Programme sur les impacts et l'adaptation liés aux changements climatiques



# CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING: BEST PRACTICES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

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## Project Goal & Purpose

The goal of the study was to examine the policies, processes, and other approaches and responses to climate change and environmental issues that take place in rural municipalities.

The study looked at various best practices or approaches to climate change, whether there existed any processes to address the issue, and if so, could they be exported as a best practices model to other rural municipalities.

Environmental issues in rural communities and any innovations in or constraints to environmental planning in addressing rurally-unique issues were also explored in order to refine environmental planning within a rural environmental framework.

## Objectives

The following objectives were pursued within the research study:

1. Identification of current rural municipal policy, program and process approaches, including best practices, to environmental issues and adaptation to climate change;
2. Examination and identification of innovative strategies and approaches that offer lessons for other rural municipalities in striving for sustainability and environmental innovation;
3. Review the capacity of rural municipalities to take appropriate action in response to environmental issues and identification of related resource needs and deficiencies.

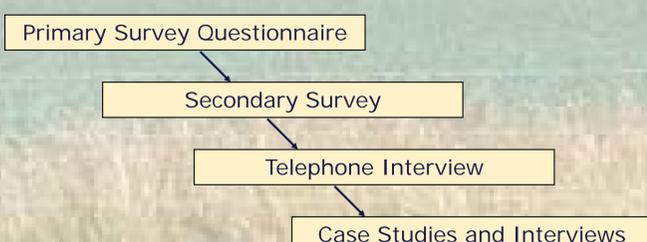


Direction of research: identify municipality; assess best practices; identify innovations; examine environmental planning frameworks.

## Methodology

Seventy-seven planning departments in rural communities from across northern and southern Ontario were surveyed to identify regions and municipalities that consider themselves innovative in their response to climate change issues. The research entailed primary and secondary surveys, interviews with municipal officers, and case studies.

Both upper- and lower-tier municipalities were approached to help identify local and regional innovative approaches. The criteria for what was innovative, and the environmental issue that the innovation sought to address, were left for the municipality to identify, thus establishing where municipal attention and planning were occurring. The methodology sequence was:



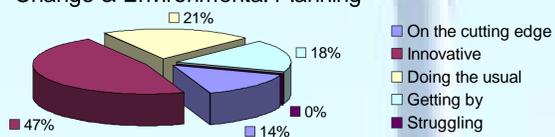
## Findings

Seventy-seven municipalities in Ontario were surveyed: thirty-eight upper and lower-tier municipalities in Southern Ontario and thirty-nine district municipalities in northern Ontario. There were twenty-eight total responses (36.4%); twenty-two (28.6%) from county municipalities and six (7.8%) from the northern districts. This breaks down further to a regional representation of twenty-two out of thirty-eight municipalities (57.9%) responding from southern Ontario, and six out of thirty-nine districts (15.4%) responding from northern Ontario.

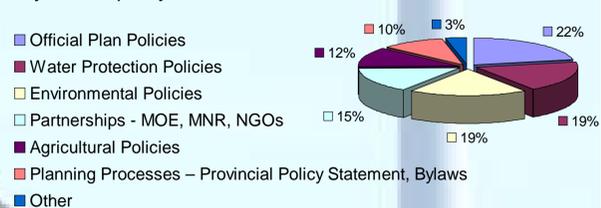
Table 1. Number and Percentage of Responding Municipalities

Region	Communities Surveyed	Responses	Percentage of Total	Percentage of Region
Southern Ontario	38	22	28.9%	57.9%
Northern Ontario	39	6	7.8%	15.4%
Total	77	28	36.7%	73.3%

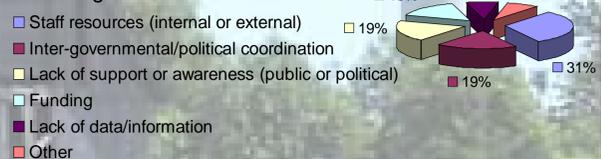
### Municipalities Position With Respect to Climate Change & Environmental Planning



### Environmental Planning Themes As Identified By Municipality



### Constraints Identified In Developing and Implementing Innovative Environmental Policy and Programs



## Recommendations

The research suggests that climate change adaptation policies at a rural level need to be intensified while maintaining those existing programs addressing environmental issues with corollary climate change impacts. Although the study found there were deficiencies in responses and direct approaches to climate change issues, there was sufficient movement in that direction, **as a result of planning initiatives**, to support further endeavours in this area.

Rural communities are taking the initiative regarding environmental issues, mainly through active citizen advocacy groups. The planning profession should, however, in addition to facilitating this process of community engagement, strengthen rurally-unique responses to climate change and environmental issues outside of urban policies.



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