

Ecology Action Centre says it's Time to Get Serious About Climate Change Impacts

Little Action on Dire Warnings Given Over a Year Ago

In the lead-up to the release of a UN study on climate change mitigation, the Ecology Action Centre is highlighting Nova Scotia's extreme vulnerability to the impacts of climate change outlined in a little-known government report.

A study, written in September 2005 but not visibly released, titled *Adapting to a Changing Climate in Nova Scotia* said the province is more vulnerable than most due to its coastal infrastructure, and the significance of natural resource sectors, such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture to the provincial economy.

The study says "All of the Atlantic Coastline of Nova Scotia is ranked as having either moderate or high sensitivity to sea level rise with approximately 80% being ranked as high" (pg. 12). 70% of Nova Scotia's population lives in these vulnerable coastal areas.

Almost two years after the release of the report, the Ecology Action Centre wonders if the province is taking the risks seriously enough.

The EAC says Nova Scotia needs to aggressively reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the most catastrophic impacts from climate change. If the world warms by 2 C above pre-industrial levels scientists predict dangerous instabilities creating potentially unstoppable changes to the climate system.

The Federal Green Plan, called a "fraud" by Al Gore, provides no change of avoiding this tipping point. The science is suggesting a 30% reduction from 1990 levels is needed by 2020, and the federal government is planning for a 5% increase above 1990 levels.

For Jennifer Graham, Coastal Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre, a comprehensive coastal strategy is essential to reduce Nova Scotia's vulnerability to sea level rise, storm surges, and accelerated coastal erosion that will occur as a result of the impacts we have already committed to.

"There are already serious consequences from unchecked development on coastal wetlands, bluffs, beaches and other sensitive coastal features. If we continue to build in locations that are already prone to flooding and erosion, what do we expect will happen when climate change intensifies these phenomena? Without a comprehensive coastal strategy to guide development on the coast, the damages and costs will continue to rise" says Graham.

She feels the province and municipalities must get serious about preparing for climate change by reigning in inappropriate coastal development in vulnerable coastal areas.

For Further Information Contact:

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Backgrounder: Nova Scotia's Vulnerability to Climate Change

Nova Scotia is starting to experience the impacts of climate change as a consequence of decades of greenhouse gas emissions. These effects will continue to intensify as a result of the global warming pollution already emitted. We need to seriously consider how we will adapt to climate change and reduce our current and future vulnerability.

The Nova Scotia Department of Energy is lead agency for climate change issues in the province, with Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour (NSDEL) playing a supportive role, especially on adaptation issues.

Adapting to a Changing Climate in Nova Scotia: Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Options (September 2005) can be found at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/energy/AbsPage.aspx?id=1392&siteid=1□=1>

Highlights

- 80% of Nova Scotia's Atlantic Coast is ranked as having a high sensitivity to sea level rise.
- 70% of Nova Scotia's population lives in coastal areas.
- Sea levels are predicted to rise by 70 cm by 2100
 - o Rising sea levels will expose shorelines to damage from wave action and intensify erosion.
- Sea level rise allows storm surges to inundate areas never before flooded
- Effect on Nova Scotia's Industries
 - o 240 km of dykes that protect farmland are extremely vulnerable to storm surges
 - o Fisheries, shipping & tourism and recreation will face impacts from sea level rise and weather pattern changes
 - o The forestry sector will face infestations of new pests, and increased risk of forest fires
- Recommendation
 - o Province to establish a climate change adaptation committee to develop an adaptation strategy
 - o Province to promote applied research into climate change adaptation to provide information for decision makers. Priority research should include improved climate change modelling and risk assessment.