



**SUMMARY DOCUMENT**

# McNabs & Lawlor Islands Provincial Park: Public Engagement Report

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# Accessing McNabs Island: Results of Public Engagement

Through Group ATN Consulting Inc., the Department of Resources and Renewables engaged parties with interest in and connection to McNabs and Lawlor Islands who had expressed concerns about changing the location for the main access point to the Island. The aim was to better understand how changing this access would impact the visitor experience.

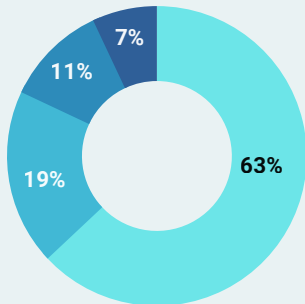
The current main access point, Garrison Pier in McNabs Cove, is in need of repair, but is viewed as undesirable from an infrastructure longevity perspective. Therefore, other locations are being considered.

Feedback has been collected through 577 survey responses collected September 14 - October 13, 2023, as well as through engagement with a variety of partnered and interested parties involved in building island infrastructure, providing island tours, services that facilitate public access to the island, or private landowners who access the island for their private use.

The following provides a summary of findings from engagement with the public, local partners and stakeholders to inform the Department about how the public uses, accesses and values the island.

## Public Survey Highlights

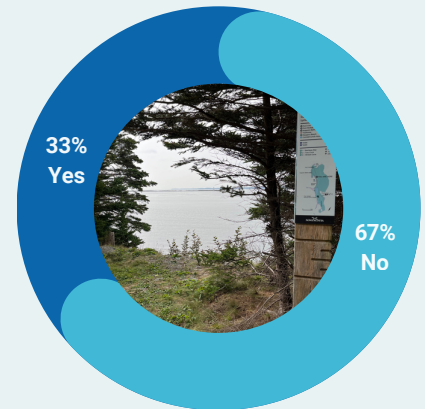
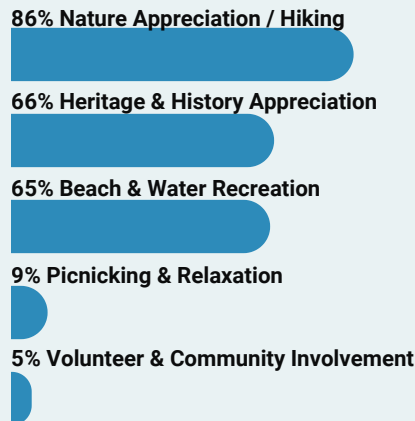
### The Importance of the Current Garrison Pier Location



63% of respondents said the current pier location was **very important** to their ability to access McNabs Island. 19% said the current location was important. To 11% of respondents it was somewhat important, and to 7% it was not important.

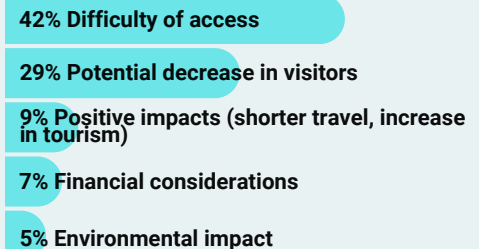
### Most Common Activities for Island Visitors

Survey respondents were asked about the activities they most commonly engage in while accessing McNabs Island. Respondents were able to provide more than one response.



67% of respondents **did not expect to be financially impacted** by a change in access point.

### Impact of Changing Main Access to McNabs Island



Survey respondents highlighted increased difficulty in access to the island as the most prominent factor resulting from a change in access location.

# Considerations of Constraints Impacting Access Location

The parties engaged throughout this process offered several valuable and important considerations and constraints of two options: repairing the current Garrison Pier or relocating the wharf to an alternative location on McNabs Island. The following are a summary of the key factors raised by interested parties.

## • Safety & Accessibility •

Participants emphasized the need for infrastructure upgrades in order to make an access point like Timmonds Cove safely accessible, such as the potential need for motorized vehicles, which would improve accessibility and offset the increased travel time for school groups or senior visitors looking to make use of Maughers beach. Additional safety concerns were raised in relation to a new access point being placed on the north side of the island, where boaters from Halifax would be required to cross two commercial shipping lanes and manage heavy winds upon return, creating safety challenges for those in small vessels or those learning to sail.

## • Environmental & Cultural Impact •

Some participants highlighted that shifting the main access point to a new location on the island could upset the currently established paths and change the patterns of foot traffic to previously less or undisturbed habitats. These parties suggested careful adjustment of the current trail plan and existing on-island signage to direct new traffic flow.

## • Loss of Interest & Visitor Value •

Interested parties feared that the requirement for increased on-island travel to points of interest and decreased visual appeal of other locations like Timmonds Cove would reduce the quality of experience and decrease visitor ambition to come to the island. Tour groups and educational providers expressed concern that visitors, particularly school groups with time constraints, may not have enough time or energy to add more on-foot travel to their existing itineraries, and that other locations could thus discourage repeat visitation.

## • Financial Impacts •

Primary and valuable uses for McNabs Island include:

- Tour groups and island management partners host educational experiences and activities for visitors and school groups
- Water-based activities are popular and include swimming or attending the beach, kayaking/canoeing or snorkelling/scuba diving
- The Forts offer historical education and activities for visitors
- Established trails allow for hiking and exploration
- Recreational boaters moor around the island and dock for day trips, and sailing instructors use it as a training destination for young learners

Organizations operating on or around the island indicated varying expected financial impacts resulting from a changed public access point, with some tour operators expecting decreases in revenues due to increased travel time and expenses, as well as a less desirable end product. Others expected to be able to decrease their fuel costs and travel time, which operators mentioned could also enable them to reduce their prices and help make the island more accessible overall.

Some parties mentioned the important investment that has been previously made into the current visitor infrastructure and the costly changes that would be necessary to support a shift in access point.

Importantly, as some interested parties pointed out, the long term financial consequences of unforeseen environmental impacts and further damage to a repaired but vulnerable Garrison Pier may be more commonly overlooked in favour of the benefits of keeping the location the same. Some stakeholders emphasized that consideration should be given to the long-term, best interests of island users based on expected environmental conditions.