

Feedback Loop Report

Winter Recreation Programming
January 2026



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Background

The Feedback Loop is a series of resident engagement surveys introduced by the Municipality of Inverness County's Communications team in January 2026.

Each monthly survey is designed to gather resident feedback on a variety of municipal topics throughout 2026. Each survey is designed to take no more than 10 minutes, is available in person and online, and is completely anonymous.

Winter Recreation Programming

On January 22, 2026, the municipality released a survey about the Recreation & Community Wellness Department's winter programming.

The survey asked participants about their winter recreation activities, thoughts on municipal programming and rental equipment, and how they accessed information.

In four weeks, 140 surveys were completed online with an additional 26 paper surveys completed throughout Inverness County.



Photo 1: Graphic used for Facebook promotion

Promotion

The survey was promoted through a variety of communications methods:

- Webpage created on invernesscounty.ca
- News release published January 22
- Facebook posts published January 22, 29, and February 18
- February Recreation Flyer published on February 2
- Presented at the Regular Meeting of Council on February 5
- Newspaper ad in *The Inverness Oran* and *The Reporter* on February 11.

How to take it

Each Feedback Loop survey is available online through Microsoft Forms (link available [here](#)). Additionally, each survey is available in person at the following locations:

- Municipal Administration Office, Port Hood
- Creignish Recreation Centre
- Alexander Doyle Public Library, Mabou
- Chéticamp Public Library
- Timmons Store, Pleasant Bay
- Meat Cove Community Centre
- Coady & Tompkins Memorial Public Library, Margaree
- Whycocomagh Waterfront Centre,
- L'Arche Cape Breton, Orangedale
- Port Hastings Post Office
- Judique Post Office
- Port Hood Post Office
- Mabou Post Office
- Inverness Post Office
- Chéticamp Post Office.

What We Heard

1. Current Activities

1.1. Individual Activities

The first question, which received 156 responses, asked what winter activities respondents currently enjoy. The most common responses were:



Hiking/walking
60 responses
(38%)



Snowshoeing
52 responses
(33%)



Skating
39 responses
(25%)



Cross Country Skiing
36 responses
(23%)



Indoor Recreation
32 responses
(20%)



Sledding
29 responses
(19%)

1.2. Municipal Activities

The second question asked about participation in and awareness of municipal recreation programs and activities. Forty-nine per cent of respondents reported having attended municipal programming in the past, 78% we're aware of programming, and 22% were unaware of winter programs.

Have you participated in any municipal winter recreation programs or activities in the past?

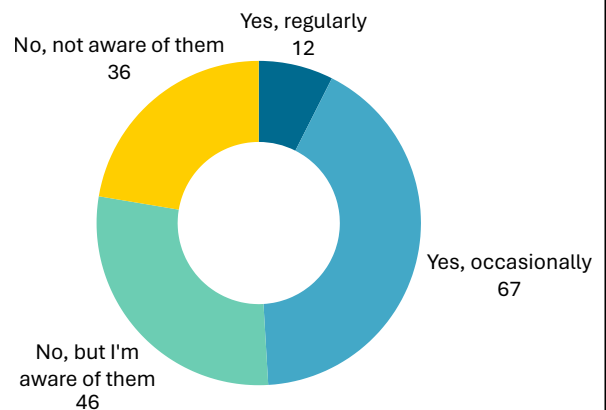


Figure 1.2: Respondents' participation in municipal winter recreation programs

2. Rental Equipment

2.1. Awareness & Use

The next section of the survey focused on the department's winter recreation equipment rental program. Most respondents (81%) were aware of the program, but only 26% of those aware had rented equipment.

Forty percent of those who had rented equipment had used snowshoes.

Zero respondents reported using the adaptive equipment (snow sleds and the Hippocampe chair), indicating little public awareness of that equipment.

2.2. Barriers & Feedback

Feedback regarding the winter rental equipment was generally positive. Most concerns shared can be sorted into three categories:



Confusion and concern on how to book equipment rentals.

Booking Process



Currently, equipment can only be picked up at the Recreation & Community Wellness office in Port Hood.

Pickup Location



Some respondents find the cost prohibitive, especially for families.

Cost

3. Programming

The next section of the survey was designed to gain an understanding of who currently participates, who would consider participating, what would reduce barriers to programming, and what kind of programming residents want to participate in.

3.1. Demographics

Which age groups in your household currently participate or would consider participating in winter programs?

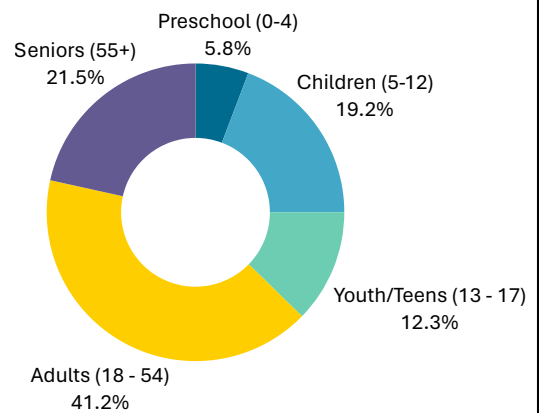


Figure 3.1: Ages of respondents' household members that do or would participate in programming.

3.2. Barriers

Twenty-five percent of respondents identified geography as the biggest barrier to participation, feeling that programming was often centralized to the Port Hood area.

Other barriers included:

- Transportation to events
- Lack of awareness of programming
- Venues, particularly schools during closures
- Time and dates, especially for professionals
- Lack of diversity of programming.

3.3. Suggestions for Expansion

The survey asked respondents what type of winter activities or programs they want to see offered or extended. The most common responses are below:

3.3.1. activities

- **Indoor hobbies/activities:** book clubs, fibre arts lessons, cooking classes, crafts nights, pottery making
- **Indoor active:** yoga, fitness classes, line dancing, badminton, seniors exercise class, walking club, Zumba, Qi Gong, Tai Chi
- **Indoor social:** trivia, games nights, cribbage tournaments, poetry, comedy nights
- **Lifestyle:** nutrition classes, healthy living programming, meditation
- **Outdoor active:** expanding hikes/walks/snowshoes/cross country skiing events, sledding, ice fishing
- **Outdoor lifestyle:** winter survival class, outdoor cooking, trail safety classes/equipment
- **Outdoor fun:** community festivals, snow building contests, snowmobile events, sleigh rides, bonfire nights
- **Skating:** adult learn to skate, skating socials/parties, outdoor skating
- **Miscellaneous:** event series of different activities for people who want to try many new things.

3.3.2. Addressing demographic barriers

- **Young professionals:** expand evening/weekend programming for working professionals
- **Newcomers:** design programming for people new to the area looking to make connection
- **Skill levels:** limit some indoor sport nights to advanced players who want to compete, as well as expand try-it events
- **Kids:** expand half-day camps, indoor play groups, and other programs to include young children under six; outdoor programming for children & families
- **Women:** weight lifting, strength training, and nutrition designed for women
- **Seniors:** expand programming to keep seniors active and social
- **Low income:** expand low/no-cost programming; funding programs for low-income participants.

4. Communication

The next section asked respondents how they hear about winter recreation programming.

Note: the communication questions were omitted in the paper surveys, so the answers reflect only the 140 online responses.

Most respondents rely on social media to keep up with recreation programming and go to social media when they have a question about winter programs.

How do you usually hear about municipal winter recreation programs and activities?

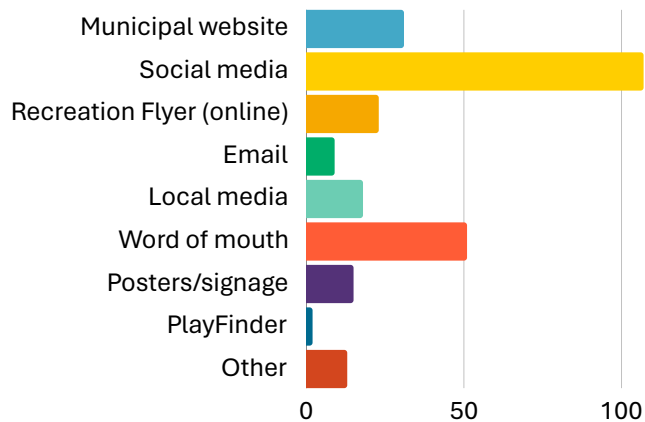


Figure 4: respondents' main communications channels

In terms of ease of information, 67% of responses found it easy (very or somewhat) to find information about municipal winter recreation programs.



Recommendations

1. Rental Equipment

1.1 Expand pickup availability

Survey responses indicate a strong desire from residents for expanded availability of rental equipment. Below are suggestions from the survey:

1.1.a) **Partners locations:** partner with libraries, post offices, or businesses across the county to offer satellite rental locations, either full time or on an occasional basis

1.1.b) **Mobile pickup:** Recreation staff travel to strategic locations (i.e. trail heads) on a regular basis with equipment to offer rentals in different communities

1.2. Education about booking process

Several respondents indicated confusion around how to book rentals. As the booking process is streamlined online through PlayFinder, recreation and communications staff should continue to plan how best to educate residents on the process.

2. Programming

2.1. Expand programming offerings

As the Recreation & Community Wellness team continue to expand their programming offerings, they should consider the list on page four of this report as a guide.

3. Communication

3.1. Build social media strategy for recreation

Given most respondents get recreation programming from social media, it makes sense to continue using social media as a main communication channel for the department. However, communications staff should explore social media trends and tactics to figure out the most effective methods.

3.2. Take advantage of community word of mouth

The second most common communication method for respondents is word of mouth. Communications staff should explore community ambassadors for recreation activities to help improve word of mouth.

3.3. Engage partners to help promotion

Communications and Recreation staff should work collaboratively to identify potential partner groups (i.e. schools, youth groups, seniors clubs, etc.) to share programming information and assist with promotion to targeted groups.

Action Items

	Related Recommendation	Challenges	Action	Status (as of April 2026)
Rental Equipment	Explore partner locations for winter rental equipment	Relying on external partners to maintain equipment, handle rental fees, and commit staff to administering municipal equipment rental program	Staff working to identify and contact key locations in communities throughout Inverness County to expand the rental equipment program	In progress.
	Explore mobile pickup locations facilitated by staff in different communities	Unpredictable winter weather and road conditions pose the biggest challenge to staff's ability to travel to different communities and offer mobile pickup	Staff plan to offer drop off to residents in different communities who book equipment in advance on offered days	Piloting the idea with the bicycle rental program through Summer 2026
	Educate residents on equipment booking process	Finding the best platform/medium to reach the most residents for most effective education	Create communications campaign to promote PlayFinder booking process	In progress. Recreation and communications staff working with Playfinder to create materials

Related Recommendation		Challenges	Action	Status (as of April 2026)
Program Expansion	Diversify programming activities (i.e. indoor hobbies/activities, indoor active, outdoor active, lifestyle, etc.)	The Recreation & Community Wellness team is primarily based in Port Hood. The team works to offer programming all over Inverness County that best suits residents; however, weather, staff complement, and the lack of municipally owned recreational facilities pose the biggest challenges to expanding programming.	To boost capacity and be able to offer expanded programming to residents, staff are working to identify individuals and groups across different communities who can partner with the department to offer programs to residents.	In progress. Recreation & Community Wellness staff creating handbook for potential community programmers; Communications staff working on materials to attract programmers.
	Diversify offerings for different demographics (i.e. younger children, young working professionals, seniors, newcomers)			
	Diversify geographic locations & times offered			
Communication	Build social media strategy for recreation	Most survey participants indicated social media as their main tool to find out what is going on; however, platforms like Facebook are external tools that the Municipality cannot control, so there is no guarantee the information gets to residents in a timely manner.	Communications to switch to “weekly overview” format for Recreation posts instead of a post for each event. The overview will be pinned to the top of the Facebook page each week to make it easily accessible. Staff will continue to explore social media trends and tactics to figure out the most effective methods.	Weekly overview posts started on April 13. Will continue throughout Summer 2026 and beyond.