

## Tour of Heat Pumps in the Glebe – Final Report

The Glebe Community Association (GCA) Environment Committee in partnership with Community Associations for Sustainable Environment (CAFES) organized a *Tour of Heat Pumps in the Glebe* on Saturday, May 10, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. When surveying attendees at the 2024 Coffee Houses on Sustainability - Homes & Energy event, the GCA Environment Committee observed that the majority of attendees (28%) planned on installing heat pumps within the next 5-years. So, the goal of this tour was to provide residents who are living with an aging furnace information on how to transition to an electric heat pump for warming and cooling their homes.

The GCA-funded event consisted of two components: a walking tour and a Q&A session. The tour ran from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. with attendees being assigned a starting house after registering on the Eventbrite page. The tour involved five Glebe homeowners who had installed heat pumps in their century-old residences who were willing to share their experiences and knowledge. The types of homes included a row house, houses with multiple apartments and single-family homes. The heat pumps included a range of manufacturers from Fujitsu to Mitsubishi, as well as standard to cold climate models. One homeowner invited their supplier/ installer to be present.



Homeowner's and displays outlining their heat pump set-ups, costs and carbon footprint reductions (photo credit Jennifer Humphries)

Attendees were able to view the exterior heat pump unit, see pictures illustrating the interior set up and ask questions about the homeowner's experience relating to selection, installation and operation. Volunteer guides accompanied attendees on a suggested route which included at least four of the five houses. Attendees were provided with a map showing locations including walking times between homes and the Glebe Community Centre so they could take a self-guided tour and see as many locations as possible.

The tour ended with a Q&A session over a cup of tea or coffee at the Glebe Community Centre's Multi-Purpose room from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. Representatives from Electrify613, EnviroCentre and Hydro Ottawa volunteered to answer questions on anything from installation tips to current heat pump rebates and incentive programs to how Hydro Ottawa is preparing for an electrified future.



Panelists at the Q&A session (photo credit Jennifer Humphries)

The top 10 takeaways that were shared by homeowners and panelists include:

1. The time to switch to a heat pump is a year or two before your gas or oil furnace reaches the end of its expected lifespan. If you wait until it conks out, and if that happens during the heating season, it may be more problematic to switch quickly to a heat pump. Do your research well in advance of that "best before date" and you will be positioned to make the move fairly rapidly.
2. It's not just your furnace. If your central air conditioner is winding down, or expected to give up soon, rather than replacing it you can choose to switch to a heat pump at that time. Heat pumps provide AC as well. Again, do your research early if you think your air conditioner won't last the summer.
3. It's more expensive to install a heat pump than a furnace, but it may not be as big a price difference as you imagine. While a cold climate heat pump continues to provide your home heating at lower temperatures than a standard heat pump, you can save up front by staying with the standard. In both cases, you will want a back-up furnace, be it electric (ideal for reducing carbon) or gas, and this will switch on automatically if it's too cold for your heat pump to provide sufficient heat. This happens less frequently with cold climate versions, perhaps only a few times each winter.
4. You can get unbiased information for free from Electrify613 whose Chris Taggart presented at our Heat Pump Info Session. Taggart and co-founder Aaron Sadhankar are keen to help local residents electrify their homes. Electrify613 is a community group of neighbours, experts and software tools to help homeowners

electrify their home, find good heat pump contractors, and reduce their home's emissions. Take a look at their website, [electrify613.ca](https://electrify613.ca) (see Get Advice: Guides/Space Heating and Cooling)<sup>1</sup>.

5. While the federal government's Greener Homes Grants no longer exist, the Canada Greener Homes Loans Program has been renewed and offers eligible applicants interest-free financing (see Natural Resources Canada's website)<sup>2</sup>. Jason Vanderzwan and Jamaal Francis who represented EnviroCentre on the Q&A panel described how you may be eligible for low-interest loans from the City of Ottawa Better Homes Program<sup>3</sup> which is managed by EnviroCentre. It's worthwhile to start your greener home journey with a visit to their website at [envirocentre.ca](https://envirocentre.ca).
6. Energy efficiency and carbon emissions reduction do not need to start with a heat pump. Homeowners are well advised to start with improving their home's insulation and its airtightness. Many century homes had no insulation, per se, though they may have two layers of brick (not a good insulator). Insulation improvement and possibly other retrofits would ideally precede heat pump installation. Incentive programs such as the Home Renovations Savings Program<sup>4</sup> offer rebates on heat pumps, smart thermostats and many other energy-saving home retrofits without requiring a energy audit.
7. Switching to a heat pump will massively reduce the carbon emissions of your home.
8. Switching to a heat pump might not instantly reduce the cost of heating/cooling your home. Homeowner hosts on our tour and panelists at our Q&A Session reported paying about \$100 a year less than they had last paid for gas heating. But the price of gas has seen recent increases, making electricity a more affordable option than in earlier years.
9. Hydro Ottawa is making provisions incrementally to ensure that it can handle the increased electricity demand of electrified homes and EV adoption. Q&A Session panelist Shawn Carr, Director, Energy Transition, Customer Strategy and Innovation for Hydro Ottawa, said that because residents are not all switching to heat pumps at the same time, but over a period of years, our system will be able to handle it.
10. What about a backup to the backup? In the event of a prolonged power outage in the winter, how can we heat our homes? In fact, gas furnaces won't work either during a power outage as they need electricity for some of their components. A gas generator could also be used, though if you want to eliminate fossil fuels that may not be your backup of choice. Many local homes have fireplaces, but these are rarely very effective except to heat a small space, so an efficient wood stove could give you peace of mind.

Overall, the event was successful with several positive comments from attendees both verbal and written (as shown below). Donations collected were used to cover the costs of refreshments.

*"I wanted to thank you and the GCA for your efforts regarding the heat pump tour.*

*The information we received was the primary determinant in helping us solidify our decisions to move forward and in determining the direction we will take.*

*We will be moving forward with replacing our furnace (and water heater) with 100% electric options within the next 12 to 18 months. This will bring our household down to zero emissions.*

*Thank you for this." D.S.*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://electrify613.ca/guides/space-heating-cooling/airsource-heatpump> (accessed 2025-05-16)

<sup>2</sup> <https://natural-resources.canada.ca/energy-efficiency/home-energy-efficiency/canada-greener-homes-initiative/canada-greener-homes-loan> (accessed 2025-05-16)

<sup>3</sup> <https://betterhomesottawa.ca/rebate-and-incentive-programs/better-homes-loan-program/> (accessed 2025-05-16)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.homerenovationsavings.ca/> (accessed 2025-05-16)



Attendees at Q&A session (photo credit Della Wilkinson)

*“...Just wanted to say thanks so much for the excellent event on Saturday, the tour of heat pumps in the Glebe. I learned a ton (haha :-)) and really enjoyed having the opportunity to talk to so many knowledgeable experts, as well as the chance to meet actual homeowners who have gone down the heat pump road already. We will definitely start investigating what our own heat pump journey will look like. Again, thanks very much for the event - I'm on the board of the Centretown Community Association and I know how much effort it is to put together something like this!  
Thanks,” M.S.*

The GCA was very fortunate to have a social media graphic which included a QR code to enable people to immediately register using their phone (see image) which helped promote the event.

**TAKE THE TOUR!**

Heat Pumps in the Glebe

MAY 10, 2025    1:00 TO 4:00 P.M.

Visit several Glebe houses with heat pumps

PLUS

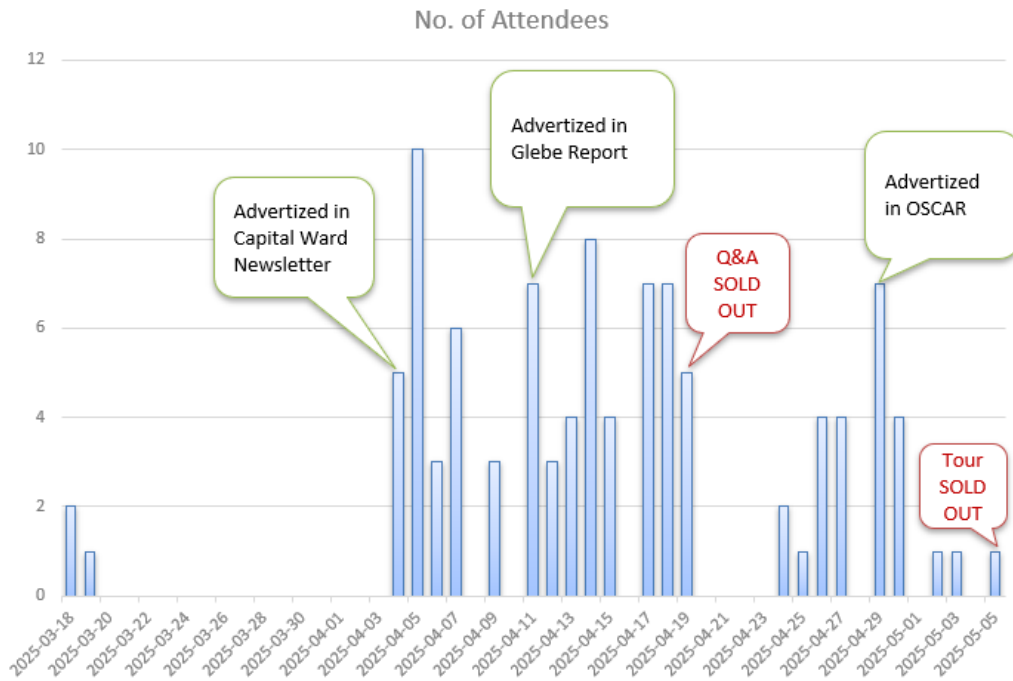
A Q&A session at the Glebe Community Centre

with representatives from  
HydroOttawa, the EnviroCentre and Electrify 613

Sign up now! Capacity limited.  
Eventbrite: <https://bit.ly/4iNn3ue>

Promotional graphic created by Magdalene Carsons, CAFES

The graphic was submitted to Capital Ward Councilor’s office and included in his weekly newsletter (published on April 4<sup>th</sup>). An article was written for the Glebe Report (published on April 11<sup>th</sup>) which was re-published in the OSCAR on April 29<sup>th</sup>. The impact of these different promotional opportunities on event registrations can be seen in the graph below. The tour and Q&A session filled up quickly so 25 more spots were added for the tour only, which also quickly reached capacity.



Impact of promotional activities on number of registered attendees

The GCA Environment Committee would like to thank the dedicated volunteers that supported this event including:

Our planning committee – John Humphries, Bill Nuttle, Carol MacLeod, Angela Keller-Herzog & Della Wilkinson

homeowners - Matthew Wilson, Carol MacLeod, William Nuttle, John Harris & John Humphries

Our knowledgeable panelists – Jason Vanderzwan, Jamaal Franics, Chris Taggart & Shawn Carr

Our volunteer guides – Steve Zan, Leslie Cole, Lenore Fahrig, Kevin Taylor & Jennifer Humphries

Angela Keller-Herzog, Executive Director of CAFES for providing display panels and equipment

Magdalene Carson, CAFES Board member for creating graphic design

Kieran Humphries for photography of interior heat pump installations