



UPLAND

June, 2026

Region of Queens Land Use Planning Update

Coastal Protection

Background Report (6/7)

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Update

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INTRODUCTION

Topic Overview

The Region of Queens has an extensive coastline along the Atlantic Ocean, stretching approximately 343 kilometres when islands are included. This coastline is a defining feature of the municipality and is highly valued for its natural beauty, recreational opportunities, and long-standing connection to the fishing industry. It also supports important coastal ecosystems that are sensitive to both human activity and environmental change.

Over time, coastal areas have also become a focus for development in Queens. Residential homes, seasonal properties, and tourism-related uses are often located close to the shoreline, taking advantage of ocean views and coastal access. While this development contributes to the local economy and community life, it also places people and infrastructure in areas that are naturally exposed to coastal hazards.

Climate change is expected to significantly influence future coastal conditions in Queens. Current projections suggest that

local sea levels could rise by approximately 1.06 metres (± 0.48 metres) by 2100. When combined with storm surge and high tide events, areas at elevations of up to approximately 4.31 metres (relative to chart datum) could be at risk of flooding.

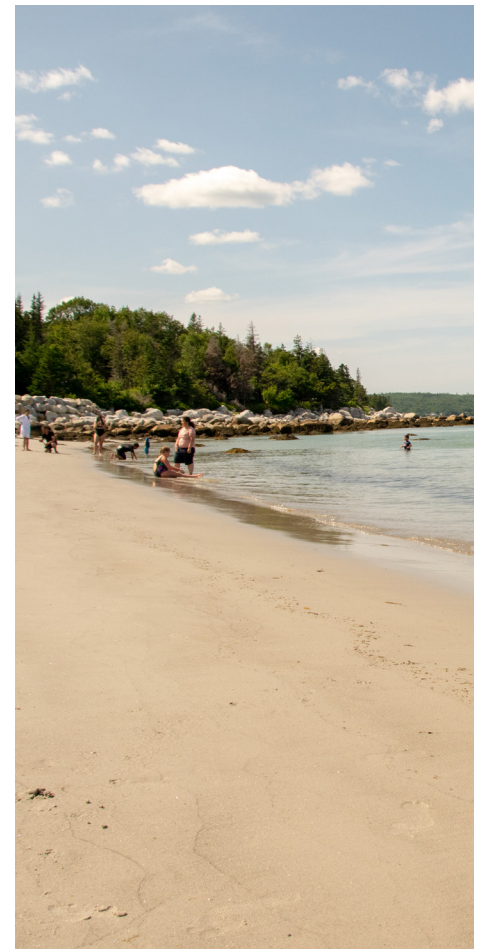
As a result, new development will need to carefully consider exposure to flooding and erosion, while existing development in vulnerable areas may require long-term adaptation strategies or, in some cases, relocation over time.

Why is this a Topic of Focus?

When Queens adopted its current planning documents, the Province of Nova Scotia was considering creating province-wide coastal regulations. The Municipality's coastal regulations were established to bridge the gap until provincial regulations were in place.

However, the Province has since chosen to defer to municipalities on coastal planning, and has provided resources such as

example bylaw text to help municipalities create coastal planning regulations. The Municipality is reviewing its coastal planning regulations to see if there are opportunities to improve them and to ensure they are appropriately protecting development and our coastlines.



Existing Policies and Regulations

The current Land Use Bylaw regulates coastal development with a minimum horizontal buffer distance to reduce erosion risks and a minimum vertical elevation to reduce coastal flood risks.

Horizontal Buffer

The minimum horizontal buffer distance is 30.0 metres (~ 100 feet) measured from the “top of bank”. This buffer distance can be reduced to as little as 15.24 metres (50 feet) if the applicant provides a study, prepared by a qualified person, that evaluates erosion and flood risks. There are also exceptions from the buffer for buildings that need to be at the water, such as boat houses and marine industries.

The horizontal buffer does not apply to the Downtown Zone, which is present in downtown Liverpool.

Minimum Vertical Elevation

The minimum vertical elevation is 2.8 metres, relative to the Canadian Geodetic Vertical Datum of 2013 (CGVD2013). This is a vertical benchmark used by surveyors to approximate the surface of the earth. In practical terms, this elevation is intended to exclude development in areas that would flood when impacted by:

- + High tide;
- + A storm surge such as the highest surges seen around the province during Hurricane Juan; and
- + A rise in sea levels of 1.06 metres (expected by the year 2100).

The elevation of the finished floor area of buildings must be above the minimum vertical elevation in the following zones:

- + Coastal Rural (R6) Zone
- + Hamlet Core (HC) Zone
- + Hamlet Residential (HR) Zone
- + Land Lease Residential (LL) Zone

- + Rural Commercial (CR) Zone
- + Lakeshore Limited Development (SL) Zone
- + Lakeshore Residential (SR) Zone

This means that buildings can be within the area potentially affected by coastal flooding, as long as they are elevated enough. In other zones, such as “urban” areas, habitable floor areas must be above the minimum vertical elevation. This means that spaces regularly used by people (homes, businesses, etc.) must be elevated, but storage areas and parking garages can be below the minimum elevation.

In both cases there are exemptions for buildings that need to be at the water, such as boat houses or marine industries.



Infill and Shoreline Armouring

A common approach to dealing with coastal hazards, such as erosion and flooding, is to infill land or to “armour” the shoreline using large boulders or rip-rap. While this can protect the armoured land, the redirection of wave energy often impacts neighbouring properties and erodes them faster. It can also destroy natural habitats.

Municipalities in Nova Scotia do not have the power to directly regulate the infilling of land or coastal armouring. However, the Municipality could help reduce the incentive to do these activities by:

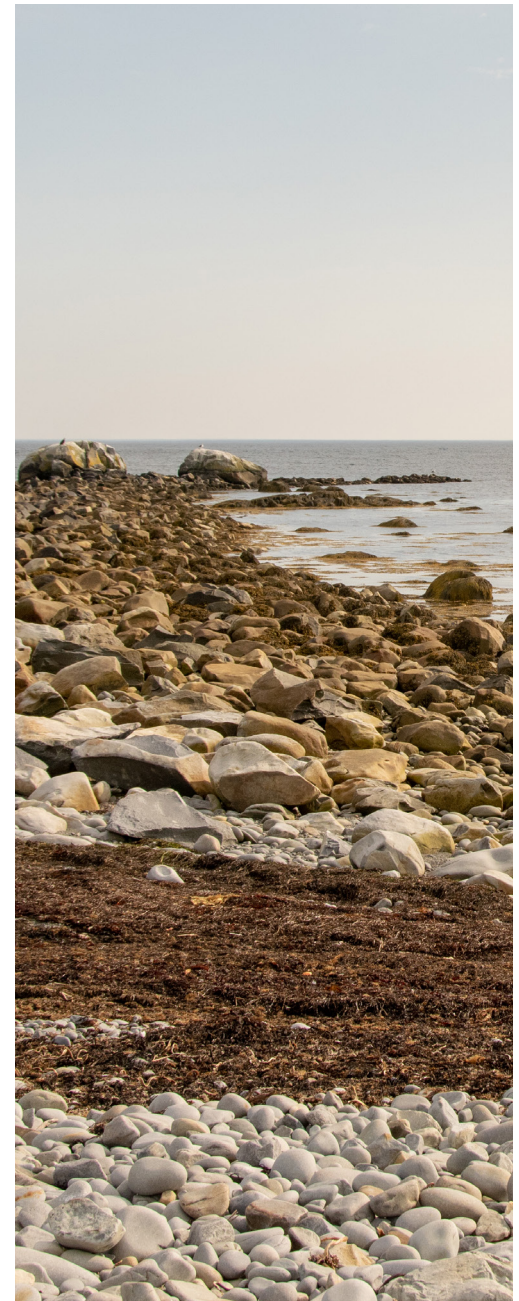
- + Prohibiting development on “infill” land, i.e. land that is created by dumping new fill into the water; and
- + Not allowing “artificial” shorelines, such as armour rock, to be considered in studies of erosion risk that are done reduce the minimum horizontal buffer.

Review Permissions within the Minimum Vertical Elevation

Current regulations allow coastal development as long as the buildings are elevated enough to avoid the risk of flooding. This can be natural elevation, or could be artificial (e.g. building up the land, or building on stilts).

The Municipality could update the permissions for what occurs in the coastal areas, such as:

- + Being more flexible by allowing buildings if they are “flood proofed” up to the minimum vertical elevation; and/or
- + Being stricter by prohibiting uses with vulnerable populations (e.g. nursing homes) or potential environmental risks (e.g. gas stations) within areas with coastal flood risks, whether they are elevated above the minimum vertical elevation or not.



KEY QUESTIONS

Questions to Consider

Community input will help us determine how best to balance development along the coast with the need to avoid coastal hazards, such as flooding and erosion. The following questions are intended to guide discussion and gather feedback:

- + What types of development have you noticed along with coastline in Queens? Has this development been positive or negative? Why?
- + Do the current regulations regarding horizontal buffers and minimum vertical elevation adequately protect development from coastal hazards?
- + Do you have any other ideas or concerns related to coastal development that should be considered as part of this review?

