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Our Path Forward

BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS
OF NOVA SCOTIA'S SOLID WASTE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY



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Introduction

In 1995, Nova Scotia began a new approach to waste management, as set out in our *Solid Waste Resource Management Strategy*. Waste was no longer a nuisance, but a potential resource that required new management approaches. This is how we became an innovative world leader in recycling and waste diversion.

Our Path Forward: Building on the Success of Nova Scotia's Solid Waste Resource Management Strategy provides clear direction on how we can increase our success and maintain our leadership position in solid waste management. Building on our experience of the past 15 years, Our Path Forward will strengthen our relationships with key partners and help us achieve our waste disposal target of no more than 300 kilograms per person per year by 2015.

Where it all started

Nova Scotia's *Solid Waste Resource Management (SWRM) Strategy* (1995) grew out of public concern about issues such as leachate and air pollution from landfills and waste incinerators. The Nova Scotia government responded to these concerns by including in its new *Environment Act* (1995) the establishment of a *SWRM Strategy* and the adoption of the Canadian target of 50 per cent solid waste diversion goal for the year 2000.

In 1994, the government had embarked on an extensive public consultation to learn how the people of Nova Scotia wanted to tackle the waste challenges facing the province. The following priorities were established as a result of that consultation process and outlined in the *SWRM Strategy*:

- Recognition of solid waste as a resource
- Equitable and consistent enforcement of regulations
- Greater emphasis on public education and awareness
- Shared responsibility and stewardship
- Regional cooperation to achieve diversion targets and objectives for environmental protection, taking into account municipal concerns

Goals included in the *Environment Act*, 1995

- Maintain environmental protection as essential to the integrity of eco-systems, human health, and the socio-economic well-being of society
- Maintain the principles of sustainable development
- Confirm the polluter-pays principle: anyone who creates an adverse effect on the environment must take remedial action and pay for the costs of that action
- Encourage the development and use of environmental technologies, innovations, and industries

What have we achieved so far?

Our *SWRM Strategy* made ambitious commitments to solid waste resource management, and the people of Nova Scotia responded with action. Households embraced the separation of recyclable and compostable resources into various receptacles for collection and processing. What was "waste" became a resource through the cooperative efforts of municipalities, the Resource Recovery Fund Board (RRFB), and industry stewards. We have met many of our original commitments from the *Strategy*, including our 50 per cent diversion goal by 2000. *The Final Report on Nova Scotia's 1995 Solid Waste Resource*

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Management Strategy (2009) describes Nova Scotia's achievements and identifies remaining challenges. To view the full report, go to www.gov.ns.ca/nse/waste/docs/SolidWasteStrategyFinalReport1995.pdf

Nova Scotia's progress towards reducing waste

- Our provincial disposal rate decreased from 743 kg/person/year in 1990 to 401 kg/person/year in 2010
- Materials recycled by Nova Scotians increased from 11,000 tonnes per year in 1992 to over 50,000 tonnes in 2010
- Organics composted increased from 3,000 tonnes in 1994 to over 100,000 tonnes in 2010

Other noteworthy Nova Scotia achievements

- 99% of households have curbside recycling
- 94% of households have curbside collection of organics
- 87% of households are within 20km of an ENVIRODEPOT™
- 2.6 billion beverage containers have been recycled since 1996
- about 1 million tires are reused or recycled each year
- over 400,000 litres of leftover paint are recycled each year

What has changed since the SWRM Strategy was released?

Nova Scotia has made substantial progress in solid waste resource management since the release of the *SWRM Strategy* in 1995. However, the percentage of materials diverted has reached a plateau with significant quantities of valuable resources such as food and yard waste still ending up in landfills. This represents lost opportunities for resource recovery and has broader environmental and economical impacts.

As waste resource materials change, our approach to waste resource management needs to adapt. *Our Path Forward* maps out how Nova Scotia will meet the waste disposal target of no more than 300 kilograms per person per year while integrating the long-term objective of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA)* to fully integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

Principles of the EGSPA 2007

- The health of the economy, the health of the environment, and the health of the people of the province are interconnected.
- Environmentally sustainable economic development that recognizes
 the economic value of the province's environmental assets is essential to
 the long-term prosperity of the province.
- The environment and the economy of the province are a shared responsibility of all levels of government, the private sector, and the people of the province.
- The environment and economy must be managed for the benefit of present and future generations.
- Innovative solutions are necessary to mutually reinforce the environment and the economy.
- A long-term approach to planning and decision making is necessary to harmonize the province's goals of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability.
- The management of goals for sustainable prosperity—such as emission reduction, energy efficiency programs, and increasing the amount of legally protected land—will preserve and improve the province's environment and economy for future generations.

What is Our Path Forward?

A path forward is one that builds on our past success and provides context to plan for the future. It means improving on existing practices, partnerships, and regulations to meet new challenges and opportunities. We have learned through the *SWRM Strategy* that a cohesive mix of public policy, community engagement, and collaboration provides the right conditions to create innovative results. *Our Path Forward* incorporates the lessons we have learned while implementing the *Strategy* over the past 15 years.

Stakeholder consultation has been key to developing *Our Path Forward*. Nova Scotia Environment established an advisory committee to guide the process. The Strategy Renewal Advisory Committee included representation from municipalities, provincial government departments, RRFB, business, industry, and non-governmental organizations. Stakeholder consultation also included more than 160 people in workshops across the province. Others sent us their written comments. *Our Path Forward* brings together what we heard from Nova Scotians about opportunities for action and integrates this within the context of the *SWRM Strategy*, the *Environment Act*, and *EGSPA*.

What We Heard: Highlights from Stakeholder Consultations (2009)

- Existing practices and programs are working well.
- Better enforcement of existing regulations is needed.
- Financial rewards, fees, and fines are good ways to keep waste out of landfills.
- The provincial government should lead by example.
- Producers and consumers must pay for recycling and disposal costs.
- The connection between waste reduction and economic activity in Nova Scotia must continue.

The objective of *Our Path Forward* is to map out how Nova Scotians will achieve a waste disposal rate of **no more than 300 kilograms of waste per person per year**. It provides direction for on-going engagement and improvement, while remaining flexible. This ensures that Nova Scotia can adapt to environmental, social, and economic changes.

Our Path Forward contains six goals that reflect what Nova Scotian stakeholders want. Each goal is followed by key actions that the Nova Scotia government will take to facilitate the outcomes.

Goal 1:

Increase participation in waste prevention and diversion

Nova Scotia has one of the highest waste diversion rates in Canada. We have realized many benefits by preventing materials from ending up in landfills. Potential environmental effects of landfill sites have been avoided, and waste is now identified as a valuable resource. Although we should celebrate our success to date, there are many opportunities to do more.

What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will develop new incentives to encourage participation in waste prevention and diversion.

Waste prevention and diversion clearly demonstrate the principles of *EGSPA*. When the environmental, economic, and societal costs of an action are accounted for, people are more likely to make decisions that benefit both the environment and the economy. But it is still too easy to be wasteful. We must look at what incentives are necessary for Nova Scotians to benefit from increased waste prevention and diversion.

Goal 2:

Improve compliance and education programs

Successful participation and application of waste diversion requires effective education and compliance programs working together. In an integrated program, people are well informed about the program in place, their responsibility to make good choices to reduce waste, and their obligations for waste diversion.

What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will work with our partners to review compliance and education related to solid waste resource management.

While reviewing existing regulations, we will keep in mind that education and compliance programs need to work together. We have invested significantly in solid waste education and compliance. We must examine these programs to find ways that the two can better support one other.

Goal 3:

Increase waste diversion

Waste Diversion, as defined in the *Solid Waste Management (SWM) Regulations*, means waste reduction, reuse, recycling, or composting.

The benefits of waste diversion are both economic and environmental. Since the implementation of the *SWRM Strategy*, Nova Scotia has seen an increase in the number of jobs related to recycling and composting. By recycling and composting materials in Nova Scotia, resources are recirculated through the economy, resulting in jobs and income for Nova Scotians.

Waste diversion through recycling and composting generate local and global environmental benefits. For example, by composting food and yard waste, Nova Scotians are gaining the nutrient value of compost while preventing the production of methane gas in landfills, which in turn reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Nova Scotians recognize the value of diverting materials from disposal and using them to produce other useful products. We need to continue to find new ways to turn waste into valuable products and materials, and we need to find markets for those products and materials. Nova Scotia's innovative services, technologies, and industries turn waste resources into valuable products, clean up our environment, strengthen our economy, and create jobs.

What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will review existing regulations to help us meet Nova Scotia's current and future opportunities and challenges for waste diversion.

Implemented in 1995, our *SWM Regulations* have contributed to increased recycling and composting rates, especially from households. However, the "waste management landscape" has changed significantly in the past 15 years. The success of current waste diversion initiatives has proven that the right mix of regulations, public awareness, and motivation can create impressive results.

We must review the *SWM Regulations* to ensure they can meet the challenges and opportunities of today and into the future.

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Goal 4:

Increase cost-effectiveness of diversion programs

One of the outcomes of our *SWRM Strategy* was the creation of Solid Waste Regions. Having municipalities work toward waste diversion and prevention on a regional basis allowed for economies of scale and increased the financial viability of recycling and composting in Nova Scotia.

What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will require renewal of Regional Plans. We will evaluate partnerships.

To facilitate the development of a regional approach, the *SWM Regulations* required municipalities to submit a Regional Plan to the province in 1997. These Plans outlined how the regions would work toward the 50 per cent diversion by 2000 goal set by the province. The *SWM Regulations* also required regions to provide progress reports to the province on achievements in disposal reduction and increased diversion.

Nova Scotians met that diversion goal. Now the province has a new, ambitious goal of no more than 300 kilograms per person per year by 2015. We need to look at how the regulations can reinforce and enhance regional cooperation. By renewing Regional Plans with the 300-kilogram goal as an objective, together we can minimize the costs of meeting current and future environmental standards for waste disposal and waste diversion.

The success of Nova Scotia's *SWRM Strategy* is largely due to partnerships. With common goals and objectives, Nova Scotians have been able to successfully integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. However, some of the challenges and opportunities for continuing this success have changed. We need to take a fresh look at Nova Scotia's partners in solid waste resource management to ensure we have the right model to meet all of our needs.

Goal 5:

Increase producer responsibility for end-of-life management of products and materials

Consumers today have a greater understanding of the connections between the products they use and their environmental impacts. Many consumers demand that the products they buy have less of an environmental impact. These products range from plastic packaging to products such as propane tanks and computers.

The recycling programs we have today were developed as a way to reduce the environmental impacts of the products and materials we use. Initially the environmental concerns were related to disposal. Since waste management is usually paid for by taxpayers, it has become typical for recycling costs to be paid by taxpayers, sometimes with help from producers. This has become the accepted model, but many people are now questioning producers' responsibility for the products they create, from resource extraction to disposal, recycling, or reuse.

Product stewardship developed in response to people questioning who should be responsible for products and materials when they are no longer useful. Product stewardship policies range from the shared responsibility between the taxpayer and the producer for the product's end-of-life recycling or disposal to full manufacturer responsibility, called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR).

Responsibility for Waste

In today's typical waste management system tax payers bear the full responsibility for waste management



With Product Stewardship, responsibility is shared between brand owners, consumers and taxpayers



Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is a form of product stewardship which makes brand owners and consumers financially responsible for waste management, rather than tax payers



EGSPA states that product stewardship will be used to ensure that the province meets the EGSPA disposal target: "the solid-waste disposal rate will be no greater than 300 kilograms per person per year by the year 2015 through measures that include the development of new programs and product stewardship regulations."

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Nova Scotia has several types of product stewardship programs, such as the milk packaging recycling program and the electronics recycling program. In the milk packaging recycling program, responsibility is shared between the dairies and the taxpayer. Nova Scotia's electronics recycling program is considered full EPR, because the electronics industry has full responsibility for the recycling or disposal of its products when consumers are finished with them.

What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will ensure the regulatory environment supports product stewardship, including EPR.

We will develop an Extended Producer Responsibility Action Plan.

EPR gives physical and/or financial responsibility for the lifecycle of a product to the producer. EPR shifts the responsibility for product end-of-life management from the taxpayer to the brand owner, manufacturer, or first importer.

EPR is a way to promote environmental improvements throughout the lifecycle of a product, to shift costs away from taxpayers, and to divert more materials from disposal. In 2009, Nova Scotia endorsed the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) Canada-wide Action Plan for Extended Producer Responsibility. This action plan facilitates a harmonized approach to EPR policies in Canada.

Principles of EPR outlined in the CCME Canada-wide Action Plan for EPR:

- Encourage producers to design products to minimize the impacts to the environment and human health
- Transfer end-of-life responsibility for waste products or materials from taxpayers to producers and importers
- Give government the responsibility for setting performance targets, creating a level playing field for producers and importers, and ensuring public has free and open access
- Give producers and importers the responsibility for program design, operation, and funding

Many jurisdictions across Canada and around the world are moving towards an EPR approach to waste management. Nova Scotia was one of the first jurisdictions in North America to implement EPR policies, with our electronics recycling program. We will continue our success by ensuring that Nova Scotia's regulatory environment supports product stewardship and by developing an EPR action plan for the province.

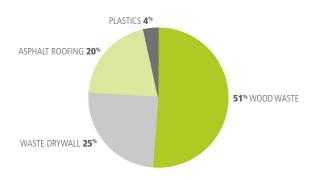
Goal 6:

Increase diversion of construction and demolition waste

Construction and demolition (C&D) waste includes materials normally used in the construction of buildings, structures, roadways, and landscaping features. C&D waste accounts for 25 to 30 per cent of Nova Scotia's total waste. While much C&D waste is currently diverted from disposal, there is significant potential to increase recycling of these materials into value-added products.

C&D waste, excluding concrete and mixed rubble, consists of:

51% wood waste 25% waste drywall 20% asphalt roofing 4% plastics



What will the government of Nova Scotia do?

We will collaborate with C&D waste generators and receivers to develop guidelines around best management practices.

We will develop an education and communication plan on best management practices for C&D waste.

We will ensure that our regulatory environment supports C&D waste prevention and diversion.

The disposal of C&D waste provides additional opportunities. With the right mix of incentives and educational information, contractors and property owners may be more likely to properly sort and recycle C&D waste rather than send it for disposal.

Conclusion

Achieving our waste disposal target of **no more than 300 kilograms per person per year by 2015** is an ambitious target that requires new approaches to solid waste resource management. Nova Scotians have demonstrated time and again that we are up to the challenge.

Our Path Forward recognizes that our success in this area will depend on how we manage change. The six goals and associated actions of this plan provide clear direction on how we will adapt our approach to solid waste management to keep pace with change.

Our Path Forward will help us achieve our waste disposal target, while contributing to a clean and sustainable environment and a strong and prosperous economy.

Our Path Forward Action Plan

WHAT NS GOVERNMENT WHAT STAKE-**HOLDERS WANT** WILL DO Increased participation **Develop** new incentives to in waste prevention encourage participation in waste and diversion prevention and diversion Improved compliance **Work with** our partners to and education review compliance and education related to solid waste resource programs management Increased waste **Review** existing regulations to help us meet Nova Scotia's current diversion and future opportunities and challenges for waste diversion Increased cost Require renewal of Regional Plans effectiveness of diversion programs **Evaluate** partnerships Increase producer **Ensure** regulatory environment responsibility for endsupports product stewardship, of-life management of including extended producer products and materials responsibility (EPR) **Develop** an *Extended Producer* Responsibility Action Plan Inrease diversion Collaborate with C&D waste of construction & generators and receivers to demolition (C&D) develop guidelines around best waste management practices

Develop education and communication plan on best management practices for C&D waste

Ensure regulatory environment supports C&D waste prevention and diversion

HOW WE'LL DO IT

Review policy options for packaging and disposable products reduction

Develop options for other incentives

Establish an advisory committee to set objectives and identify compliance and education opportunities

Develop project plan and identify focus areas

Initiate regulation review

Develop workplan to recommend amending regulations

Review roles of existing partners such as RRFB, municipalities, and industry

Review existing stewardship/EPR programs

Identify which products and materials should be managed by product stewardship / EPR policies

Identify an implementation plan for product categories listed in Phase 1 of the Canada-wide Action Plan on EPR, with plan to designate packaging first

Develop policy framework for product stewardship, including EPR

Approach stakeholders to form a working group to develop guidelines for best management practices for maximum diversions at minimum costs

Develop C&D policy tools

Scope out need for C&D regulations

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