

## Community Talks -Surrey, British Columbia

*Full Report on Session Two: January 27th, 2024*

### Summary

This report summarizes the knowledge gathered at the second community conversation in Surrey, British Columbia, hosted by Iron & Earth in partnership with the Sustainable Workforce Coalition. Building on themes identified in the first session, this event was focused on gathering community perspectives on climate and the cost of living, transportation, and diversity. Feedback forms indicate high levels of satisfaction from participants, with 97% of respondents indicating that they learned something new from the discussion. This high satisfaction rate reflects an engaging conversation: community members participated in a solutions-oriented conversation about their desires for Surrey, offering ideas concentrated in three areas.

Participants continued to express immense interest in the topic of transportation. They noted that Surrey's sprawling size, compounded with insufficient public transit and pedestrian infrastructure, has driven a car-dependent transportation culture. They shared their uncertainty about the existing EV charging infrastructure in their community, and emphasized that expanded public transportation is a key priority in envisioning a more sustainable, affordable community. The Surrey community members we spoke with highlighted free public transit and transit-conscious city planning as important solutions to the transportation-related challenges the city faces.

On the topic of government, participants highlighted several ways for the City of Surrey to create an inclusive climate adaptation strategy, including providing subsidized air-conditioning units, establishing a centralized climate-emergency hotline number, and ensuring all climate and sustainability communications are provided in a wide range of languages. They argued that the government must provide incentives for local people to shift towards lower-emissions lifestyles, and emphasized the need for accountability.

Finally, regarding community-based solutions, participants were enthusiastic about creating structured social support networks to activate during times of crisis, developing community carpooling systems, and fostering a strong civic culture to hold the government accountable to its people.

## 1. Introduction

### About Iron & Earth

Iron & Earth (I&E) is a non-profit organization with roots in the fossil fuel industry that is working toward a future where the workforce is dynamically engaged in a thriving green economy. We envision broad participation in a Just Transition, leading to strengthened economic and climate resilience, expanded accessibility to sustainable energy solutions and meaningful careers. This vision extends beyond workforce mobilization to foster a community-driven transformation, where people actively contribute to a sustainable and equitable future, for their communities and the planet. Its mission is to enable sustainable, community-driven climate solutions and reduce barriers for those seeking a future in the green economy with programs that support greater job security, social protection, and more training opportunities as we move toward a low-carbon economy.

Iron & Earth believes community engagement is an effective way to influence sustainable participation in a Just Transition, and that community-driven solutions have a greater chance of becoming successful and sustainable in the long-term. Iron & Earth is committed to take the time to build relationships and adapt to individual community needs whenever possible.

Community Talks is Iron and Earth's engagement initiative designed to spark conversations about how environmental, social, and economic changes impact people across Canada. It is committed to meeting communities where they are at, by supporting self-determined, community-driven solutions, and offering non-prescriptive support with programs that are designed by the community and for the community.

### About the Sustainable Workforce Coalition (SWC)

The Sustainable Workforce Coalition (SWC) is a regional initiative to help catalyze an equitable transition for workers in BC as part of the clean economy. It is part of the Zero Emissions Innovation Centre which is an independent non-profit and charitable organization and a committed member of the Low Carbon Cities Canada (LC3) network. ZEIC was established by an endowment from the Government of Canada, with support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and the vision and contributions of many regional and provincial champions.

The SWC is a 40+ cross-sector network of leading organizations from business, labour, Indigenous partners, education, community groups, and government working to ensure that a large number of diverse workers are ready and able to enter the clean economy.

The SWC provides coordination and strategic leadership to businesses and people as part of BC's energy transition.

The Coalition delivers its work by creating strategies and programs that focus on:

- Workforce attraction and retention
- Training gaps and opportunities
- Research and data
- Media and communications

## Why this community was selected to have a conversation

As explored in the first Surrey report, the city was selected as a site for community conversations because it is one of the fastest growing and diverse cities in Canada. As one of the largest cities by land area and population in B.C., Surrey is a hub of growth and development in the province.<sup>1</sup> Currently, Surrey's top industries are retail trade, health care and social assistance, construction, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing.<sup>2</sup> The strength of these industries, in addition to a large commuter community living in Surrey and traveling to Vancouver for work, means that Surrey is home to a significant portion of the Metro Vancouver workforce. The municipality is set to overtake Vancouver as the largest city in B.C. by 2040<sup>3</sup> and is one of the most culturally diverse places in the country. In 2021, 45% of Surrey's population self-identified as immigrants to Canada.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to being a city in the midst of immense growth, Surrey is also notable for its significant vulnerability to a range of climate impacts due to its coastal location: the municipality is at high risk of increased flooding due to sea level rise and storm surges.<sup>5</sup> Beyond the risk of flooding, British Columbia was thrust into the national spotlight in June 2021 when an unprecedented heat wave swept the Pacific Northwest, breaking

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<sup>1</sup> City of Surrey. 2024. "About Surrey." Accessed October 2024.

<https://www.surrey.ca/about-surrey#:~:text=The%20City%20of%20Surrey%20is,culturally%20diverse%20cities%20in%20Canada>.

<sup>2</sup> Invest Surrey. n.d. "Economic Overview." Accessed January 2025.

<https://investsurrey.ca/market-data-resources/economic-overview#:~:text=Key%20Sectors&text=Top%20Industries%3A%20Surrey's%20economy%20includes,manufacturing%20centre%20within%20Metro%20Vancouver>.

<sup>3</sup> Surrey Local Immigration Partnership. n.d. "Surrey Demographics." Accessed November 2023.

<https://www.surreylocalimmigrationpartnership.ca/research-resources/surrey-demographics/>

<sup>4</sup> Invest Surrey. n.d. "Economic Overview." Accessed November 2023.

<https://investsurrey.ca/market-data-resources/economic-overview#:~:text=Key%20Sectors&text=Top%20Industries%3A%20Surrey's%20economy%20includes,manufacturing%20centre%20within%20Metro%20Vancouver>.

<sup>5</sup> City of Surrey. n.d. "City of Surrey: Climate Adaptation Strategy." Accessed October 2024.

<https://www.surrey.ca/sites/default/files/media/documents/ClimateAdaptationStrategy.pdf>

all-time maximum temperature records by several degrees.<sup>6</sup> Communities across North America mourned the loss of their family members and neighbours to extreme heat, including 619 people in British Columbia.<sup>7</sup> 75 people lost their lives during the 2021 heat dome in Surrey.<sup>8</sup> The impact of this heat dome loomed large over the conversation, with many participants frequently referencing the event as a turning point in their perspective on climate change.

Between the first and second community conversation, Surrey experienced a temporary but significant disruption in transportation capacity. On January 22nd 2024, CUPE Local 4500 workers went on strike for 48 hours, halting buses and SeaBuses across Metro Vancouver.<sup>9</sup> This conversation took place only a few days after the resolution of the labour dispute, with many participants referencing the strike as an impactful event, emphasizing the need for accessible public transit in Surrey.

## About the conversation participants

The goal of this event was to convene a group of people with diverse perspectives and lived experiences, spanning a wide range of industries and demographic backgrounds. In an effort to reach the Surrey community, we deployed a variety of outreach methods, including social media posts, physical advertisements, email outreach directly from Iron & Earth, and email outreach through our community partner networks.. As a result, 47 people registered for the event and 32 people attended. The figures explored below are based on the answers of the 32 attendees. As demonstrated in *Figure 1.1 - Outreach Results*, the most successful outreach method was directly emailing potential attendees (44%), followed by social media (25%), word of mouth (22%), and having other organizations, such as from our partner SWC, circulate our invitation via email (9%). Of the 32 attendees, 11 participants had previously attended a Community Talks event.

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<sup>6</sup> White et al. February 2023. "The unprecedented Pacific Northwest heatwave of June 2021." Accessed October 2024. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-023-36289-3>

<sup>7</sup> Government of British Columbia. June 2022. "Ministers' statement on 619 lives lost during 2021 heat dome." Accessed October 2024. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2022PSSG0035-000911>

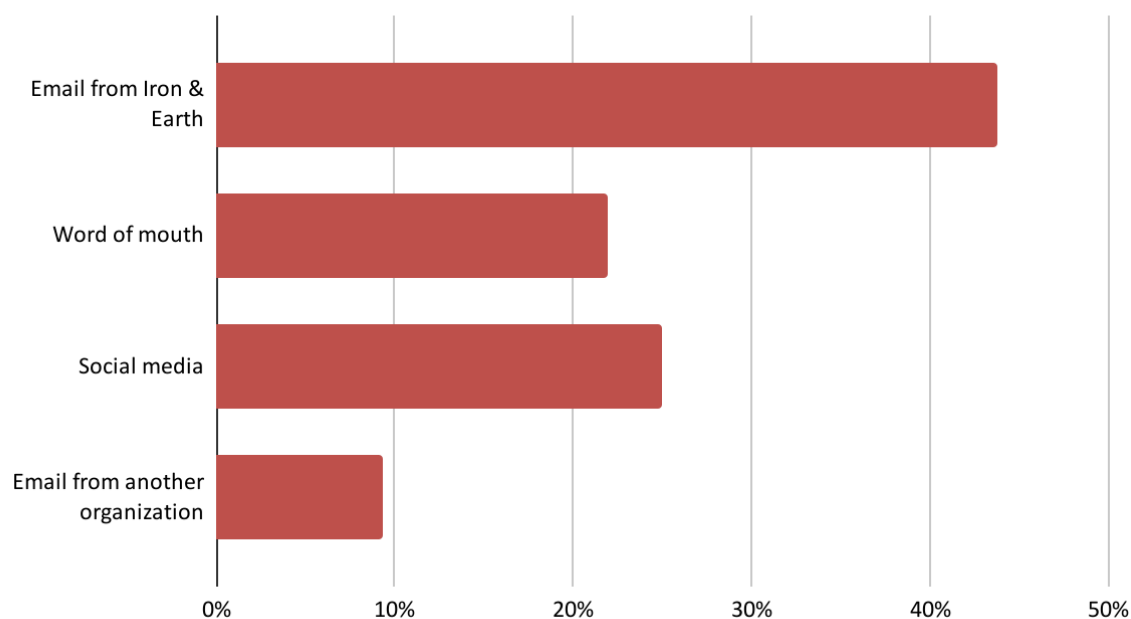
<sup>8</sup> Surrey Now-Leader. June 2023. "Vigil in Surrey remembers the deadliest 'heat dome' day of June 29, two years later."

<https://www.surreynowleader.com/news/vigil-in-surrey-remembers-the-deadliest-heat-dome-day-of-june-29-two-years-later-3002891>

<sup>9</sup> CBC News. January 2024. "Buses halted in Metro Vancouver as transit workers go on strike." Accessed October 2024.

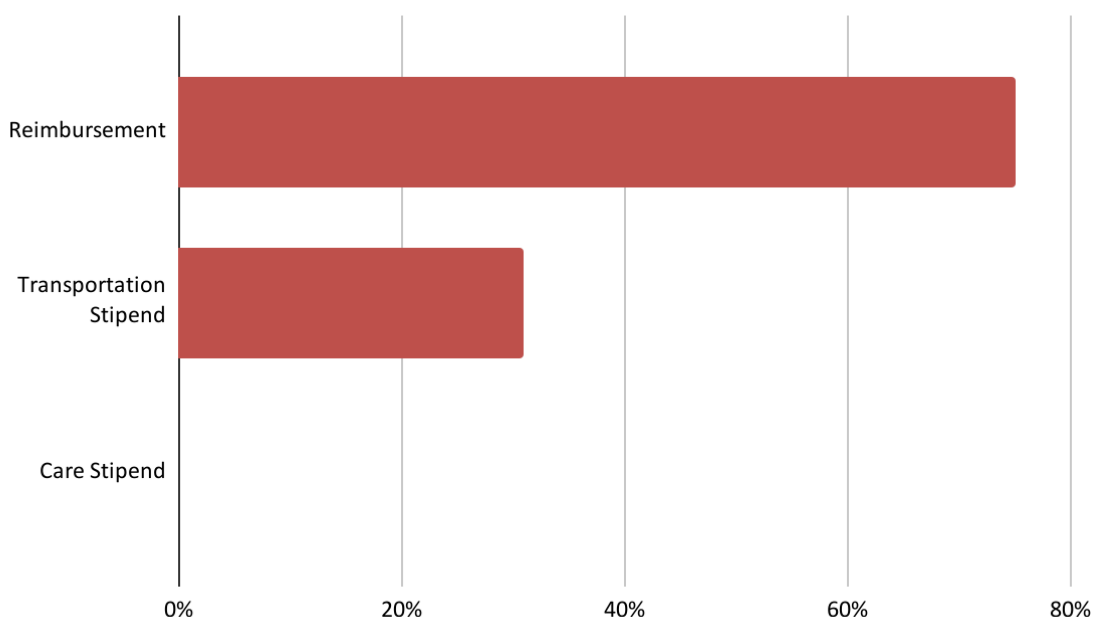
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/metro-vancouver-transit-strike-jan-22-1.7090592>

Figure 1.1 - Outreach Results



To reduce potential barriers for participants, the sign-up form included questions on accessibility information. The major accessibility supports identified during the planning phase were: competitive reimbursement, child or dependent care assistance, and transportation stipends. Participants also had the option to answer an open-ended accessibility request question, to list additional requests outside of the mentioned categories. The registration information shows that most participants received one or more kinds of accommodation offered by I&E. As outlined in *Figure 1.2 - All Accommodations*, 75% of participants received compensation for their participation, while 31% requested transportation reimbursement. No participants in the second Surrey community conversation requested care support for children or dependents.

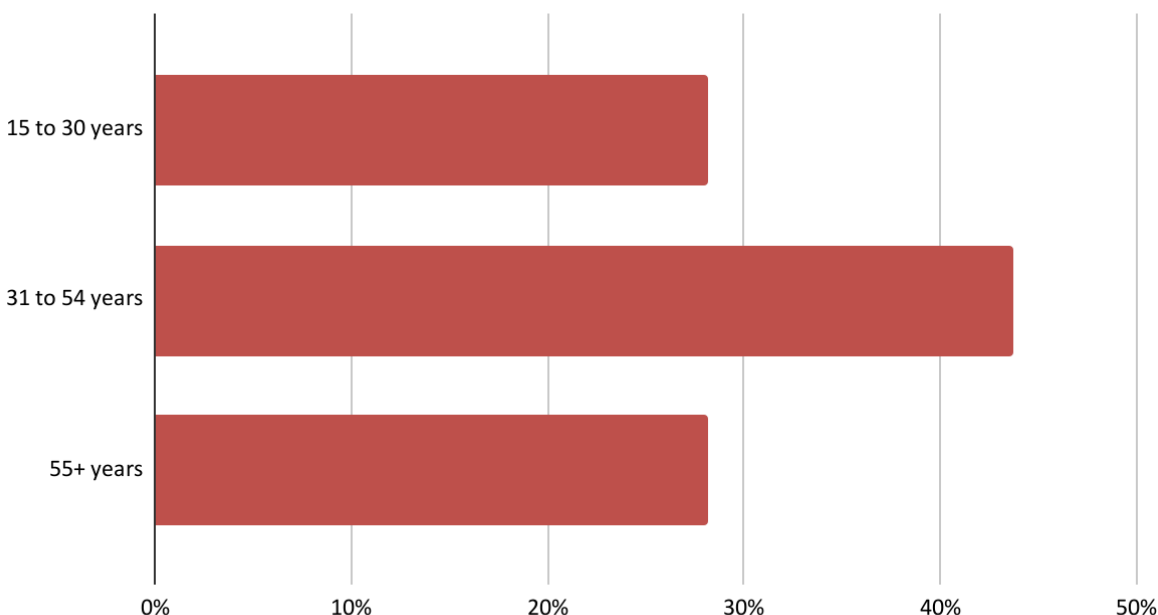
Figure 1.2 - All Accommodations



A survey of the demographic characteristics of participants showed that 81% of participants were residents of Surrey, whereas 19% did not live in the community. 19% of participants identified as newcomers to Canada. For first languages, 41% of participants speak English at home. 47% of participants shared that they speak English and another additional language, including: Albanian, Arabic, Czech, French, Greek, Hindi, Mandarin, Nepali, Polish, Punjabi, Shona, Tagalog, Tigrinya. 9% of participants shared that they speak Nepali and 3% of participants speak Malayalam.

In terms of gender, 53% of participants identified as women and 47% of participants identified as men. There were no self-identified Two-Spirit, agender, genderqueer, or non-binary participants. No participants identified as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and 3% of participants declined to disclose their identity in this category. 63% of participants identified as people of colour, whereas 37% of participants did not. There were no self-identified Indigenous participants present at this event. 16% of participants identified as disabled, 81% did not disclose experiencing disability, and 3% preferred not to share this information. As seen in *Figure 1.3 - Age Distribution*, most of the participants belonged in the 31-54 age group (44%), with equal participation from participants aged 15-30 and 55+ years old.

Figure 1.3 - Age Distribution



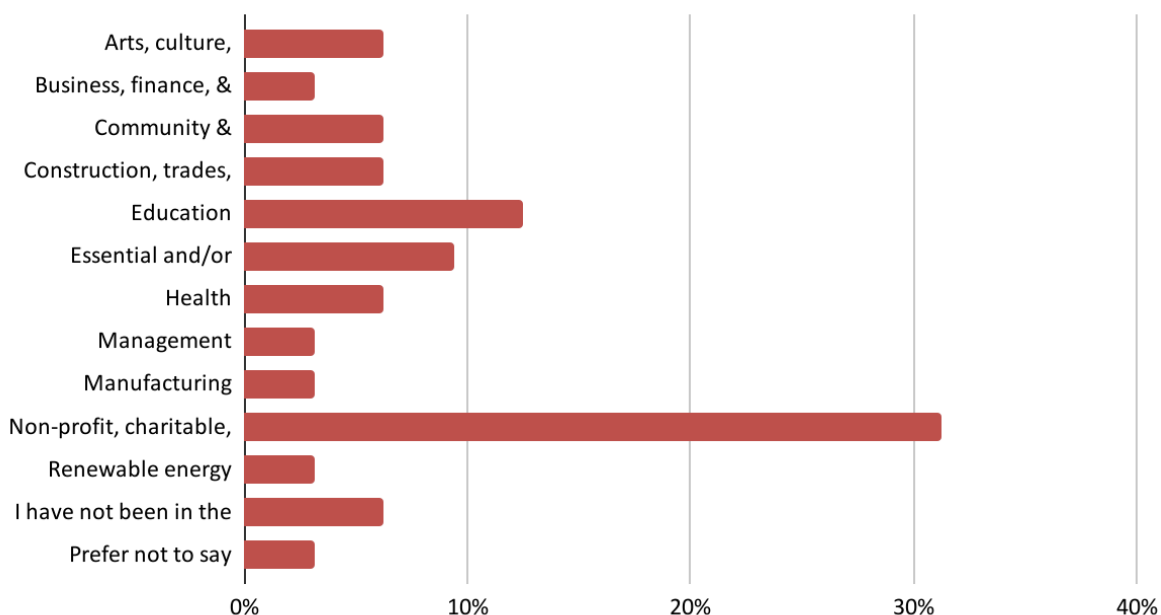
In terms of income, 53% of participants were of low income status (below \$53,413 per year), 28% of middle income status (\$53,413 - \$106,827), 3% of participants were of high income status (above \$106,827), and 16% preferred not to say. In the job sector category, as seen in *Figure 1.4 - Job Sector*, the participants present came from a variety of industries, with the top two being non-profit, charitable, & grassroots organizing work (31%) and education (13%).

In comparison to the 2021 census from Statistics Canada<sup>10</sup>, the gender breakdown of the community conversation closely tracks with the gender breakdown of Surrey, which is 49.7% male and 50.3% female. The 31 to 54 year old age bracket (44%) is overrepresented in our community conversation when compared to Surrey’s census data, which shows that 15-29 year olds 21.5% of the population, 30-54 year olds are 27.9%, and 55+ year olds are 29.3%. This session was not representative of the 2.2% of Surrey that identifies as Indigenous. Immigrants to Canada were underrepresented at this event (19%) when compared with the Surrey census data, which shows that 44.6% of Surrey residents are immigrants.

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Surrey&DGUIDlist=2021A00055915004&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

Figure 1.4 - Job Sector



### The Community Conversation

The goal of every community conversation is to foster a non-polarizing and warm environment for people to discuss important local issues with the neighbours. To reach this goal, we take great care in planning sessions that are comfortable for participants, from providing stipends to drafting questions tailored to the local context (see our script in Appendix A). The event was staffed by a Vancouver-area Community Engagement Officer and three local facilitators, who were all trained to de-escalate and redirect the conversation away from potentially polarizing discussions. While pre-session research indicated that Surrey residents are generally quite open to language like “climate change,” facilitators avoided discussing specific political parties or politicians to keep the conversation open to those across the political spectrum.

The second community conversation was hosted on January 27th 2024 at the Surrey Nature Centre, which was selected to accommodate a larger number of participants due to the success of the first Surrey Community Conversation. Three facilitators guided conversations at three separate tables, as the Community Engagement Officer oversaw event logistics and managed participant questions. Participants were offered lunch and refreshments. Their conversation contributions were captured with recording devices to ensure accuracy, however all attendees were offered written notes as an alternative form of contribution. To respect each participant’s consent and data preservation preferences, all participants’ names were anonymized and assigned numbers.



## 2. What We Heard

Iron and Earth's three-session community engagement model is built on the principle of community-led discussions, with questions getting gradually more specific over the course of three events. The first event, held in November 2023, was structured around three broad questions to understand three facets of change in Surrey: environmental, economic, and social. These themes included concerns over the interconnected crisis of climate change and cost of living, a focus on government and a desire for leaders to enact more urgent action on these issues, and a keen attention to transportation issues in Surrey. Throughout the discussion, participants frequently highlighted the international context of climate change, emphasizing that climate change transcends the boundaries of the Surrey community. Based on these findings, we proposed the following questions for the second community conversation.

- *In our last conversation, participants described dealing with the combined challenges of increased extreme weather events and rising costs of living. What can the people of Surrey do to address these challenges?*
- *What does accessible, sustainable transportation mean for Surrey and how do we get there?*
- *How do the experiences of diverse communities shape the progress towards a sustainable and thriving Surrey?*

With these prompts as a starting point, participants adopted a highly solutions-oriented approach to the three key issues identified by the Surrey community in the first session. The following report explores solutions offered by participants in three general areas: **transportation, government, and community.**

### Transportation

The focus on transportation as a key issue for Surrey residents is driven by Surrey's vast size. As one participant identified: "We actually have the largest municipal geographic footprint of any municipality in BC. It takes 30 minutes to get from one side of Surrey to the other side of Surrey." While the city's size was discussed as a minor annoyance from behind the wheel of a car, for those who rely on public transportation, travelling across Surrey becomes a time-consuming endeavour: "For me to get to South Surrey [by public transit] takes longer than for me to get to North Vancouver from where I live, which is just nuts." Another person reiterated this idea, stating that "I noticed when I wanted to go somewhere it's 20 mins drive and one and a half hours [by] bus." One person identified a connection between lack of public transit access, job accessibility, and emissions:

There are still many areas in Surrey which are not accessible by public transportation. When I was applying for jobs I could see every other posting having 'our area is not accessible by public transport, you should have your own car.' So it just promotes having your own car, like having more pollution.

Within the issue of transportation, walkability and the lack of sidewalk infrastructure in the community emerged as a point of concern. One newcomer to the community observed that "I don't think it's very walkable as a new person here...it's mostly focused and built around how it's easier for our cars rather than for us." Throughout the conversation, it became clear that inadequate pedestrian infrastructure is a matter of public safety. Several participants shared experiences being hit by cars as pedestrians in the community, including one elderly person, whose experience getting hit by a car transformed her relationship to moving through Surrey: "I myself am a victim of a car crash. I was crossing [and] a car hit me...I was turned disabled so I [don't] drive anymore."

In addition to concerns around lack of public transit and pedestrian infrastructure, much like the last conversation, participants maintained a skepticism about electric vehicles (EVs). For current EV owners, challenges with locating charging infrastructure coloured their uncertainty about EVs as a solution to Surrey's transportation issues, as phrased by one participant, who stated:

I have an EV now because I inherited it from my family, but I live in a building with 100 units. We don't have any chargers and it's like the most annoying thing in my life...there is not enough charging infrastructure so you are always waiting in a lineup.

Other participants offered perspectives from the point of view of low-income renters in the community. "I don't anticipate owning [an EV] probably ever, and for me I would have to ask the landlord to hook it up and charge it outside," one person said. Another person agreed: "Renters are going to be expected to go two blocks to a public charging station, that's crazy, that's not viable." This desire for EVs but uncertainty about their current application was summarized succinctly by one individual, who stated that "the future is electric, but I don't think so for now."

In response to these issues, participants emphasized that expanded public transportation infrastructure would transform their experience living in Surrey. "I think we should start with investing in public transportation. We talk a lot about electric vehicles and everything. But I think the basics would be investing in the public." People continued to express enthusiasm about the SkyTrain, as one person stated: "For sustainable transportation, I would say more and more of public transport, like the SkyTrain that we

have.” An EV-owning participant reiterated that their choice to invest in a private vehicle was driven by a lack of public transit options:

Why do we individual people get a subsidy for an EV? [We] are probably wealthy [enough] to already afford the EV, when that could go instead into having better public transit. I would 100% always take public transit if it was available, I just live in an area where there isn't really good public transit.

In addition to requesting expanded transit options, participants identified improving the accessibility of existing transit options as a key priority. Many people discussed the importance of providing free public transportation amidst the cost of living crisis. “Why not make transportation free?” one person stated. “Everybody would be happy to pay 1% more in taxes. And then you wouldn't have all these problems with hubs being the way they are and people pushing people to get through.” Another agreed: “That's one of the main things that they need to do is provide free transport. When the program was brought in for university college students through their student fees, free transit pass, ridership went way up.” Someone proposed launching a pilot program to demonstrate the benefits of free transit:

They could offer one day a week free at no charge and see what happens to the ridership. If you see that, whoa, it's gone [up] 1000%, that's a huge bit of data right there...if you reduce the cost or have no costs, people will use [it].

Throughout the conversation, participants drew links between transportation and housing accessibility, arguing that city-planning must take into account both issues: “Overwhelmingly, when we talked about cost of living, we're really talking about housing. That's the biggest component in Surrey...especially because our transit system is so scattered.” Enthusiasm about “pocket construction” and “15-minute cities” was strong, with participants highlighting that building high-density communities promotes active transportation and lowers carbon emissions, as put succinctly by one individual: “That saves gas, that saves transportation.”

### Government-led solutions

During the previous community conversation, participants spoke at length about their desire for the government to take an ambitious and proactive approach to climate change. Throughout this second session participants began problem solving, identifying many ways that local government could create an accessible climate adaptation strategy for the city of Surrey. These discussions tended to focus on extreme heat, as the legacy of the 2021 heat dome loomed large over the conversation. Much like in the first

conversation, the event served as a consistent reference point illustrating how ill-prepared Surrey was for a severe heat wave.

First, several people requested an expansion of access to free or discounted air-conditioning units. “We're not causing the majority of this, you know, the corporations and all the other people that are getting the subsidies, they should be paying compensation to all of the people that are suffering,” said one individual. “We need air conditioning units to help us survive when we are in these climate extremities.”

Second, discussants pointed to a need for a centralized number to call during extreme weather events. For example, one person reflected on the chaos of trying to seek help during the heat dome, recalling that it took several hours for the fire department to respond to emergency calls. In lieu of this experience, they said:

“In case of an emergency in the community, we need to have a central number that people can contact when they feel like they're going to die from heat or they're being flooded. We should have a central number in Surrey for these circumstances, a line that successfully reroutes and redirects them to resources.”

Finally, participants requested that communications around climate change and sustainability reflect the cultural diversity of the Surrey community. Several participants discussed the importance of the municipal government translating their climate plans: “I think for the city, specifically on sustainability, [a priority] is making sure that the programs and documents and information about it are translated, so that they can better penetrate communities,” one person stated. Another reiterated this point, saying that “we should be translating a lot of these resources, even doing some community consultations with folks in Punjabi and Tagalog.” One participant explained how unilingual conversations on climate change can be in Surrey:

I think another thing is making education about climate change more accessible. It could be culturally adapted, but also language, because anything environmental or climate...everything is in English. If you don't speak English, it's hard to get interested in the field. For myself, I'm francophone, so to get into the climate change environment I had to learn English. Now I'm doing my best to translate every time I [have] the chance but if we can do that in different languages it will make a big difference.

Outside the world of climate adaptation, participants consistently emphasized that local governments need to provide meaningful incentives to citizens if they hope to see a shift towards lower-emissions lifestyles. For example, one individual was passionate about

supporting local businesses that are making an effort to operate sustainably: “I think that the onus is on the city and the government to implement these regulations, and support those that are actually doing the work.” Another person suggested that creating a mobile app which tracks the positive impact of your recycling, walking, or public transit habits would educate and motivate them to contribute:

I know that for someone my age, what would motivate me is if I could say okay, today, I used a water bottle, but I recycled it, I did this little thing...and at the end of a quarter I could see...I made a positive impact on the environment.

The realm of transportation was an area of passionate discussion regarding government support. As discussed in the previous section, the Surrey residents we spoke to were passionate about free public transit as a method of saving money while encouraging people to get off the roads. However, discussants also shared creative ideas for encouraging partnerships between public and private transportation dispatchers. Reflecting on the experience of a disabled family member who relies on the HandyDART system to get around Surrey, one participant suggested that private ride-share companies could fill gaps in the system’s reliability: “I think there needs to be more accessible options, possibly even partnering with like Uber or Evo or something where she could just get an individual driver to take her somewhere that can be an electric vehicle.” Another participant shared a similar idea:

This past week with the strike happening, there were so many more cars on the road...how cool would it be if there was actually a government incentive for some of our taxi companies, for Uber drivers to have to have an electric vehicle so that it is less gasoline being burned while folks are on the road?

With regards to gas-powered vehicles, participants were also passionate about implementing buy-back programs, to facilitate the wider adoption of EVs..

Overall, participants conveyed a sense that the government must be accountable to the people. One participant who had experience working as a public servant supported this notion: “There's just too many people who do not necessarily have the best of intentions when it comes to government spending and money...they're the ones working with the corporations and doing all the subsidies.” The desire for government accountability was most potent in the area of housing development. For example, one person expressed frustration while reflecting on the state of housing costs in Surrey: “The government doesn't care, right? I think they rely too much on private developers and private developers are, at the end of the day [looking at] their own bottom line.”

### Community-based solutions

Throughout the discussion, participants expressed a desire to strengthen their community to become resilient during times of crises. One of the most frequently discussed topics was the importance of creating well-defined social support networks in order to ensure that people are not alone during immediate emergencies. Discussing the loss of life during the heat dome, one person remarked that “We need these social support networks that don't really exist, and lots of people are isolated. We need to break that down somehow.” Another person echoed this sentiment, stating that “Community is the one keeping each-other safe during extreme weather events, [so we] need a collaborative approach with government to create communication networks and lines.” From creating regular neighbourly check-in routines to devising letter-writing campaigns directed at supporting local seniors, people were passionate about strengthening the bonds of the community to ensure that during the next emergency, the community knows who is most at risk. This idea is communicated clearly in the following passage:

I think what's really important is having networks of community building and networks of care. Because, like, whenever there are extreme heat events, it's really common [that] people who live alone [and] elderly people who live by themselves don't really have people to check in on them. Those are the people who are most vulnerable to extreme weather events, because they don't have people to check in on them.

Returning to the theme of transportation, the idea of creating community car-pooling systems was popular with participants. “I think carpooling would be a good thing. To have more of a centralized carpooling [system] or reward workplaces that set up some sort of carpooling program. Another person highlighted the interconnected environmental and economic benefits of car-sharing: “If we start helping out more car sharing, we could reduce our own car need, which helps with the transportation, but it also helps with getting more cars off the road, because people would be scheduling their visits going places.”

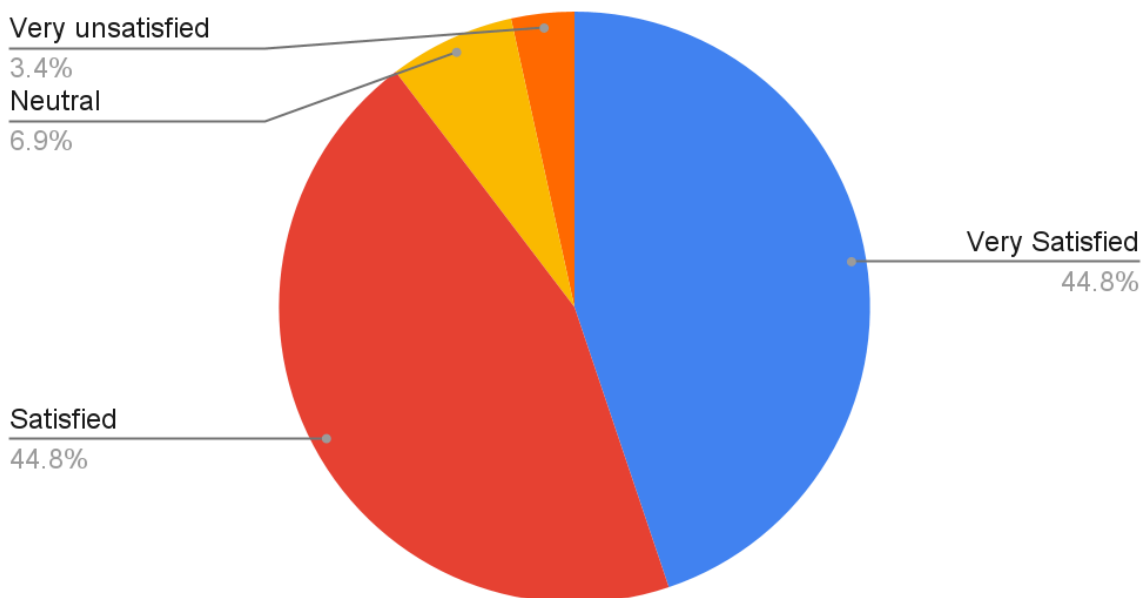
Another key area of interest for participants was fostering a stronger culture of community civic engagement in Surrey. In a discussion on the influence of housing developers on local politics, one person encouraged people to make their voices known at City Hall meetings and consultation events: “It's important if we think this is of importance to keep these folks accountable when these decisions are being made.” Another person vehemently agreed: “Yeah, we can't accept it. We have to demand more profound change and not accept what they're offering.” Remarking on the slow-moving nature of policy making, someone stated that “citizens don't talk about [15-minute cities] enough to the council, so they don't move fast enough.” Participants were particularly

concerned about including the voices of marginalized community members and youth in conversations about climate. For example, one student organizer emphasized that the community needs to think creatively about engaging students in important issues: “Even though we organized [an event] really well and promoted it, students... are not willing to go.”

### 3. What We Learned

#### Feedback

**Figure 3.1 - Discussion Satisfaction Levels**



We shared a Google feedback form at the end of our session which was completed by 29 of 32 participants. From the provided options: “Very Unsatisfied”, “Unsatisfied”, “Neutral”, “Satisfied”, and “Very Satisfied,” most participants rated their level of satisfaction as Very Satisfied (48.8%) or Satisfied (48.8%), followed by Neutral (6.9%), and Very Unsatisfied (3.4%).

As seen in *Figure 3.2 - Discussion Topics Feedback*, 86% of participants were familiar with the topics prior to the discussion and 97% participants learned something new about the conversation topics during the discussion. 80% of respondents identified missing topics in the conversation, such as discussions around government funding and policy, medical negligence, social housing, tactics for civic engagement, exploration of the differences between Surrey versus Vancouver, and more information on alternative jobs offered by Iron & Earth. Meanwhile, 75% felt that there were some groups absent, such as

representatives of the urban Indigenous community in Surrey, the Eritrean community, more business owners and government representatives, and greater representation of organizations that support newcomers to Canada. The most common response in this category was a desire for more engagement with First Nations. Other pieces of feedback on the discussion include: the necessity of more space and time for the discussion, an interest in a longer information session with data on the issues discussed, and a desire for a greater presence of government officials to ensure that community voices are heard. Finally, all attendees expressed that they would like to continue the conversation and would like to be contacted for future projects or activities relating to these topics.

**Figure 3.2 - Discussion Topics Feedback**



## Conclusions

Throughout the discussion, the Surrey residents we spoke with expressed immense pride in their community. “I think we live in the best part of Canada right now,” one person remarked. Another person stated that “one of the things Surrey would like to pride itself in is making things sustainable.” Participants conveyed a keen interest in bettering the community, and by proxy, bettering the world. As one person phrased it, “When I was young, it was okay to be young and try to change the world. We've given up on that idea...[but] we all should be trying to change the world.” This commitment to building a strong, sustainable community was reflected in the solutions-oriented nature of this second community conversation, which unfolded in response to prompts about the



intertwined issues of extreme weather and the rising costs of living, accessible and sustainable transportation, and the experiences of diverse communities in building a thriving Surrey.

First, the Surrey community members we spoke with were focused on transportation as a key issue in their life, highlighting that given the municipality's size, insufficient public transportation and pedestrian infrastructure create a car-dependent community. They expressed uncertainty about the viability of electric vehicles as a solution to making transportation more efficient, accessible, and sustainable, given the lack of charging infrastructure available to consumers. Instead, they pointed to expanding public transportation as a key priority for them. Free public transit options and transit-oriented city planning were of particular interest as solutions to making Surrey an easier place to travel through.

Participants offered a range of government-led solutions they hope local decision-makers will prioritize in supporting citizens through the dual crises of climate change and cost of living. These included: subsidizing air-conditioning units for all community members, creating a centralized climate-emergency hotline number, and ensuring all climate and sustainability communications are provided in a wide range of languages. They argued that the government must be more proactive in creating incentives for local people to shift towards lower-emissions lifestyles, emphasizing the need for accountability, and advocating for more partnerships between public and private institutions.

Finally, Surrey participants also highlighted a range of community-based solutions, including strengthening social support networks to ensure safety during times of crises, creating community carpooling systems, and encouraging a stronger civic culture to hold decision-makers accountable to promises made to the public.

In total, 97% of attendees at the second Surrey community conversation shared that they learned something new during the discussion.

## 4. Next Steps

Iron and Earth utilized the findings from the second installment of the Surrey community conversations to inform the third and final event, which was held in March 2024. After all three events are completed, Iron and Earth will review all of the data collected to identify the most pressing community issues raised by participants. These findings will be verified with the general public to identify the most salient issues in the community, before being mobilized through a local advocacy campaign to ensure decision-makers are made aware of community priorities. Iron and Earth will ensure that findings are circulated to all participants in the Surrey community who attended these events. If you would like to learn more about the program's progress and the work that takes place after the sessions, please contact us at [communities@ironandearth.org](mailto:communities@ironandearth.org).

## Appendix A

The following appendix contains the script that was used as a general guide by the facilitators for the Community Conversation conducted by Iron & Earth.

Script for Facilitating an Iron and Earth Session - First Surrey Session

### CONVERSATION TIME BREAKDOWN:

Session Introduction: 20 minutes

Breakout Group Setup: 5 minutes

Breakout Conversations: 60 minutes

Break: 10 minutes

Reporting Back: 5 minutes

Session Conclusion: 20 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 120 minutes

DOORS CLOSE TIME: 1:15 pm/when max capacity is reached

START TIME: 1:00 pm

END TIME: 3:00 pm

SETUP START TIME: 12:00 pm

### SETUP PERSON:

Set up presentation slides/theater screen

Setup microphone(s) and lighting

Have a facilitator in front doing headcount checking registered names and hand out registration forms if they haven't filled them, for those unregistered, provide registration form and letter of consent. Once we cap our numbers lead folks to fill up our sign up sheet

SESSION INTRODUCTION: 20 Minutes

Session Overview Introduction:

Greetings everyone and welcome to the first Community Conversation hosted by Iron & Earth featuring Surrey. This series of discussions is taking place in Surrey with a focus on livelihoods, climate change, and opportunities and developments related to achieving a net-zero economy.

[primary facilitator introduce themselves]  
name

pronouns (if desired)

association with Iron & Earth

Why are you facilitating today? / provide goals for session

We would like to acknowledge the unceded Indigenous land where we are today in so-called Surrey. The home of many Indigenous Peoples including Semiahmoo, Katzie, Kwikwetlem (kwee-kwet-lum) , Kwantlen, Qayqayt (key-kite)and Tsawwassen First Nations.

Funding for this event is generously provided by ESDC and in partnership with the Sustainable Workforce Coalition

This is Iron & Earth's first session with the Surrey community with the goal of building relationships that go beyond a simple consultation process. We aim to meet communities where they are at, to understand their ideas on extreme weather events, the transition, potential solutions, and their level of preparedness on each of these issues. We shared with you a 1-page highlights from our previous communities so that you have an idea of what to expect from the session. We recognize that each community is different.

After our conversation, we'll create a brief report to serve as a resource for understanding the needs and desires of Surrey's residents. We'll share it with you, our outreach network, key stakeholders, decision-makers, and publish it on our website.

For the rest of this session, we'll talk about the Surrey community and its current challenges. Your breakout group will address three questions about the community, its challenges, and your vision for the future. There is also pen and paper if you prefer to share your ideas in a written or graphic form.

Each group will have a facilitator. You'll be in those breakout groups for about 60 minutes, with each question taking up to 20 minutes.

Finally, we'll come back together for a quick wrap-up and aim to be done by 3:00pm.

If you haven't filled out our registration or consent forms please fill it and give it to one of our facilitators.

**IMPORTANT:** This is a space that welcomes diversity of opinions, we ask that these conversations are approached with mutual respect and care. We endeavor to have a meaningful conversation with the participants who have diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experience.

#### Privacy Policy:

We shared a letter of consent for you to sign. In it we explained the participation, reimbursement and confidentiality processes. From it:

We would like to highlight that we will be recording today's conversation, but the transcripts and documents collected will only be shared between Iron & Earth staff. After this process ends, the notes will stay with Iron & Earth. These notes will be used to produce our reports. However, your participation will remain anonymous.

We do want to include some quotes in the community and final reports, but they will have no name attached to them.

We also want to make sure that you know that you are free to leave at any point during this session. We truly appreciate your time and respect your privacy.

Lastly, we ask that you please do not record, or photograph the conversation.

#### Facilitator Introductions:

We have 2 other local facilitators with us today.

[Secondary Facilitators please introduce yourselves]

name

pronouns (if desired)

association with Iron & Earth

Why are you facilitating today? / provide goals for session

Conversation Introduction:

What is this conversation about?

Livelihoods: Our livelihood is our means of meeting our basic needs, such as food and shelter

Climate Change: Human driven extreme weather events and increasing global temperatures, are having significant impacts and posing major challenges for communities

Energy Transition Opportunities: The shift from an energy mix based on fossil fuels to one based on renewable energy sources.

What's going on in Surrey?

Surrey is experiencing a moment of profound change. As one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, it's on track to overtake Vancouver as the largest city in British Columbia by 2040.

The city has been subject to a variety of extreme weather events like the heat dome of 2021, more frequent cold snaps, disruptive flooding events, and wildfire smoke in the summertime. According to a City survey, 8/10 people in the community are concerned about climate change.

Surrey residents are also concerned about the rising cost of living, as housing prices become increasingly unaffordable. Median rents in Surrey went up 65% from October 2013 to October 2022.

BREAKOUT CONVERSATIONS: 60 Minutes

Setting-up Breakout Groups: 5 minutes

[Facilitators remember to turn on recorder in the breakout group]

[Participants must do some kind of round table of names at the beginning of the breakout recording. This is only for reference purposes, the name will not show in any of our results]

Sustainability Definition: "Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (UN 1987)

Question 1 20 Minutes

What environmental changes have you seen in your community?

Question 2 20 Minutes

How have economic or industry changes affected income security and job availability in your community?

Question 3 20 Minutes

What does sustainability mean in your community?

BREAK: 10 MINUTES

Reporting back to the room: 5 minutes

## CONCLUSION: 20 MINUTES

Desired outcomes and impacts of this project

We conduct three sessions within each community, this being the First for Surrey, we will be conducting a minimum of two more community sessions, and each will have their own session reports. These reports will summarize the needs and desires of Surrey's residents and will be shared with our outreach network, key stakeholders and decision-makers, and published on our website for everyone's benefit.

If you're interested in learning more about the program's progress and post-session work, please reach out to [communities@ironandearth.org](mailto:communities@ironandearth.org) and one of our team members will be happy to provide an update. We are planning to host more sessions in other areas of Surrey in the coming months, so stay tuned!

Please share your feedback on this conversation. Let us know if there's anything important we missed, anything you learned, or anything else you want to tell us!

[Share feedback forms and give time to fill them out]

Finally, we would like to remind everyone that all reimbursements are subject to a processing time of 10 business days.

On behalf of Iron & Earth, I'd like to thank you again for joining us. Have a wonderful rest of your day!

[SESSION END]

[Collect remaining registration and consent forms and Audio Recording Devices]