

# Ecology & Action

SUMMER 2016



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The Dense-Sprawl Paradox



Coasting Blindly

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**Ecology Action Centre**

The EAC's vision is of a society in Nova Scotia that respects and protects nature and provides environmentally and economically sustainable solutions for its citizens. The EAC is a founding member of the Canadian and Nova Scotia Environmental Networks. Views expressed in *Ecology & Action* are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the EAC or its supporters.

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# Letters

WE LOVE HEARING FROM YOU!  
EMAIL YOUR THOUGHTS TO  
MAGAZINE@ECOLOGYACTION.CA

## To the Centre

I would like to commend the Ecology Action Centre for all the work they are doing on environmental racism and environmental justice in the province. The Spring 2016 edition of "Ecology and Action" demonstrates that well.

I was also pleased to learn that the artist on the cover of the magazine, Marven Nelligan, is a resident of Uniacke Square with roots in North Preston.

*Ingrid Waldron, Ph.D.*

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*Picture this: vibrant streets, beautiful forests, clean water, plentiful fish...  
This is the world the Ecology Action Centre is working to create.*

**Come join us and help us build our Perfect World!**



# PERFECT WORLD



You are warmly invited to attend the Ecology Action Centre's 3rd annual Perfect World event: a magical evening of food, drink, music and art!

-  Savour delicious culinary creations from five celebrated local chefs
-  Enjoy live musical entertainment and an interactive art installation
-  Bid on high-quality, eco-friendly items and experiences in the silent auction
-  Mingle in excellent company as you take in the ambiance of a beautiful late-summer's evening

**Sunday, September 18th, 2016**

**Time: 7:00-10:00 p.m.**

Location: The Wooden Monkey at Alderney Landing  
Tickets: \$100

To purchase visit: [ecologyaction.ca/perfectworld](http://ecologyaction.ca/perfectworld)

*Be sure to purchase your tickets soon,  
as there is a limited number of tickets available!*

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Hydrostone

A simply delicious evening in support of the



**Ecology Action Centre**



# >> Aiming for Net Zero

## Speaker Series

Nova Scotia could be on track to construct all new building to **NET ZERO BY 2030!**

The Built Environment Committee of the Ecology Action Centre is hosting a speaker series to discuss how prepared we are to meet the challenge. A broad spectrum of architects, engineers, contractors, developers, educators, representatives of LEED, PASSIVE HOUSE, Energy Star, R2000 and ENERGuide programs and other industry representatives are going to speak on the latest most innovative solutions and to answer:

### IS NET ZERO AFFORDABLE AND ACHIEVABLE FOR ALL?

**SEP 21, 2016**

**John Crace, Architect**

*Large institutional, commercial buildings LEED*

**OCT 19, 2016**

**Steven Crowell, Crowell Construction**

*Nova Scotia's original Net Zero builder*

**NOV 16, 2016**

**Bill Lahey, Chair Efficiency One**

**Marty Janowitz, Chair Minister's Round Table on Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity (EGSPA)**

*A discussion on energy efficiency policies and their impacts*

**COMING IN 2017**

**Kim Thompson, The Deanery Project**

*NS original straw bale home and sustainability*

**Rochelle Owen, Dalhousie University, Office of Sustainability**

*Owner's perspective*

**Dan Boyd, NSHBA**

*Homeowner Label programs*

**Joe Rogers, Provincial Building Code Coordinator**

*Update on the Energy Codes for Buildings, and for Houses and Small Buildings*

**Shawna Henderson, Blue House Energy**

*Research of energy efficiency*

All talks start at 7:00 pm. Please check our web page for updates on new speakers, dates, and our new location for the series.

# Mobilizing the Right Moves

by **ROSE SNEYD** /// Editorial Committee Volunteer

Haligonians may be witnessing a new era of transit planning in their city.

Until recently, some were warning of the dire consequences of the widening of the Highway 102 and Bayers Road corridor. One journalist writing for *The Coast*, Tim Bousquet, even warned that, “Quite literally, if the Bayers Road / 102 Widening project moves forward, it will utterly destroy any hope that HRM will ever have an effective transit system.”

Now this project appears to be on hold.

The development of this corridor, as Bousquet explained, would have involved the widening of both Bayers Road and Highway 102, but potentially also the expansion of those streets that would receive the cars it shunted along Young, Gottingen, Windsor, and Oxford. And it would have cost many hundreds of millions of dollars.

The plan was symptomatic of what Tristan Cleveland, EAC’s Our HRM Alliance Coordinator, describes as an archaic mindset in transit planning—that is, the mentality that cities must prioritize the flow of private vehicles over public transport. For years, Cleveland says, “the approach that planning staff was taking... was that, ‘okay, we try to encourage biking, walking, car-pooling, and transit to the degree that we can, but for everyone that’s left over who wants to drive, we have to provide enough road space for them to drive.’”

The problem with this is “there’s no latent base level of desire to drive out there, people will drive and drive more to the extent that it’s easy and possible and cheap.” In other words, if you build roads, there’ll be more traffic.

With specific reference to the widening of Bayers Road, Cleveland points out that it is not a long-term solution: “So we’re going to funnel all those cars and shove them...where?” In addition, he suggests that the city will need to spend millions of dollars on infrastructure around the corridor, and “it’s the local people who live there that pay in breathing in the fumes and the fine particulate pollution. They pay for it and they don’t get the benefit.”

Now, however, Halifax is embarking on a comprehensive review of “proposed road network, transit, and active transportation planning policies and initiatives” —that is, the Integrated Mobility Plan. This plan encompasses the widening of Bayers Road.

For Cleveland, this is a welcome move. “The good news is that... it was decided that instead of doing the road network priorities plan and just kind of doing business as usual, that they would instead do this Integrated Mobility Plan.”

The impetus for the plan, according to municipal spokesperson Tiffany Chase, was to create an integrated approach to existing and future transit options. “A number of major transportation initiatives have been completed or are currently underway,” she wrote in an email, “and, although they are tied together by the principles identified in the Regional Plan, they are insufficiently integrated to allow the implications of assumptions in one plan to be reflected in another.”

The plan is, as yet, in its infancy. So far, according to Chase, there has been some public engagement (there will be more over the summer), as well as “additional stakeholder engagement” via “an experts workshop and a transportation advocates focus group session” —to which Cleveland contributed. Ultimately, Chase says that a draft plan should be presented to the Transportation Standing Committee in early 2017.



Vision of Bayers Road as a complete street including bus rapid transit.  
ILLUSTRATION: Liam Smedley

Hoping to sway the municipality towards more sustainable transit, Our HRM Alliance is proposing that bus rapid transit should be included in the Integrated Mobility Plan. “We’re saying, ‘okay, if you’re going to widen Bayers Road...[only] do it for bus lanes.’” Cleveland points out that such lanes could continue along Robie Street, in both directions, and that they would serve two university campuses, the hospital, the Halifax Common and the Oval, Agricola Street and Quinpool Road, “some of the highest residential and employment centres in the city.”

It’s a proposal that Fusion Halifax’s Director of Urban Development David Quilichini supports: “We definitely feel that bus rapid transit should be considered as the favored solution to providing an easily accessible and affordable transit system.”

The philosophy behind such an approach is neatly summarized in a concept Cleveland refers to as the “virtuous cycle.” When “you invest in great transit, you create a place where people want to be.” While new highways may depress the value of adjacent land, there is evidence that the removal of highways increases the value of nearby land. Cleveland elaborates, “you increase land value, and you encourage investment directly around it, people invest in more businesses and homes around the transit, and then there’s more people around the transit, so the transit can run buses more frequently, and then the transit system is working better, so more people want to locate there.”

Furthermore, Cleveland points to a drop in driver’s license ownership in Canada in every age group under 50. “The desire to live a lifestyle relying on a car actually happens to be dropping.” It only stands to reason, then, that Halifax should welcome people who desire an alternative to the car-driven lifestyle. As Quilichini puts it, “a world class transit system” is vital to “attract and retain young talent in the city.”

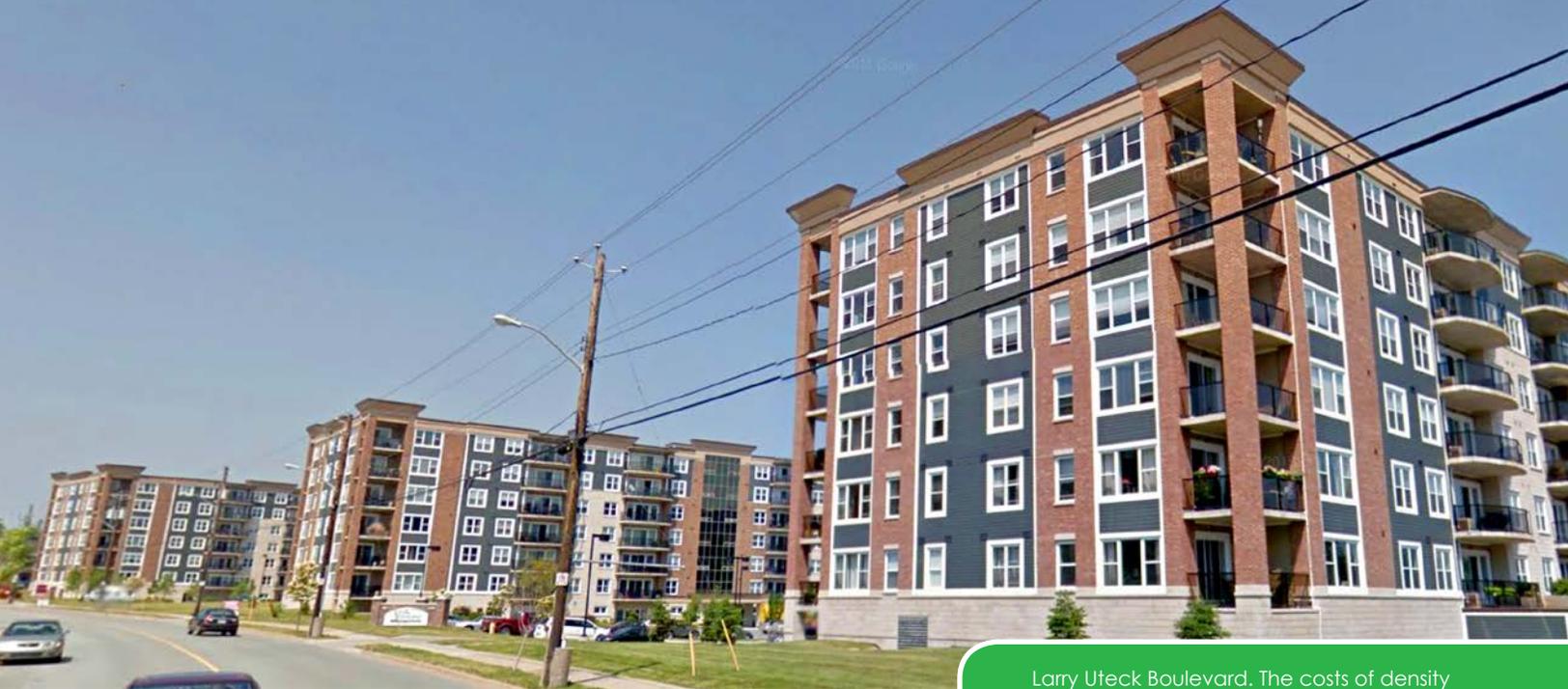
Chase could not, at this early stage, “speak to any possible alternatives” to the widening of Bayers Road for private vehicles. However, she did say that the “Integrated Mobility Plan will identify guiding principles and big moves for our future approach to regional mobility, and, therefore, bus rapid transit will definitely be explored as part of this plan.”

This could signal the beginning of a brave new world of transit planning in Halifax.

**Rose Sneyd** is a PhD candidate in English literature who studies 19<sup>th</sup> century English and Italian poetry. She combines her other passions for sustainable living and journalism in writing for *Ecology & Action*.

# The Dense-Sprawl Paradox

by **TRISTAN CLEVELAND** /// EAC Staff



Larry Uteck Boulevard. The costs of density without the benefits. IMAGE: © Google

*“ Suburban homes are the way they are today in Halifax because that’s what customers want. Suburbs are car-dependent because people don’t want to live on top of each other in high density. ”*

This theory is often used to argue against requiring new suburban development to create sustainable communities that include local business and transit. Since these amenities require slightly higher densities, I am often told it would be wrong to force them on people.

Is that true? For example, how much denser do you think a neighbourhood in the urban core's West End is than one in Cole Harbour?

Consider this: many Cole Harbour blocks are indeed significantly less dense, but not all. While an area in the West End has 48 people per hectare, one average Cole Harbour neighbourhood has a density of 40.

Physically, the two communities are quite similar. Both are lined with two-story homes. The urban ones have apartments tucked into basements or backyards, and the suburban ones are duplexes.

But in another sense, these communities are remarkably different. A company called WalkScore measures the variety of destinations to which people can walk, bike, or take transit from their homes, and assigns the area a score from 1 to 100. The West End community scores 72 on walking ("Very Walkable"), 65 on transit ("Good Transit"), and 93 on biking ("Biking Paradise"). The Cole Harbour homes rank 13 on walking and this area is labelled "Car-Dependent".

Contrary to what we might interpret from these numbers, some of our most walkable communities are not exceptionally dense. And some of our totally car-dependent communities are quite dense.

Consider the strange case of Larry Uteck Boulevard: rows of six and twelve story buildings have a walk score of only 34. These residents live a downtown lifestyle in that they need an elevator to get to a yard, and yet have none of the cafes, jobs, and grocery stores that make living downtown worthwhile.

What is strange about these examples is that they actually do provide sufficient density to support successful local business and transit. Repeated studies around the world have found that at a critical mass of 35 people or 35 jobs per hectare (preferably both), local business and transit are sufficiently viable that people walk for many trips. Above that threshold, car use drops off exponentially.

So if these example areas have sufficient density, why don't they have great local main streets? The problem is fourfold.

First, in many places, main streets are illegal under zoning rules, and, if not, the commercial space simply was not built by the developer. Either way, planning has not allowed entrepreneurs to respond to demand.

Second, density can only support business if streets allow people to walk to them. Many of our streets wind inefficiently around large blocks and would force people to walk twice as far to reach the same destinations.

Third, if streets are laid out loosely with gaps in between, then high density on the street does not equate to high density in total. Larry Uteck's high-rise developments are in a census tract with a low 21 people per hectare because the streets are spread out with patches of isolated forest between them.



West End Halifax. Similar density and built form as some areas of Cole Harbour but more walkable. IMAGE: © Google

Fourth, many streets are hostile to pedestrians, with too fast traffic, too few sidewalks, and too little visual complexity or nuance to make travelling at 5km/h feel enjoyable.

All this raises a question: if people are willing to live in places with sufficient on-street density to support local business and transit, do they really not want these amenities because they do not want high density? Or did they choose to live there despite the lack of amenities?

If high density on-street is a nuisance, we have subjected residents to it without offering any of the benefits. The idea that we did so to meet market demand is a bit ridiculous. While the financial crisis made the value of many car-dependent homes in the United States plummet, suburban homes on good transit routes stayed stable. The value of good transit has been found to be similar to that of waterfront property.

The real reason why more people do not have main streets, and why so many of us cannot take healthy, sustainable forms of transportation, is primarily that planners have been terrible at their job. Also at fault are developers who profit efficiently from building hundreds of homes without worrying about such nuances as a main street. Last, Halifax Council has failed to demand better.

For people who do want car-dependent homes, we have built plenty in Halifax. It is time we require all new communities that are growing in this city to be complete communities.

**Tristan Cleveland** is the EAC's Our HRM Alliance Coordinator. He is an urban planner who is proud to be advocating for sustainable rural, suburban and urban development in the Halifax region.

# Sustainability on the South Shore

interview by **KELSEY POWER**  
/// Editorial Committee Volunteer

Solar thermal energy system on Bridgewater's Town Hall.  
PHOTO: Leon de Vreede

It seemed fitting for the Cities & Towns issue of *Ecology & Action* to highlight some of the innovative sustainable energy ideas being implemented in Nova Scotia. The Town of Bridgewater, in particular, is becoming a beacon for the province as it strives for a complete transition to energy sustainability. It has created Energize Bridgewater, a community-wide sustainable energy initiative, introduced Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing, implemented energy efficiency upgrades, and established solar energy installations.

Kelsey Power spoke to Leon de Vreede, who has been the town's Sustainability Planner since 2008, about how they're making such a remarkable transition happen in the community located along the LaHave River.

## **K: In terms of energy planning, what are you doing in Bridgewater that's so different?**

**L:** We searched Canada-wide for best practices and leading ideas in how to do community-wide energy work, and we've brought together a program that's really leading in the Canadian sense. A number of municipalities and regions in Nova Scotia have explored energy issues relating to wind, home energy upgrades, water conservation, or just general awareness building. While there are great initiatives happening around the province, I think what we're doing right now, with Energize Bridgewater, is really kicking it up a notch.

We're looking for best practices and deep community engagement with lots of different stakeholders. We're also tying it to economic development. So, part of the outcome is an economic investment strategy for energy sustainability: how can individuals, businesses,

homeowners, the community at large benefit economically from a transition to energy efficiency, renewable energy, and so on; and can we actually map that out and quantify that? I think this approach is fairly unique—definitely in Atlantic Canada—that a municipality is looking actively at linking energy and economics on the community scale. We're also tying it heavily to the idea of a complete transition towards energy sustainability. This isn't about saving five per cent of our energy, or reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 1000 tonnes. This is about a complete transition towards a low carbon economy and what that looks like for our entire community. We want to map that out in its entirety and that is still a new thing in the Canadian context.

## **K: Could you give me some context as to how you're going deeper or how your approach is more robust?**

**L:** We're bringing in a very experienced consultant specialized in modeling pathways toward energy sustainability—future potential possibilities, realistic assumptions for how communities can change over time. We've specifically asked them to include more areas of relevance to this community than I think many similar plans do.

We're using a local economics approach. Every bit of electricity we purchase from Nova Scotia Power, for example, or every drop of fuel oil that we truck in, mostly represents money leaving our community. What happens if we no longer rely on that import of energy from areas outside of our borders? What if we can generate most of our energy internally, or, what if we just no longer need that energy? How many more dollars would there be for us to spend on economic development here—to spend on local goods, products and services, or to reduce costs for homeowners and businesses?



Leon de Vreede, the Sustainability Planner for the Town of Bridgewater.

Some of these are really far reaching questions. These plans typically don't go into that level of detail.

We're also looking at the idea of energy security. If we produce more of our own energy, if that energy is properly stored locally, and if our energy consumption is really down, can we describe how much more secure we would be as a community? Is it possible that we would not be as affected, say, by blackouts, or by another oil crisis, or by anything, even carbon pricing, which is going to likely enter the market place in the next few years? Would we actually be more protected from those risks that could cost us as a community? That resiliency, that security question, is something we really want to explore as part of this plan.

**K: What concrete figures do you have as a result of the work you've initiated so far?**

**L:** We've already demonstrated we've saved over 15 per cent in energy consumption at our municipal facilities—and that's just after a few years of work doing energy management work. We know there is potential, and a business case to be made, for a transition to energy sustainability.

**K: How much do those changes cost to implement?**

**L:** Our energy management plan contains two to three years of upgrades and improvements at our facilities and we're looking at an average payback period of about 8 years for those upgrades. But that's just assuming energy prices stay where they are. If energy prices increase, that payback will improve.

This year we are launching, probably by July, a new program whereby our municipality will finance home energy upgrades to people's homes. For example, if you would like to install a heat

pump in your home, the municipality will pay for that installation, and then you will pay back the municipality through your property's municipal taxes and rates over a period of up to ten years. The program is structured so that upgrades will save you more energy than what you'll pay in monthly financing charges, leaving the homeowner cash flow positive.

We're working with the Clean Foundation to administer and deliver that financing program. The program will involve completing a home energy assessment that will determine what the upgrade costs and benefits are to the home owner in terms of energy savings, cost savings, the payback period, and so on. All of these things for the most part have really solid information about them. The nice thing is because the municipality can lend money to homeowners at a very low rate this becomes very cost effective for homeowners.

We're looking for these types of creative economic and financing strategies for the whole community so that everyone can participate in energy sustainability.

**K: Who else are you working with? How are you making this happen?**

**L:** Everybody's a partner; there's nobody who's not a partner. This is a community-wide initiative. In fact, we're launching what's called the Energy Partnership. It's open to any Bridgewater, or area, business, organization, institution, or community group, interested in supporting the energy movement. We'll create a whole series of workshops and learning opportunities and peer networking opportunities for these groups, so they can all learn from each other, and we can learn from them. We can't do it without working together as a whole community.

**Kelsey Power** is a Halifax-based freelance journalist who enjoys sustainable living and contributing to the health of her community. She's probably dancing or doing yoga when not reading or writing.

**OTHER ENERGY INITIATIVES**

- **The Living Energy Laboratory:** an exciting program in Bridgewater, which will follow up to ten local innovative energy partners and their projects during the next year and a half as active learning projects in the community. Grants will be made available. Will launch by late summer or early fall.
- **The Bridgewater Community Energy Centre:** a new store front on King Street, where local residents, business owners or visitors can drop in and learn about sustainability, Energize Bridgewater, and familiarize themselves with energy products. It will be one of the projects of The Living Energy Laboratory.
- The creation of a **municipal energy learning group**, consisting of Nova Scotia municipalities that want to learn about energy sustainability together, is underway. The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, and QUEST NS, have been engaged and are working towards making this happen sometime later in 2016. The Town of Bridgewater hopes to be a participant in the group in order learn from other communities and share its own successes and challenges.

# Food in the City

On May 14<sup>th</sup> the Mobile Food Market launched! It is a 21 week pilot project that uses a Halifax Transit bus to bring fresh and affordable vegetables and fruit to five communities in the Halifax region that have limited access to healthy food. These communities are Halifax North, Spryfield, Fairview, North Preston and East Preston.



PHOTOS: Sydney MacLennan

It's a community collaboration led by the Ecology Action Centre, Halifax Regional Municipality, NS Health Authority and Partners for Care.

The preliminary results are exciting:



## CUSTOMER SURVEYS IN TWO MOBILE FOOD MARKET COMMUNITIES SHOW THAT:

**95%**

would attend a year round mobile food market

**86%**

agree or strongly agree that the location makes it easier to buy fresh fruits and vegetables

**84%**

agree or strongly agree that the food prices of the market make it easier to buy fruits and vegetables

**80%**

agree or strongly agree that it is a fun and welcoming place in the community



average  
**52**  
customers  
per market

“The variety of fruits and veggies, good prices, local nice and close to walk to.”



average transaction per customer  
**\$8.45**

“Great addition to the community, great prices. Please keep this.”

“The tips on what to look for in fresh produce as well as the accessibility of it. Fantastic idea.”



After **5** weeks of operation:

**628** total transactions



total sales of  
**\$5,300**

“Affordable food! Brings community together!”



# Coasting Blindly

by **LAUREN ISABELLE** /// Volunteer



Building this close to the shore isn't in anyone's long-term interest. Shoreline armouring disrupts ecosystems that could provide flood protection, and buildings this close to the shore put them at real flood risks. PHOTO: EAC Staff 2010

Some people lose sleep because of crying babies. Others toss and turn over debt, or dire relationship struggles. Personally, I toss and turn over Nova Scotia's lack of response to coastal land-use planning, and lately I have been especially restless.

Nova Scotia, known as 'Canada's Ocean Playground,' has a saltwater coastline over 13,000 km long. Rising seas surround the province. Nowhere in Nova Scotia are you more than 65 km from the sea. This province is a low-lying peninsula in the path of many storms, so it is particularly susceptible to coastal flooding. While climate change threatens the entire planet, our experiences of it will be highly local, and in Nova Scotia that means big changes for our coast.

Coastlines have a long history of attracting settlement, particularly in the Maritimes. We love the coast—about two-thirds of people in Nova Scotia live on or near the shore. Despite this relationship, our coasts are generally poorly represented as a line on a map. We rarely understand our coasts as the dynamic and ever-changing ecosystems that they are. If we plan to continue enjoying our shores in their intact and healthy states, we need to start managing these precious spaces better. We impact the coast with what we choose to do and build in the coastal zone, and the shore impacts us as the climate changes and sea level rises. These impacts look different depending on how we protect our coastal ecosystems—or don't.

Proactively adapting to climate change and coastal hazards is essential to ensuring that seaside communities remain safe and sustainable, and that we can continue enjoying and relying on the coast as we have in the past.

Even though the benefits of coastal adaptation are clear, and even though we have named ourselves 'Canada's Ocean Playground,' Nova Scotia doesn't even have a coastal plan. No overarching policy or legislation, no consistent land-use planning rules, no cohesive idea about how to treat our shoreline and protect it in a changing climate. Provincial authorities have explicitly acknowledged the utility of consistent coastal planning and management since the late 1970s, and still—nothing.

Reviewing current coastal zone management efforts including jurisdiction, legislation, and government mandates reveals an inefficient patchwork of authority and begs the question: who is responsible for coastal management in Nova Scotia?

Littoral zones are tough to manage. Our federal, provincial, municipal and Mi'kmaw governments have some jurisdiction over certain aspects of the coast. We all have a responsibility to protect our shared coasts. All levels of government and private landowners alike benefit from our coasts, and are impacted by them. Municipalities, however, have a particularly direct route to coastal action—land-use planning.

Land-use planning provides an opportunity to minimize impacts of climate change on coastlines (e.g. flooding, erosion, loss of wetlands, and damage to coastal property). Zoning is one of the most powerful adaptive tools for the impending impacts of climate change, and can be done in a manner that supports community involvement. Land-use planning can be used to regulate shoreline protection, landscaping, building materials, flood prevention efforts, watercourse alteration and soil removal, as well as the types and intensity of development. This empowers us to make a huge difference in preparing our coastal communities for the changing climate.



Coastal ecosystems are adapted to manage floods and storm surges – as long as we don't pave them! Maintaining these ecosystems and preventing development in these critical zones is a great climate adaptation investment.  
PHOTO: Jennifer Graham

Nova Scotia is one of the only coastal provinces or states in North America without a clear coastal protection plan. For ten years we've been calling for a provincial Coastal Act that shows that we value our coasts, want to see them protected, and makes good information available so we can make smart coastal decisions. Land use planning is one part of this overarching act to protect our coastal ecosystems and communities from unwise development and the impacts of climate change.

## TAKE ACTION

Canada's Ocean Playground is under threat. Intensifying uses along the coastline, combined with the coastal hazards of climate change, pose serious threats to safety, livelihoods, and quality of life for Nova Scotians. The upcoming municipal elections prompt us to think about what we collectively value about our communities, with coastal sustainability as a prime example.

Municipalities can't do this alone. Without explicit provincial coastal policy, municipal governments are left to find their own data and expertise to back up any regulation or prohibition concerning coastal development, which can be difficult given the uncertainty surrounding the limits of climate change. So while municipalities have a huge opportunity to protect our coasts, they need help from the provincial government to do that land use planning properly.

Without good planning, coastal development can have unintended impacts—impacts we already see across Nova Scotia. Critical ecosystems can be harmed, economic opportunities lost, and homes and businesses put at risk by coastal hazards.

The 2016 municipal elections will be held on October 15, so when you're figuring out who to vote for this fall, be sure to ask candidates what they think about coastal land-use planning. It presents a complex and challenging problem, but our coast, the very thing underpinning our identity as Nova Scotians, is worth it.

We need leaders who support coastal legislation, who implement effective coastal land use planning rules, and who feel a duty to protect this priceless resource.

A native Nova Scotian with an affinity for the coast, **Lauren Isabelle** has framed her academic (BSc. & MPlan) and professional focus around coastal planning for the province in the hopes of working on coastal adaptation planning in the future. She believes public engagement is imperative to this process and is currently honing those skills in the Halifax community as the President of PLANifax.

# A Deeper Shade of Green

by **SADIE BEATON** /// EAC Staff

Let's try to imagine our favourite city as a "green" city. Now, can we stretch our imagination a little more than usual? Can we imagine our city pursuing not just "sustainability," but environmental justice?

Picture our mayor at a podium. They are acknowledging how issues like food insecurity, climate change, urban development, waste, and transportation access unfairly impact communities of colour and other marginalized groups. The mayor is also admitting that many efforts to "green" our city have so far failed to meaningfully engage these citizens. That would be a nice start.

Maybe our mayor is standing in Africville Park, a site of national significance when it comes to the legacy of environmental racism and injustice.

Next, let's imagine that our mayor promises that the city will prioritize work to reverse the damage caused by historic and current environmental injustices. Introducing a committee of local leaders representing the communities most impacted, the mayor explains how they have worked collaboratively to shape a truly bold agenda outlining how we can repair the damage and "green" our city in a direction that joins environmental protection with social justice.

If we were in Seattle, maybe we wouldn't have to imagine quite so hard. On Earth Day their mayor announced, "Seattle's environmental progress and benefits must be shared by all residents no matter their race, immigration status, or income level." He was introducing the results of a significant collaborative effort between grassroots community groups, environmental NGOs, and the City of Seattle, a 40-page document known as the Seattle Equity and Environment Agenda (EEA).

As Seattle's Agenda describes, "Though the City has made great strides to be green, it faces the same challenges as the broader US environmental movement: it is primarily white, upper-income communities that shape and benefit from environmental policies, approaches and outcomes." The overall theme of the EEA underlines a commonsense idea—that the people most impacted by a problem (say, inadequate access to healthy and appropriate food, or barriers to civic participation) often have the most fitting solutions. The work of Seattle's Agenda is to address inequities in city-level decision-making, in the environmental health of the places where people live, and opportunities for folks to participate in efforts to make their communities "greener" and more just.

Here's a taste, from the Agenda's Environmental Justice Guiding Principles: "We are steadfast in our pursuit of Environmental Justice, redefining our environment as not just the natural environment, but also where we work, worship, play, learn and live. We believe in a world that respects communities' histories and cultures, and that uplifts self-determination and full participation. We know that communities of color are creative, resourceful and resilient, and deeply care about the environments in which they live. Given that, we believe in environmental solutions that connect to and create economic and educational opportunities so that all communities can thrive. To do this necessitates addressing past systemic injustice while creating proactive, transformational solutions for the future."

Seattle's Equity and Environment Agenda was developed by a group of 16 community leaders convened by the city. The Community Partners' Steering Committee's job was to *engage meaningfully* with communities of colour and other marginalized groups most impacted by environmental issues. This meant showing up and engaging folks at kitchen tables, out on the street, and even Vietnamese Karaoke nights.

The steering committee also engaged with representatives from "historically white-led" mainstream environmental organizations. Tellingly, this was less about getting mainstream input, and more to help environmentalists broaden their understanding of environmental issues. As program director Sudha Nandagopal explained to Grist, "There's a disconnect between how communities of color, lower-income communities, immigrants and refugees are experiencing their environmental issues and how mainstream environmentalists tend to think and talk about environmental issues." Involving environmental NGOs early helped ensure that these relatively powerful groups were less surprised by the language and strategies contained in the final agenda.

Of course, our cities need to find their own way, but let's allow Seattle's exciting work to stimulate our imaginations. As we continue to advocate for a greener city, let's keep environmental justice in the picture. Let's envision how we start, and discover what is already happening that we can build on.



L-R: Kyturera Jones, Christiana Tesfai, Treno Morton, Josh Creighton, Nikaya Paris, Emily Muse and Donntayia Jones.  
PHOTO: Courtesy of the North-End Community Action Committee.

*“We believe in a world that respects communities’ histories and cultures, and that uplifts self-determination and full participation...”*

Halifax’s new Mobile Food Market might be a clue to where the imagination hits the city pavement. This 21 week pilot project is using a Halifax Transit bus to deliver fresh, culturally appropriate and affordable produce to the communities of North Preston, East Preston, North End Halifax, Fairview, and Spryfield. The project works to address food access issues in alignment with Halifax’s mandate to create a more Healthy and Livable community. A collaborative initiative, it is being led by Nova Scotia Health Authority (Public Health, Central zone), Partners for Care, Halifax Regional Municipality, and the Ecology Action Centre.

Our city can also learn from and build on the important efforts of many groups around the city. For example, the ENRICH (Environmental Noxiousness and Racial Inequities Community Health) project, which supports Mi’kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities in addressing and advocating for the socio-economic and health effects associated with environmental racism. The North End Community Action Committee is also doing inspiring environmental justice work. These young community leaders are engaging in city planning activities and other processes affecting their community to ensure the concerns of African Nova Scotians and other marginalized residents are heard.

As Seattle Mayor Ed Murray noted at the launch of his city’s historic Equity and Environment Agenda, “We need to create environmental leaders who look like this city.” Maybe we don’t need to use our imaginations at all. If we are ready to listen and move aside, our environmental justice leaders are already here.

## SEATTLE’S EQUITY AND ENVIRONMENT AGENDA ADVOCATES FOR A FOUR-PRONGED APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

- Design environmental policies and programs that acknowledge the cumulative impacts of environmental, racial, and socioeconomic burdens, such that Seattle ensures “clean, healthy, resilient, and safe environments” for communities of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low incomes, youth, and those with limited English. This goal advocates for the development of a high-resolution environmental equity assessment.
- Create opportunities for “pathways out of poverty through green careers.” One strategy, for example, advocates for “support structures for people of color to lead in environmental policy/program work through positions in government and partnerships with community organizations, businesses and other environmental entities.”
- When crafting environmental policies and programs, ensure that affected communities have “equitable access, accountability, and decision-making power.”
- Center community stories and narratives and “lift up existing culturally appropriate environmental practices” during the decision-making process.

**Sadie Beaton** is a Research Coordinator with the Community Conservation Research Network. She’s really excited to be working on a podcast series called “Shades of Green” that explores Nova Scotia’s Environmental Justice landscape. And she’s trying to get over hearing recordings of her own voice.

# Action is our Middle Name

## COASTAL & WATER

### Storms, Shorelines, and Sawmill River

One year after installing a Living Shoreline demonstration site next to Saint Mary's Boat Club in Halifax, we're starting to see the benefits this project will provide to the coast. Plants have taken root and new life is sprouting! As these plants get bigger their roots will provide stability to the coast while maintaining an important connection between the marine and terrestrial ecosystems. We also continue to explore new ways to remain connected to the watersheds we live in and how stormwater impacts the lakes and rivers in our communities. In late June we hosted a public meeting to grow public support for Daylighting the Sawmill River and to ask community members what they wanted the project to look like. Once the Sawmill brings fish back into Lake Banook, those fish will need a healthy ecosystem to live in, so over the summer months we will deliver stormwater tours in order to share how urban development impacts our freshwater networks.

## MARINE

### Taking Stock

The Marine team has had a busy few months! We launched a brand new forage fish campaign and a report called "Making Forage Fish Count," focused on promoting precautionary, ecosystem-based management for important forage species like herring and mackerel. Through Seachoice, we also helped to release the "Taking Stock" report, the first to summarize Canadian seafood consumption, trade statistics and seafood sustainability. We also organized and hosted a workshop that introduced electronic and video monitoring technology for use on Atlantic Canadian fishing vessels, as well as support open dialogue and discussions. Participants included fishing associations, unions, harvesters, processors, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO), aboriginal peoples organizations and non-profit organizations. After many years of hard work, the EAC has been successful in working with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to approve a scientific experimental dive fishery in the Bay of Fundy, which will officially start this summer.

## WILDERNESS

### More Parks and Less Biomass

We mobilized hundreds of citizens and the media to help save Blue Mountain Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park on the outskirts of Halifax. This was in response to the release of a terrible report by an independent facilitator which recommended that a massive new suburban sprawl development be allowed to go ahead inside the long-promised, but yet-to-be-delivered park. We co-hosted a public meeting with over 300 people in attendance. Folks took a collective pledge to promote, protect and defend the area and to ensure it becomes a Regional Park as promised in the 2006 HRM Regional Plan. We also celebrated the provincial government's recent decision to remove the "must run" requirement for the Port Hawkesbury Biomass Energy Plant. This will mean a lot less forest fiber will be trucked and burned to feed the massive energy plant. It's a good first step and should be followed up with complete closure of that plant once renewable energy comes from Muskrat Falls.

## FOOD

### Great Things Growing this Garden Season!

In May, we collaborated to launch Halifax's first Mobile Food Market—a 21 week pilot project that uses a transit bus to bring affordable, healthy food to East Preston, North Preston, North Halifax, Fairview, and Spryfield. In June, we hosted a Community Planning Workshop supporting organizations and citizens to bring food issues to the upcoming municipal elections. In Sydney, Cape Breton we co-hosted a very successful second annual Food Upskilling Event with over 100 participants. At the Amherst Community Garden we are providing growing space for Syrian refugee families, and a group of local youth planted a pumpkin patch that they will use for a fundraising event this fall. South East New Brunswick has kicked off a whole host of community food gardens including a brand new one at the Peter McKee Community Food Centre in Moncton.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Great Buildings and Great Cities

The Built Environment Committee has launched a long-term, once-a-month speaker series called Aiming for Net Zero. The series examines the feasibility of making all new construction in Nova Scotia "net zero" by 2030. Net Zero buildings generate as much as they consume using technology such as solar panels and ultra-thick insulation. We had a full house for our first presenter, Keith Robertson of Solterre Design. We have also worked closely with members of Fusion's Urban Development Action Team on developing policy ideas for the 2016 municipal elections for how to make Halifax a great city for young people. Ideas include affordable housing policy options, implementing a greenbelt, and investing consistently in our downtowns.

## TRANSPORTATION

### Gearing Up!

Summer is here, and there's no better time to brush up on your cycling safety knowledge and skills. Check out our events calendar or local municipal/town listings to learn about upcoming Making Tracks program opportunities for children, youth and adults. In May we successfully held our first Welcoming Wheels event for refugee families. With support from our community partners, we provided 25 individuals with free refurbished bikes, safety equipment and cycling education. Our "One-Metre-Rule" magnets are going fast! Stop by the EAC's Front Desk today to pick them up. With support from EAC's Making Tracks program, Halifax Region's Try-A-Ride mobile cycle, skate and scooter unit is back this summer leading free adapted programs for all ages across the region. The EAC's Sustainable Transportation Action Team wants your help to grow sustainable transportation. Meet with us the first Monday of every month from 5:30pm to 7:00pm at the EAC.

## ENERGY

### Nova Scotian Experience Shaping Climate Action in Canada

On the heels of the Paris Agreement, the 2015 federal election and over a decade of Canadians demanding action on climate change at the federal level, Canada is currently developing its national Climate Plan. The Energy Action Team has been working steadily, along with a variety of other Canadian environmental groups, to provide policy recommendations to ensure the national Climate Plan is ambitious, fair and achievable. We're providing expertise on electricity systems, carbon pricing, community energy, energy efficiency and building and infrastructure policy. This complements our work in helping to coordinate the People's Climate Plan ([peoplesclimate.ca](http://peoplesclimate.ca)) here in the Maritimes. We also held a Carbon Pricing Forum in May, to identify benefits and barriers to carbon pricing, and to ensure a made-in-Nova Scotia program is implemented when carbon pricing comes to our province. The forum brought together stakeholders from various industries, academia, political parties, Mi'kmaq communities and environmental groups across the province.

# The Seasonal Gourmet

by **CHAITI SETH** /// Volunteer

## Blackberry Ice Cream

It's the time of year when farmers' markets and farm stands are bursting with the season's bounty and we've been enjoying a flood of berries that started with early summer haskaps, through strawberries, raspberries and blueberries. But the fall star of the berry world – the blackberry – is just coming into its glory and there's lots of ways to enjoy this dark, delicious treat. So find yourself a bramble, a pair of jeans and a thick, long-sleeved shirt and go pick your own, or make your way over to the farmers' market and pick up a box. This ice cream is a wonderful treat at the end of a warm fall day, whether you scratched yourself for the blackberries or not!



### INGREDIENTS

**3 cups** whole milk

**1 cup** cream (250ml, 35% whipping cream)

**1 cup** blackberries, fresh or frozen, plus more for garnish

**¾ - 1 cup** sugar (depending on your sweet tooth)

**1 tsp** vanilla extract

### DIRECTIONS

In a blender, combine milk, cream, sugar, vanilla extract and blackberries and blend on high until smooth and deliciously purple.

Put the blended mixture in the fridge for 1-2 hours until chilled.

If you have an ice cream maker, use it at this point according to the instructions. After removing from the ice cream maker, freeze ice cream for 1-2 hours before serving to allow it to firm up.

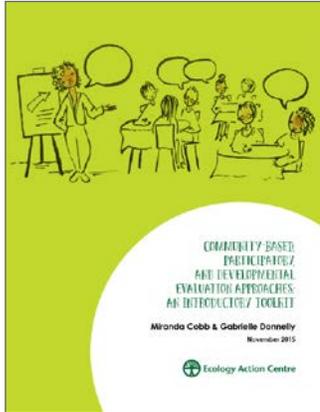
If you do not have an ice cream maker, place the mixture in a bowl in the freezer. Remove from the freezer every 30 minutes and stir quickly with a fork or sturdy whisk to break up ice crystals and return to the freezer, repeating until fully frozen and creamy.

Serve fresh with a garnish of fresh berries or store in an airtight container for up to a week (if you can stay away from it that long!).

**Chaiti Seth** is an avid home gardener and cook who loves to grow and eat food! She works on helping build healthy and sustainable local food systems near Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

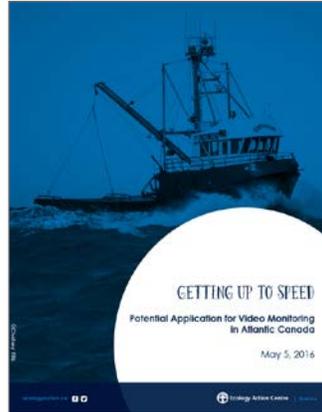
# New Publications

Unless otherwise stated, the following publications are available online at [www.ecologyaction.ca/publications](http://www.ecologyaction.ca/publications)



**Community-based, participatory and developmental evaluation approaches: an introductory toolkit**

November 2015  
(Food Action)



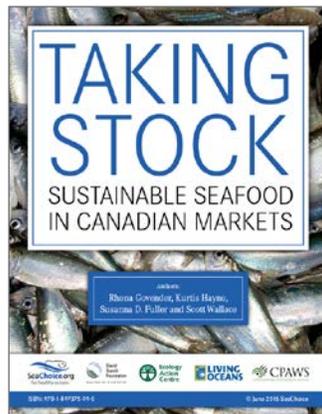
**Getting Up to Speed: Potential Application for Video Monitoring in Atlantic Canada**

May 2016 (Marine)



**Making Forage Fish Count**  
May 2016 (Marine)

Available at:  
[ecologyaction.ca/foragefish](http://ecologyaction.ca/foragefish)



**Taking Stock: Sustainable Seafood in Canadian Markets**

June 2016 (Marine)

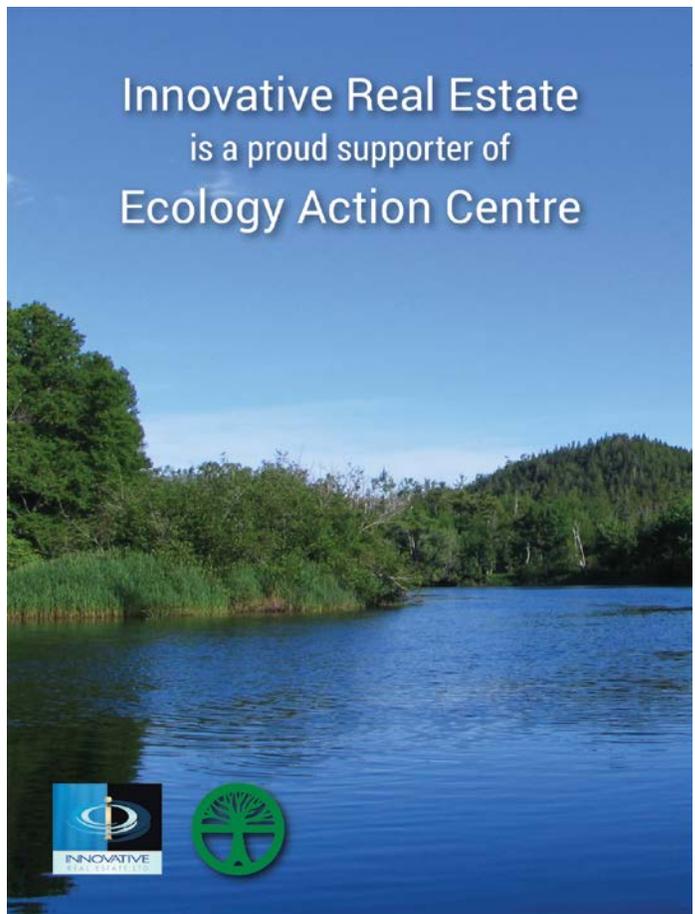
Available at:  
[seachoice.org/taking-stock/](http://seachoice.org/taking-stock/)

# Action in Verse

by **NANCI LEE**

## Mushrooms

Backwoods in rain, rings spring and spread without ceremony. We are the ones to embellish. Aphrodite damp, impossibly white. Dragon's breath, red bursting through the brush. Yellow fingerlings sprouting. Dotted stools of orange, hood-winked. They dance. Give us velvet but don't let a little burlesque distract you. They're more apt to act nobly. House-sit. Absorb oil spills. Survive nuclear. They can reduce a hardwood to dust. But is it tale of tree or mushroom? Hades' mistress takes a bow. Broad-brimmed broody over gills exposed. Good underground. She'll outwit you. Close-mouthed, erupting.



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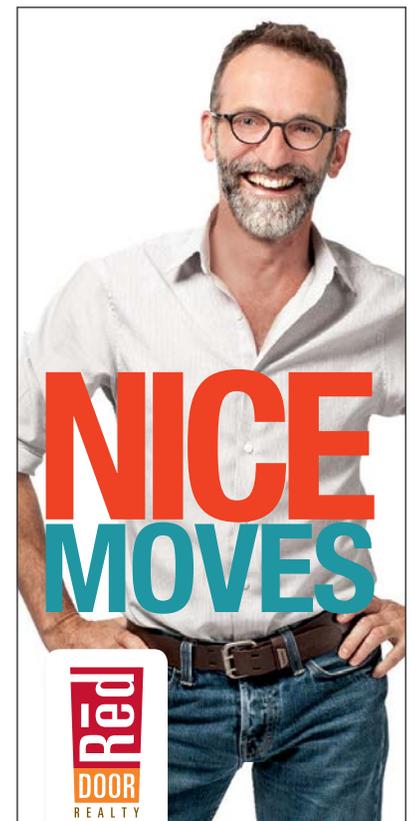
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# Recent Successes

- Celebrated the **end of the must-run legislation for Nova Scotia Power's biomass electricity plant in Port Hawkesbury**. This will result in the plant running approximately 50% less, and therefore burning less of our forest as a costly, carbon-intensive source of electricity.
- Launched "**Shades of Green**" a new weekly interview series being broadcasted on CKDU 88.1 FM exploring environmental justice in Nova Scotia. The program features poets, indigenous land defenders, historians, frontline community members and public health researchers among others, and starts with a very basic question: **what IS environmental justice?**
- Launched Halifax's first **Mobile Food Market** in partnership with Halifax Regional Municipality, NS Health Authority and Partners for Care. This is a 21 week pilot project that uses a Halifax transit bus to bring affordable, healthy food to the communities of **East Preston, North Preston, Halifax North, Spryfield and Fairview**.
- Began a partnership between our Energy Action Team and the EU organization, ERNACT, in which EAC will draw on the amazing clean energy work done in NS to **advise communities in Ireland, Sweden, UK, Finland, and Faroe Islands about transitioning to clean energy powered communities**.

## WHAT WILL YOUR LEGACY BE?

Leave a gift to the EAC in your will to ensure a healthy future for generations to come. Please call us at 902-442-0300 or email us at [ryan@ecologyaction.ca](mailto:ryan@ecologyaction.ca)



"As long time proud supporters with passionate concerns for the environment, it was easy for us to decide to leave a gift to the EAC in our wills. We have long respected the work EAC does for the environment and know that its strong voice must continue into the future." - Karen Hollett & Fred Harrington

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