

# Ecology & Action

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Liza Tsitrin is a researcher, artist, and photographer with a passion for adventure and ocean conservation. She has been painting for as long as she can remember, but became especially fascinated with depicting the ocean once she learned to scuba dive at the age of 12. Since then, the ocean has sparked her imagination and curiosity, leading her to pursue a career in marine sciences. Today Liza is completing her Master's in Biology at Acadia University, where she studies fish migration and interactions with tidal turbines. She continues to raise awareness for conservation through her art, which she hopes will inspire appreciation and respect towards the natural world. During her free time you're likely to find her at the beach, taking photos, or looking for hidden treasures!

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## Correction

In our article titled Grassroots to Groundswell (Ecology & Action, Spring 2019) we inaccurately said that youth climate activist Greta Thunberg is from Switzerland. Greta Thunberg is from Sweden. Thank you to those who wrote to alert us of our error.



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The Ecology Action Centre is a member-based environmental charity in Nova Scotia. We take leadership on critical environmental issues from biodiversity protection to climate change to environmental justice. We are grounded in community, and a strong voice and watchdog for our environment. We work to catalyze change through policy advocacy, community development and building awareness. We take a holistic approach to the environment and our economy to create a just and sustainable society. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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“The Ecology Action Centre is incredibly important to the environmental health of Nova Scotia and to the people who live here. Over the years it has built a reputation for integrity and unrivaled research and work on ecological issues. My gift, I hope, will ensure it continues this work for many, many years in the future.”

– Cliff White

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# Spare Change

## THREE CHEAP AND EFFECTIVE WAYS GOVERNMENTS CAN FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

by CAROLINE SKELTON /// EAC Volunteer

Photo: Unsplash

Photo: Acorn Art Photography

Photo: Nova Scotia Environment

Massive renewable energy farms.

Sweeping public transportation megaprojects.

Generational investment in transitioning to a post-carbon economy.

All hopeful, all essential, and all expensive.

Governments often cite the pocketbooks of the taxpayer when explaining why they can't seem to manage our climate future. To maintain liveability, the theory goes, change must be modest and incremental.

Never has the false dichotomy between environment and economy been less true than today, of course, as governments struggle with the mounting costs of climate disasters, while the clean energy sector is an economic powerhouse, growing a third faster than Canada's economy as a whole, according to a recent study by Clean Energy Canada.

Still, even if curbing our climate emergency is unquestionably good for the economy, elected officials still struggle to come to terms with today's price tag, fearing reprisal at the polls.

But not all climate initiatives require generational spending. Some of the most effective government policies cost next to nothing.

Here are three.

### 1 Cleaning up the cars



They may not have the pizzazz of tidal power or wind farms, but low carbon fuel standards are relatively cheap to implement and they work.

A low carbon fuel standard (LCFS) sets a benchmark for the greenhouse gas intensity of vehicle fuels, and compels fuel suppliers to reach it – by either cleaning up their act, or by buying credits from low carbon fuel suppliers.

The goal: encourage the growth of sustainable fuel producers, force changes from carbon-intense fuel producers, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions along the way.

In British Columbia, the LCFS is credited with 25 per cent of BC's emission reductions between 2007 and 2012. In California, an LCFS has helped drive growth in the renewable energy sector, and a report from Consumers Union (a division of Consumer Reports) suggests it will pay off for taxpayers: clean transportation policies could end up saving California households up to \$1,530 each year by 2030.

### 2 Building better



Energy efficiency programs don't grab headlines. But their price tag is modest, and their potential is transformative.

According to the International Energy Association, an estimated 49 per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions reductions needed to stay below two degrees are going to come from energy efficiency – more, even, than renewable energy.

If run equitably, efficiency programs also help create good jobs in communities, supporting people and economies where we live.

It's easy to see why building efficiency is a key pillar of the Green New Deal, which calls for an overhaul of every US building to "achieve maximal energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, and durability." Efficiency has been central to Sweden's ambitious climate work – by 2020, the government there hopes to make buildings 20 per cent more efficient than they were in 2008.

Rebate programs are important, and many are available to Nova Scotians today – those programs see upfront costs for government in exchange for long-lasting benefits in energy efficiency. But a few simple policy shifts that cost governments even less can make a big impact; i.e. changing building codes and increasing efficiency standards.

The goal? Working towards the net zero energy home: a home that is so efficient, it uses only the energy it produces.

### 3 Plant a few (billion) trees



Getting a tree in the ground isn't just a well-worn symbol of hope and environmental stewardship - it's a cheap and effective way to start cooling the planet.

In a study published recently in the journal *Science*, scientists found that planting nearly a billion acres of forest has the potential to suck up a quarter of the atmospheric carbon pool. Planting trees, they argue, is among the most effective way to combat climate change.

And, it's relatively cheap.

The study puts Canada among the top six countries with the most room for new trees - which means Canadian governments could have a unique opportunity to help restore the world's canopy.

There is no shortage of low—or no—cost initiatives that governments can take to confront our climate crisis. All it takes is a little political will.

Caroline Skelton is a writer and editor living in Halifax.

Collage by Frederica Jacks, showing species listed as Endangered under Nova Scotia's Endangered Species Act. Photo: Karen McKendry



# Underprotected

## GOING TO COURT FOR NOVA SCOTIA'S MOST VULNERABLE WILDLIFE

by **JAMIE SIMPSON** /// EAC Volunteer

“So, wait, how does the government get away with not doing what it’s legally required to do?” asked my student, her brow furrowed.

I had just given a lecture to my environmental law class on species at risk. I had highlighted the Department of Lands and Forestry’s alleged failures to fulfill their legal obligations under Nova Scotia’s Endangered Species Act. We also covered “rule of law,” fundamental to Canada’s Constitution and by which government is explicitly not above the law.

“Well,” I stalled, fumbling for a response. Had I seen the province fail our forests and wildlife so many times that I was jaded? Did I simply accept this as the status quo?

“Well,” I finally answered, “no one has bothered to go to court over this, so the Department doesn’t bother to meet all of its legal obligations.”

I felt my students’ frustration. Why doesn’t the government abide by the law? What kind of governance is that? Citizens are expected to abide by the law, but the government can pick and choose which laws to follow?

I decided I couldn’t deliver the lecture again next semester without at least trying to launch legal action against the Department of Lands and Forestry.

First, I needed a client. I emailed my legal action proposal to a couple of Nova Scotia’s naturalist organizations—naturalists know first-hand the loss of species and the decline of wildlife habitat in Nova Scotia. Not unexpectedly, some organizations were hesitant: “Lawsuits are expensive.” “What if we lose and have to pay the government’s legal costs?” “We’re not activist organizations.”

I explained that when a law requires a government to do a certain thing, the courts are generally willing to step in and tell the government to do that thing. Courts, after all, are serious about the rule of law.

Dr. Soren Bondrup-Nielsen, president of the Blomidon Naturalists Society, and Mr. Bob Bancroft, president of Nature Nova Scotia, were immediately supportive. Funds for the lawsuit were quickly raised—Bob secured donation pledges and Soren set up a crowd-sourcing website. We launched the case at the end of January 2019 on behalf of Bob Bancroft (as an individual), Nature Nova Scotia, the Blomidon Naturalists’ Society and the Halifax Field Naturalists.

“Every one of the millions of species on Earth is unique—a natural work of art that cannot be recreated once lost. Humans are now causing the sixth major extinction in the planet’s history, but many of us aren’t noticing that. By dissociating from nature, people lose interest in protecting it. The three-piece collage highlights the urgency of conservation, with emphasis on the threat of habitat fragmentation and human-nature disconnection. We need to stop looking at endangered species as individual bullet points in our conservation to-do list. The Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not just a list of names, and protecting individual species is not just a matter of their own existence, but of their contribution to the surrounding environment, and as part of a beautiful, sustainable world for us all to live in.”

- Frederica Jacks

We chose six species at risk to represent the alleged failures by the Department of Lands and Forestry to meet legal obligations under the Act: Mainland Moose, Ram’s-head Ladyslipper, Black Ash, Wood Turtle, Canada Warbler, and Eastern Wood-pewee.

The Act requires the Minister of Lands and Forestry to both appoint a recovery team and ensure a recovery plan is created, within one year of an endangered species’ listed under the Act (two years for threatened species). Ram’s-head Ladyslipper was designated as endangered in 2008. It still lacks a recovery team and plan. The Act also requires recovery plans to identify “core habitat” for threatened and endangered species. Mainland Moose was listed as endangered in 2003. A recovery plan was prepared in 2007, but it does not identify core habitat, as required by the Act. In fact, the Department has yet to identify a single hectare of core habitat for any species at risk.

The lawsuit isn’t the first time these legal failures have been pointed out. In 2015, East Coast Environmental Law Association (ECELAW) published a report entitled Protected on Paper Only, which details the Department’s various alleged violations of the Act. Soon after, the Auditor General’s Office of Nova Scotia released its assessment of the Department’s track-record on species at risk

and recommended the Department to meet its legal obligations under the Act. After the lawsuit was launched, ECELAW published a follow-up to their 2015 report. It found that not only that the Department had none of the shortcomings identified in 2015 been addressed, but that the list of alleged violations had grown. The Auditor General’s Office also released its follow-up report earlier this year. It noted that the Department had failed to follow any of the Office’s 2016 recommendations.

Shortly after the lawsuit was launched, ECELAW, represented by Ecojustice, requested to join the case as an intervenor, and the Department agreed. The applicants and ECELAW submitted a motion for costs immunity – that is, no costs would be awarded for or against the applicants and the intervenor no matter the outcome of the case. Again, the Department agreed.

At present, we are waiting for the Department to provide us with the “record,”—the collection of documents on which the case will be argued and decided. Once we receive and review the record, and assuming there are no disputes about what the record should contain, we will finally be able to set a date for the actual hearing of the case. Stay tuned! With any luck, I’ll have a more positive lecture on species at risk for my students next term.

The **Endangered Species Act (ESA)** is one of Nova Scotia's key environmental laws. Like the national Species at Risk Act (SARA), it is designed to protect wildlife at risk of extinction. Three status categories designate the level of threat: green for Vulnerable, yellow for Threatened, red for Endangered. The ESA incurs penalties for anyone killing or disturbing listed species or their core habitats.

**BLACK ASH**



Photo: Keith Kanoli, Maine Forest Service, USA

**CANADA WARBLER**



Photo: William H. Majoros (Wikimedia)

**EASTERN MAINLAND MOOSE**



Photo: Raymond Plourde

**LISTED AS  
ENDANGERED UNDER  
NOVA SCOTIA'S  
ENDANGERED  
SPECIES ACT**

**EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE**



Photo: Jim Conrad

**WOOD TURTLE**



Photo: Luke Voith

**RAM'S HEAD LADYSLIPER**



Photo: Orchi (Wikimedia)

**Jamie Simpson** is a lawyer, forester and author, and proud recipient of the Elizabeth May Award for Environmental Service. He represents Bob Bancroft and several naturalists' organizations in the species at risk lawsuit against the Department of Lands and Forestry described in this article.

# Sustainable Stepping Stones

by **WESLEY TOURANGEAU** /// EAC Volunteer

On March 15, 2019, approximately 300 high school students gathered in protest in downtown Halifax to demand action on climate change.<sup>1</sup> The rally was part of a global student movement that has been building momentum since Swedish student Greta Thunberg initiated the climate strikes in 2018.



Photo: Veeterzy

Carbon emissions and GHGs in the atmosphere are the major cause of climate change.

Across the world, students are demanding more climate action from their respective governments. On March 15 alone it is estimated that more than 1.4 million students spanning more than 300 countries took part in the protests.<sup>2</sup> And if the young age of the protestors, and the sheer size and reach of these protests failed to draw the attention of state and corporate actors, thousands of scientists have supported this movement by signing letters that shore up the scientific validity of these students' concerns.<sup>3</sup>

As the list of global environmental problems increases, so does the public's demand for meaningful government action. So what is Canada doing as a country to address climate change and other major environmental problems? And is it enough?

## Taxing Carbon

A key target in the worldwide effort to curtail the warming of our planet is limiting the release of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. *Carbon pricing* is a policy mechanism being used across the globe as a low-cost, efficient way for promoting climate action. It is a fee placed on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions like carbon dioxide.<sup>4</sup>

Carbon pricing was part of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's climate policy platform during the 2015 federal election.<sup>5</sup> This policy has since been developing. Following the Paris Agreement, Canada's federal, provincial, and territorial leaders began to make commitments to improve climate change policies. Beginning with the *Vancouver Declaration on Clean Growth and Climate Change* in March 2016, and subsequently, the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change* in December 2016, commitments to lower GHG emissions were made across the country, with carbon pricing as a central pillar.<sup>6</sup>

Four provinces—Ontario, New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan—resisted the introduction of GHG emissions pricing systems. For these provinces, the federal backstop kicked in on April 1, 2019. Alberta has also now withdrawn its carbon pricing system and will have the federal backstop applied on January 1, 2020. Mandated in the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* passed in mid-2018, "listed provinces" that have failed to develop their own carbon pricing system will be obligated to use the system set by the federal government.<sup>7</sup>

Now, all other provinces and territories have their own compliant carbon pricing system up and running.

Between excess/food waste, transport emissions, and pesticide use, the food industry is one of our major climate affectors.



Photo: Peter Wendt

## A New Food Guide

Earlier this year Canada released a new food guide. It was years in the making. Among the guidelines for building the foundation for healthy eating, there is a section on the environmental impacts of food choices.

Food production is one of the most significant contributors to climate change. A shift towards more sustainable diets can result in positive health and environmental impacts, particularly in high-income countries such as Canada.

Research suggests that significant strides towards a more sustainable food system can be achieved through a shift toward diets that consist largely of “vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and unsaturated oils, includes a low to moderate amount of seafood and poultry, and includes no or a low quantity of red meat, processed meat, added sugar, refined grains, and starchy vegetables”.<sup>8</sup>

Updating national dietary guidelines to reflect this evidence is one way of spurring change.<sup>9</sup> The new guide explains the “potential environmental benefits to improving current patterns of eating” including diets “higher in plant-based foods and lower in animal-based foods”.<sup>10</sup> The integration of sustainability principles into Canada’s food guide is a much-anticipated change.

For the first time, the guide explicitly recognizes the environmental implications of dietary choices, creating an opportune moment to build coherence with Canada’s first-ever national food policy,<sup>11</sup> which has seen a renewed commitment from the federal government in the 2019 Budget.<sup>12</sup>

## Action on Plastics

Single-use plastics remain a part of our everyday lives, and plastic bags have become a key target for governments looking to regulate their use.

Provinces in Atlantic Canada are leading the way in recent demands for bans on plastic bags. On July 1, 2018, Prince Edward Island became the first province in Canada to ban plastic bags when the *Plastic Bag Reduction Act* officially came into effect. The new law bans the use of single-use plastic checkout bags and requires minimum charges for the sale of paper bags and reusable bags.<sup>13</sup>

This year, Newfoundland and Labrador announced plans to become the country’s second province to implement a ban. The announcement came after public consultations indicated overwhelming support for such a ban.<sup>14</sup>

In provinces and territories without plastic bag bans, municipal governments are taking the lead. In Quebec, several municipalities have passed bylaws banning plastic bags. Starting with the town of Huntingdon in 2008, dozens of municipalities have joined in, with most of them taking effect in the last two years.<sup>15</sup>

In early 2019, Halifax Regional Council voted yes to the single-use item reduction strategy. It includes a motion to collaborate with the ten largest municipalities in Nova Scotia and to draft a bylaw for council’s consideration as soon as possible to eliminate the distribution of single-use plastic bags.

Plastics now find their way into our water and soil, even our bodies. The volume of recyclable plastic is so high, we are unable to process it all at this time.

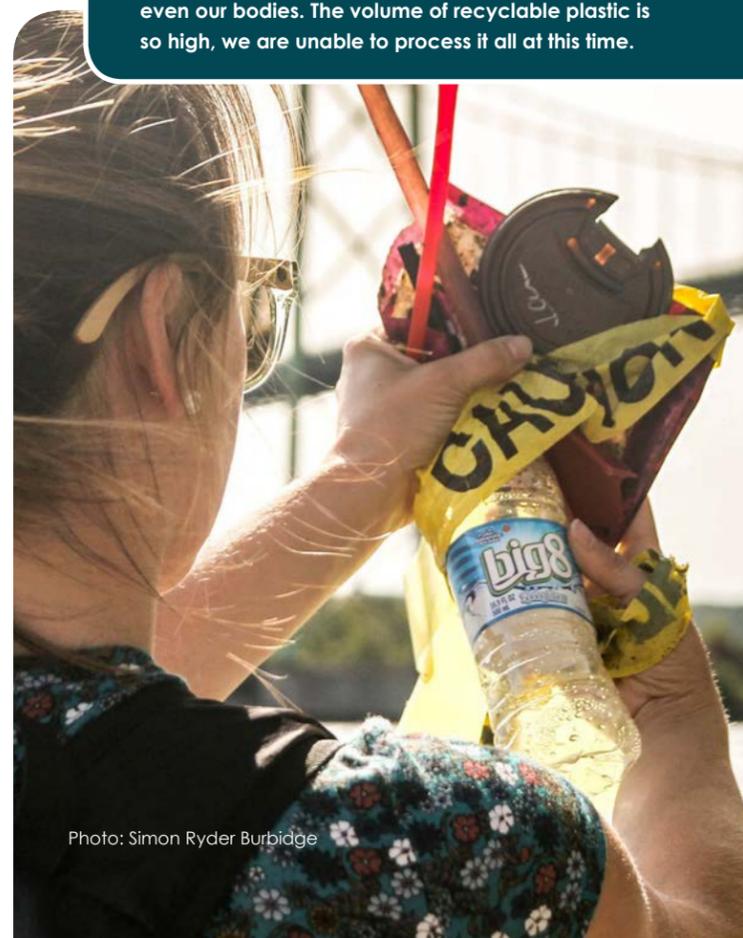


Photo: Simon Ryder Burbidge

## Is it enough?

Much progress has been made across the country—at all levels of government—in developing policies, laws, and regulations that more adequately address human impacts on the environment. While there is value—and undoubtedly necessity—in determining whether these changes will be enough to spark a transition toward a more sustainable future, it is important to recognize the possibility of intense disagreement that looms at each step.

To some, carbon pricing measures are too strict; there is concern that it may have negative economic impacts by decreasing the competitiveness of certain stakeholders.<sup>16</sup> For others, Canada’s carbon pricing plan and overall climate policy fall short of what is needed to produce meaningful change.<sup>17</sup> Regarding the food industry, Canada’s meat and dairy producers have expressed strong opposition to the emphasis on plant-based foods in the new food guide.<sup>18</sup> Others argue that the re-vamped food guide falls short and needs an even greater emphasis on sustainable options. It also fails to address cultural and social barriers to food.<sup>19</sup>

In an era where the environmental movement continues to gain momentum, it remains to be seen if current efforts will satisfy a growingly dissatisfied youth, who are expressing their dissent against a status quo characterized by capitalism.<sup>20</sup> While not transformative, the progress being made might be considered stepping stones towards more sustainable levels of production and consumption. Perhaps making small steps toward sustainability is the most promising solution until we are ready to make a grander transformation.



Photo: Stephen Thomas

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FOR MORE INFO: [mec.ca/community](http://mec.ca/community)



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LEARN MORE AT: [laughingwhalecoffee.com](http://laughingwhalecoffee.com)



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# Biodiversity in crisis

## THREE THINGS NOVA SCOTIA CAN DO RIGHT NOW

by EAC STAFF

Photo: Raymond Plourde



Photo: Michelle Paul

The UN's recent report on the state of the world's biodiversity sounds an alarm and call to action, matching the scale and urgency of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s recent climate report. More than one million species are at risk of extinction in our lifetime, and the trends that have pushed them to the brink continue.

The 2019 Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services calls for “transformative change” at every level of society. Yet, in Nova Scotia, we're still not acting on some of the simplest changes that can help protect people and the planet.

In the face of the important warnings in the IPBES report, the Ecology Action Centre has put forward the following recommendations for three immediate actions Nova Scotia can take.

### 1 Biodiversity conservation through protected areas

The number one cause of biodiversity loss is “changes in land and sea use” - in other words, habitat loss. This often happens when natural habitat is permanently converted to something else (like a parking lot).

Protected areas are places where natural habitats are protected from natural resource extraction where and conservation of nature comes first. These areas are anchors of biodiversity, hold the greatest concentrations of wildlife, and provide ecosystem services like water purification. We need more of them for all species to survive.

Nova Scotia has the ability to take immediate action on biodiversity loss — meet its long-promised goal of reaching at least 13 per cent of Nova Scotia as protected areas.

Karen McKendry, Wilderness Outreach Coordinator at EAC, says getting to 13 per cent is one of the easiest actions the government can take right now to help address biodiversity loss and climate change.

“The lands that need to be protected to get to 13 per cent have already been identified, assessed, and consulted on,” McKendry says, “These critical nature areas are simply awaiting designation by cabinet.”

#### TAKE ACTION

Call on Minister of Environment Gordon Wilson, and the Premier, to designate lands already picked out in the Parks & Protected Areas Plan.

### 2 Stewards of our Earth

As the IPBES report recognizes, the world's Indigenous Peoples are responsible for stewarding 80 per cent of Earth's biodiversity. As report authors describe, the trends of extinction that are rife across the planet “have been less severe or avoided in areas help or managed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.”

Here in Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq ways of knowing remain critically important to biodiversity protection. However, treaty rights have not been respected and rights holders have often been left out of mainstream biodiversity protection efforts.

To take meaningful action on biodiversity loss and climate change in Nova Scotia, we need to respect and heed Mi'kmaq rights holders when they assert Treaty to protect sensitive ecosystems from the threats posed by dirty energy projects including the Alton Natural Gas Storage Project.

“Projects like Alton Gas that do not have the consent of Mi'kmaq Nation should not continue to have the support of Federal and Provincial governments,” says Sadie Beaton, Community Conservation Research Coordinator at the EAC.

#### TAKE ACTION

Support frontline Mi'kmaq land defenders and water protectors, including the Alton Gas resistance, by donating, and by amplifying their voices.

Formally protecting land already slated for protection. Supporting folks on the front line of protecting water and land in this province. Participating in, and supporting the expansion of, existing programs that help increase energy efficiency while saving money. These are Nova Scotia's low-hanging fruit when it comes to taking meaningful action against the biodiversity crisis.

“We need to ask why our province isn't taking these steps to protect people and the planet,” McKendry says.

This piece was originally written in recognition of International Biodiversity Day. Staff contributors include Karen McKendry, Sadie Beaton, Joanna Bull, Sam Fraser, Gillian Wesley, and Emma Norton.

### 3 Climate change and biodiversity loss are linked

Climate change is now one of the main drivers of the current mass extinction event. Whole ecosystems are changing due to the over-abundance of greenhouse gasses we continue to expel into the atmosphere.

The International Energy Association estimates that 49 per cent of GHG emissions reductions needed to stay below two degrees will come from energy efficiency.

“It's the largest slice of the climate solution pie,” says Emma Norton, Energy Conservation Coordinator at the EAC.

In Nova Scotia, our power utility is legislated to buy the most cost-effective form of energy available. “The most cost-effective form of energy available to them is energy efficiency. That's why every year Nova Scotia Power buys energy efficiency from Efficiency Nova Scotia,” Norton says.

Energy efficiency is something Nova Scotians can tackle at home — Efficiency Nova Scotia offers free programs to help people get energy saving light bulbs and pipe insulation. In addition, Efficiency Nova Scotia and the Clean Foundation offer HomeWarming, a program that provides free energy assessments and home energy upgrades to low-income homeowners to reduce energy poverty in Nova Scotia.

“Nova Scotia's HomeWarming program provides low-income homeowners with free energy upgrades to their homes so that they can save an average of between \$600 and \$1,000 each year. Other programs offered by Efficiency Nova Scotia subsidize or finance energy efficiency upgrades for Nova Scotians so that larger projects are more affordable for more people,” Norton says.

#### TAKE ACTION

Ask the province to commit to tripling energy efficiency in Nova Scotia's electricity sector by 2030. Visit [ecologyaction.ca/egspa](https://ecologyaction.ca/egspa) to click-to-send an email asking Premier McNeil to set strong climate goals like this one today!

# Home Grown

## HOW COMMUNITIES CAN TAKE BACK THEIR FOOD SYSTEMS

by **MAGGIE SUTHERLAND** /// EAC Staff  
and **REBECCA HASDELL** /// EAC Volunteer

The food we eat is an important environmental issue. How we grow, process, transport, consume and dispose of food is harmful to the planet. From farm to plate, Canada's agricultural sector accounts for almost 30 per cent of our national greenhouse gas emissions. This number rises to 50 per cent when considering global emissions.

Our food system influences health and social inequalities too. Canadians are struggling to put nutritious food on the table. Nearly one in five deaths in Canada are linked to unhealthy diets. In 2015-2016, the Halifax region had one of the highest increases in food bank usage in the country. Approximately 70 per cent of Canadians over the age of 12 do not eat the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.

It's a national problem that requires change at the local level.

By making changes in our food system we can build more sustainable, just, healthy and economically vibrant communities. To achieve it, changes are required at all levels of government; however local action can directly benefit our communities.

## The Role of Municipalities

Across Canada, municipalities have been stepping up, working collaboratively to promote change in our food system. A 2013 survey found 64 local and regional municipalities engaged in diverse actions to improve the food system. Examples include using municipal tools such as resources (i.e. funds, land, facilities and staff), projects and programs (i.e. support for community gardens) and regulatory and policy instruments (i.e. food charters) to impact how food is produced, processed, distributed, purchased and protected.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of these activities. Just as food-related challenges are interconnected, so must our solutions work across government, businesses, the community sector and with citizens. How a city is designed and the way it engages citizens in making decisions influence the various stages of the food system, from production to disposal. Therefore, it is important not only to leverage and share resources but also to ensure that community is at the centre of our policy and program decisions.

One example of this is implementing a food charter—a call to action for a coordinated effort to strengthen local food systems.

Initiatives such as food policy councils provide important supports to this work, convening a broad set of actors and facilitating discussions to work together on solutions.

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA) is a partnership of individuals that represent all different sectors of the food system, including EAC's Our Food Project. The vision of the HFPA is to achieve a Halifax where everyone has nutritious food, produced locally for generations to come. The expertise offered by the HFPA actively supports the municipality to integrate food systems into its strategies and plans. HFPA also provides an important bridge between HRM Regional Council, citizens, and local experts, ensuring locally-relevant and community-engaged recommendations and solutions to food system challenges. By working alongside the municipality, the HFPA is creating and implementing a strategic food action plan that will help coordinate efforts across government, community, and the private sector on food-related goals.



“ When the Regional Plan was being updated in 2013 and Mayor Savage was hosting his conversations on Healthy and Livable Communities, we heard loud and clear that HRM should be supporting the local food system and promoting food security. Being part of the Halifax Food Policy Alliance has been crucial for charting the municipal role and forging partnerships with community experts like the Ecology Action Centre and Nova Scotia Health Authority, recognizing that we need to work together to make positive change. ”

- Leticia Smillie, Planner, Halifax

Many departments within Halifax Regional Municipality have been key champions for food issues in the region and continue to demonstrate how the municipality can play a leadership role in supporting and promoting regional food systems.

In Nova Scotia, municipalities have started to take action by:

- Proposing visions and implementing action plans, such as food charters and strategies;
- Creating community and municipal plans that encourage healthy food retail and promote urban agriculture;
- Using municipal assets like libraries, community centres and transit systems for community food programming and to maximize existing infrastructure;
- Buying local, sustainable, and healthy food for use in municipal programs and activities;
- Working to reduce food waste;
- Bringing together different kinds of partners, such as community, government, business, health, researchers, and others to create leading-edge ideas and initiatives;
- Working with provincial and federal governments to ensure that food policies and programs are coordinated across jurisdictions.



# Action is our Middle Name

## TAKE ACTION

There is so much we can do to start food action!

### AT HOME:

- Shift 5 per cent (or more!) of your food budget to a locally grown source.
- Visit a local farmers' market.

### AT WORK:

- Host a lunch and learn about food issues
- Create a policy to only purchase local foods for events and meetings

### IN YOUR COMMUNITY:

- Share a community supported agriculture (CSA) box or swap extra fruits and vegetables with a friend or neighbour
- Support local farmers, fishers, harvesters, distributors and processors
- Ask your councillor what your municipality's food policies are!

### MUNICIPALITIES:

- Create local procurement policies that will boost economic growth
- Initiate waste reduction campaigns
- Adopt a whole system approach that supports the natural integrity of farmlands, fisheries, watersheds and species diversity
- Promote access, education and community action in the food system
- Adopt food pledges and food charters



## Connecting Communities

Our Food Project works with citizens to help strengthen their voices and to provide support and resources to build a connection with municipalities. By working with municipalities, citizens can feel more connected to the decisions that impact the services available in their community. Using this approach, Our Food Project has helped in the ongoing process of developing a Food Charter for Cape Breton, a Garden Strategy in Cumberland and a Food Action Plan for the Halifax Region. Through the collaboration of different actors, Our Food Project has been able to make significant progress toward building public and political awareness around food issues, enhancing municipal buy-in and support, and building sector alignment and leadership.

Each municipality needs to tailor its food system based on their own unique circumstances, local level leadership can enable individuals and organizations to reach their potential and grow the initiatives needed in their community for a sustainable food system.

**Maggie Sutherland** is the Research and Evaluation Coordinator on the EAC's Food Team and **Rebecca Hasdell** is the Ecology Action Centre and Dalhousie University Food Policy Fellow.

## ENERGY

### Rallying Energy: Creating Space for an Inclusive Vision

The Energy Team has been working alongside others to create spaces for conversation about the future of Nova Scotia. We intervened in the provincial electrical efficiency hearings, advocating for an immediate increased investment in energy efficiency. In June, EAC supported Our Time's Green New Deal Town Hall at the Ummah Mosque in Halifax. One of over 190 Town Halls across Canada, over 250 people attended to talk about their vision for the Green New Deal. Overwhelmingly people want a low carbon society with equality, inclusion, and Indigenous, worker and migrant rights at the forefront. The Energy Team has also been generating conversation around green jobs with a presentation to the Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Economic Development, and around energy efficiency in faith-based institutions and affordable housing. The momentum and vision for a just transition to a low carbon present and future is gaining, will you join us?

## FOOD

### Seeds of Change planted for Food Access

The food teams work has been heating up like a summertime greenhouse and one major achievement is the new Food Policy for Canada, which is the first of its kind for our country. Our team has been working alongside partners to make this a reality and the policy will help build healthy food systems including a national School Food Program. The Halifax Mobile Food Market provided mentorship to the Digby Fresh Food Box, which in collaboration with many local partners will bring fresh produce to communities in the area. In Cape Breton, the 5th Annual Up!Skillling Food Festival had over 100 people attend to share local food knowledge and build a community around food. In Southeast New Brunswick, Our Food hosted a discussion about bringing a good food box back for Tantramar. In Cumberland, we provided mentorship to the new FOUND Forgotten Food Hub, which like its Halifax partner will harvest unwanted and excess foods from local farms and distribute them at food banks.

## MARINE

### Pushing for change in and out of the water

In the water, we're working with Environmental non-governmental organization (ENGO) partners to advance marine protected areas (MPAs) in Atlantic Canada and achieve strong standards of protection. We've seen some big successes on this front recently, with the establishment of the Laurentian Channel MPA and announcement of a ban on industrial activities (oil and gas, mining, dumping, bottom trawling) in new federal MPAs in April 2019. We also saw the passing of an updated Oceans Act, which helps streamline the MPA process.

Out of the water, together with SeaChoice, we are participating in multiple stakeholder consultations launched by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to modernize our food labelling system. Their proposals, unfortunately, are not reflective of a "modern" system, so we are pushing hard to change that. We are particularly focusing on ensuring geographic origin is on a label and proposing changes for fish common names so consumers can make informed, sustainable decisions.

# Action is our Middle Name

## TRANSPORTATION

### Rolling Into Summer

This Spring brought another successful Bike Week to HRM! Our Welcoming Wheels program partnered with Bike Again for a number of initiatives, like their Bike Auction that sold ALL of the 80+ bikes that were up for grabs; a Good Robot Brewery fundraiser that raised over \$700 for the two programs; and our Open Day events for Welcoming Wheels and Bike Again with over 70 people attending for the two events. Our Making Tracks safety education program is still going strong, with nearly 900 children/youth trained so far this year along with almost 60 adults. Also, in celebration of Bike Week, Making Tracks teamed up with the EAC's Marine Team to host an educational coastal ride ending at the Discovery Centre. We were excited to hold a Mobility Solutions workshop for active transportation practitioners led by mobility masterminds, Gabe Klein and Robin Chase. Finally, we continue to engage with youth through our youth-led walkability audits pilot project for select communities across NS.

## WILDERNESS

Threats to the wild species and spaces of our province abound, but the Wilderness Team is deeply involved in saving what we have left. We continue to push for true implementation of the Lahey report on forestry practices on Crown land, including through our participation in a government-hosted forum on the Province's work on improving forestry and biodiversity protection, and through our support of the Healthy Forest Coalition. Inappropriate gold mining projects, like the one proposed on the St. Mary's River, threaten fresh waters, wildlife, and people's health. We work in solidarity with community partners that are pushing back against the "tradition" of exploitative projects in rural communities. Nova Scotia still has not reached its goal of 13 per cent land protection. We emphasize the need to meet this goal whenever we meet with political leaders, government staff, partner organizations, and the media. Forest conservation is an excellent way to combat increasing carbon dioxide emissions and increasing biodiversity loss. This was part of our message in response to the devastating UN report on global loss of biodiversity. But it is still a joy and inspiration to get out into nature, and we shared the restorative aspect of nature at guided hikes at Sandy Lake (Bedford) this June and July.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Building Connections for Halifax's Green Network

The Built Environment team is back in action after celebrating the big win of Halifax Regional Municipality's adoption of the Green Network Plan. We brought together Our HRM Alliance, a coalition of 65 community groups for both a campaign development workshop and a member's meeting. Collaborations within the Alliance will allow us to support the important implementation of the Green Network Plan. We have been supporting and celebrating the work of our partners within Sandy Lake, Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes, and the Purcell's Cove Backlands. Stay tuned for public hikes headed to these spots and beyond in the late-summer and early fall. Come explore the future Halifax Green Network with us!

## COASTAL & WATER

Instead of an update this time, we want to ask you to share your coastal story with us. The Coastal Team wants to know - **How is your coastline is changing? What is happening in your community in terms of coastal climate change? Are you seeing erosion? Flooding? Have there been bad storms in recent years with storm surge? Has there been destruction?**

Please submit your stories and photos (we would LOVE photos!!! Especially before and after shots!) to [coastal@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:coastal@ecologyaction.ca) We want to share your stories (identities will not be revealed) on our social media channels so that others can see real time stories of coastal climate change. We also want to populate our interactive map on our website [www.sealevelrise.ca](http://www.sealevelrise.ca) and to begin monitoring in several sites around the province over the next few years to see what is happening along our coast.



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\*hours may vary, please check social media before coming to the shop

5664 Charles Street  
Halifax

#### Contact us

[www.bikeagain.ca](http://www.bikeagain.ca)  
[bikeagainvolunteer@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:bikeagainvolunteer@ecologyaction.ca)

# The Seasonal Gourmet

by **ELISABETH BAILEY** /// EAC Volunteer

## Apple Cheddar Pie

It's the beginning of peak season for apples here in Nova Scotia, and you'll find them piled high at farm stands right through to October – although local apples are available pretty much year-round. This is a main dish apple pie—low on sugar and high on protein, you can eat it guilt-free for breakfast or any other time of the day. You may also use pears in this recipe or a combination of apples and pears. If you're not terrific at rolling out and shaping pie crust, press torn pieces together for both the bottom and top crusts. It won't be quite as pretty but it will taste just as good.



### INGREDIENTS

**2 ¼ cups** flour (white, wheat, or a combination )

**1 cup** grated cheddar cheese

**¾ cup** cold butter, cut into small pieces

**½ cup** cold milk

**3 pounds** apples, any variety or a mixture, peeled, cored, and chopped into bite-sized pieces

**½ cup** sugar

**1 tablespoon** corn starch

**1 tablespoon** lemon juice

**½ teaspoon** ground nutmeg

**½ teaspoon** salt

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Combine flour, cheddar, butter, and milk in a mixing bowl or food processor. Cut together until dough just holds together. Wrap ball of dough in wax paper, or put in a reusable container, and put in the refrigerator.
- 2 Preheat oven to 450°F. In a mixing bowl combine chopped apples, sugar, corn starch, lemon juice, nutmeg, and salt. Stir until apples are thoroughly coated.
- 3 Remove dough from refrigerator. Divide into two parts and roll into two large rounds. Arrange one in the bottom of a 9 inch pie plate.
- 4 Transfer filling on top of bottom crust, then gently transfer larger crust to the top and seal edges to top of bottom crust. Cut several slits in the top crust to vent steam.
- 5 Bake for 20 minutes, then reduce heat to 375°F and bake until crust is browned and filling is bubbling-hot, about another 40 minutes. Cool on a rack for at least 30 minutes, then serve warm or cool.

Originally published on the Adventures in Local Food blog where you'll find dozens of local, seasonal recipes alongside articles from our food team and fantastic local contributors like **Elisabeth Bailey!** [adventuresinlocalfood.com](http://adventuresinlocalfood.com)

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