
20 Goals to Advance the Environmental and Economic Well-being of Nova Scotia

May 2021

The Ecology Action Centre believes the following goals will result in significant environmental, economic and social benefits for our Province, and we recommend them for adoption as part of the Sustainable Development Goals Act regulations and/or Climate Plan for Clean Growth. We look forward to continued dialogue with the Province as we work to build a shared vision of a sustainable and prosperous future in Nova Scotia.

- **Renewable Energy**

90% of Nova Scotia's electricity needs are supplied with renewable energy by 2030.

In 2017, Nova Scotia still relied on coal for about 55% of its annual electricity needs and now has the dirtiest electricity grid in Canada. Dramatically decarbonizing Nova Scotia's electricity grid is technically and economically possible by displacing coal, oil and large-scale biomass with increased levels of domestic wind, imported hydro, solar, small-scale biomass and community-scale projects. This goal is a key mechanism to reduce our province's overall GHG emissions and will ensure fewer Nova Scotians are made sick or die by air pollution each year. Meeting this goal would create more than 35,000 jobs-years in Nova Scotia between now and 2030ⁱ.

- **Inclusive Deep Energy Upgrades**

100% of Eligible Social Housing is Net-Zero Energy Ready (NZER) by 2030.

This goal will help Nova Scotians living in social housing save energy, save money and be more comfortable in their homes, thereby contributing to their quality of life and reducing energy poverty within the province, and aid in boosting the energy efficiency industry. This goal can be achieved by reducing energy consumption in all eligible existing social housing by 60% or more, and ensuring all new construction is built to NZER standards. This would create more than 9,000 jobs-years in Nova Scotia between now and 2030ⁱⁱ.

- **Energy Efficiency**

The Province increases the level of total electricity system efficiency (Demand Side Management) to 3% per year by 2030.

Nova Scotia has a strong history of energy efficiency programming, but we consistently limit ourselves in what is possible to save energy, create jobs, address energy poverty and make all Nova Scotians more comfortable in

their homes. Increasing the level of total electricity system efficiency to 3% per year by 2030 would nearly triple the work happening in the efficiency sector. This can be achieved by purchasing more demand-side management programming through Efficiency Nova Scotia.

- **Zero-Emission Vehicles**

Nova Scotia will sell 100% zero-emission vehicles by 2040, with interim sales goals of 10% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

In Nova Scotia 27% of GHG emissions are from the transportation sector. Electric vehicles are approximately 50% cleaner than single combustion engine vehicles and this will increase as the energy grid shifts to renewables. A commitment to selling electric vehicles is needed in order to reduce our carbon emissions from the transportation sector and increase EV use. Two significant levers are absent from the provincial marketplace: consumer incentives and supply-side mandates. Financial incentives for drivers, through rebates, fee exemptions and tax credits coupled with mandates requiring automakers to supply and sell EVs, would increase availability and uptake of electric vehiclesⁱⁱⁱ.

- **More Green Jobs**

Nova Scotia will create 15,000 green jobs every year between now and 2030.

Meeting the above-mentioned four goals alone will substantially increase the economic prosperity of the green economy in Nova Scotia and aim to create over 15,000 green jobs per year in the province by the year 2030, as detailed in our 2019 Green Jobs Report. These jobs are “green” owing to their focus on development of renewable energy resources, saving energy through efficiency and reducing energy consumption. Not all the jobs are incremental (new additions) since some result from the changing nature of work done by Nova Scotians (“green shifting”). The Just Transition for workers in Nova Scotia should be front and centre in the planning toward the opportunities in this growing, green economy.

- **Active & Public Transportation**

90% of Nova Scotians will have access to (public/community) transit or active transportation within 400 m of their homes and destinations by 2030.

In order to shift our transportation habits and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transport, Nova Scotians must be given realistic and viable alternatives to driving cars. To this end, the province should provide resources to strengthen municipal transit, and coordinate a reliable network of public

and community transit across the province. Nova Scotia must also invest in a province-wide active transportation network, supported by education, programming and infrastructure to ensure equitable, reliable access to active transportation within Nova Scotian communities.

- **Zero Waste**

Nova Scotia will reduce its solid waste disposal rate by 50% below 2020 levels by 2030 and will achieve zero plastic waste by 2030.

Atlantic Canadians want to see action on plastics and other waste. Nova Scotia has the opportunity to reclaim a leadership role in waste reduction and recycling through the expansion of extended producer responsibility programs, product bans and other measures. A strong goal will spur the expansion of the recycling industry and encourage companies looking to address the plastic crisis.

- **Climate Adaptation in Communities**

The Province will build climate change adaptive capacity and resilience by prioritizing climate adaptation across every government department and ensuring that all Nova Scotia municipalities have sufficient resources to take immediate and long-term action on their adaptation priorities by 2022.

Nova Scotian communities are already feeling the impacts of the climate crisis. Even in a best-case mitigation scenario, these impacts will intensify over the coming years and decades, with an expectation of increased extreme weather events, flooding, drought, and sea level rise. Non-action will increase our need for future adaptation investments and jeopardize our prospects for sustainable prosperity. The Province must integrate climate adaptation concerns in all decision-making across all government departments, with a tailored approach to meet local community-level needs. Municipalities must be provided with adequate funding and resources to implement their Municipal Climate Change Action Plans, and to update them as needed to reflect current climate science and the concerns of communities who are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

- **Equity in Climate Adaptation & Community Resilience**

The Province will establish a provincial Environmental Equity Working Group in 2021 to address inequities in climate action and adaptation, and foster resiliency.

The Environmental Equity Working Group should be mandated to engage those communities who are disproportionately impacted by climate change to co-create solutions that support climate

change adaptation and fair inclusion within the changing economy and explicitly focus benefits to those communities. This Working Group must have representatives from multiple provincial departments, impacted communities, community groups and academia, and prioritize the active participation of Mi'kmaw and African-Nova Scotian communities and coastal fishing communities in decision-making, recommendations and actions. Approaches must honour the resilience and resourcefulness of communities as part of environmental sustainability.

- **End Environmental Racism**

The Province will update its existing environmental decision-making process to include a race-equity lens by 2021.

The purpose of the race-equity lens is to ensure that hazardous industries, large industrial projects and waste sites are no longer disproportionately sited near or in Mi'kmaw and African-Nova Scotian communities. By 2022, the government must identify and facilitate remediation of sites, so that the long history of environmental racism is no longer a factor in Nova Scotia. This must be accomplished in partnership through shared decision making and leadership with Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian communities.

- **Protected Areas**

At least 17% of the total land mass of Nova Scotia will be legally protected for nature conservation by 2025, and at least 20% by 2030. This Protected Areas network will now include Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.

A major United Nations report^{iv} finds that “nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history – with over a million species at immediate risk and the rate of species extinctions accelerating, with grave impacts on people around the world.” This rapid decline in species is also happening here in Nova Scotia. Canada is a signatory to the Convention of Biological Diversity which commits to 17% land protection nation-wide (Canada Biodiversity Target 1), and the Federal government has announced plans to significantly increase its protected areas targets to 30% by 2030. Additionally, as a 2019 IPBES report recognizes, in the lands cared for by the world's Indigenous Peoples and local communities' biodiversity losses “have been less severe or avoided.” Protected areas must now include Indigenous-led protected areas, such as IPCAs. We call for provincial support for Indigenous-led conservation – promising initiatives are already underway with substantial federal support. Nova Scotia has the ability to protect species, conserve ecosystem services and increase resilience to climate change through more protected areas and to help our nation reach its national and international land conservation commitments.

- **Sustainable Forestry**

The Province will implement the Independent Review of Forestry Practices (The Lahey Report) by 2023.

The government of Nova Scotia has held two in-depth reviews of forestry practices in the last ten years, both calling for significant reform. Although the province has made many commitments to reduce clearcutting and other ecologically harmful practices, little has actually changed during this time. Committing to fully implement the most recent (Lahey) Report in legislation will ensure forestry is improved in Nova Scotia. Improving forestry practices will help to conserve and restore Nova Scotia's forest biodiversity.

- **Ban Bio Mass**

The province will ban the use of forest biomass for the purpose of electricity generation both domestically and abroad.

The government of Nova Scotia should strictly regulate the use of forest biomass for domestic (Nova Scotia) space heating only, using wood burning systems with a minimum 70% efficiency rate. The province should strictly regulate wood feedstock to genuine sawmill residuals and silviculture thinnings only and explicitly ban purpose-specific harvesting/clearcutting for biomass fuel feedstock.

- **Aquaculture**

Phase out open net-pen finfish farming by 2025.

Increase shellfish farm production by 5% by 2025.

Nova Scotia has the opportunity to be a world leader in the future of sustainable aquaculture. Our coasts provide potential for significant growth in shellfish aquaculture. Our coastal communities have skills, resources, and infrastructure that can support significant investment in the future of a sustainable industry – recirculating aquaculture systems. Open net-pen finfish farming is a threat to Nova Scotia's wild fish and shellfish populations as well as to shellfish aquaculture potential. It is a source of pollution and has little social license. The Province should develop a plan to phase out open net-pen finfish farming by 2025 and support transition to lower-impact, sustainable aquaculture.

- **No offshore oil and gas**

Offshore oil and gas development is phased out by 2030 in a way that ensures a just transition for workers. Drilling in all protected areas is banned.

The phase out of offshore oil and gas should be done in a way that ensures a just transition for workers. Key components of this transition include centering the voices of workers, upskilling and reskilling the workforce and shifting investments towards creating green jobs. Oil and gas should be banned from all protected areas including federal MPAs and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs); to achieve this, the province should work with the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board to ensure that the land tenure process does not result in new bids in these areas, effective immediately.

- **Protect Water**

The province will update its environmental impact assessment process to consider the cumulative impacts of any development that would potentially affect wetlands, rivers, lakes, or other aquatic environments.

Effective water stewardship and management is critical to the health of our environment, our economy and to Atlantic Canadians. Pollution from industrial developments, wastewater, and runoff can change the ecology and chemistry of rivers, and coastal systems, with immediate and long-term impacts on drinking water quality and the well-being of wild fish species. Likewise, hydroelectric dams and water extraction projects can interfere with fish passage and healthy aquatic ecosystems. Provincial environmental assessments currently deal with developments on a case-by-case basis. The policy and practice must be changed so the impacts of any development that may affect a wetland, stream, river, lake or other aquatic ecosystem are considered in concert with those of all other developments affecting that same water system. Any new developments that may cause the cumulative impacts on a particular body of water to progress to a point of ecological unsustainability must be prevented from going forward.

- **Environmental Literacy**

Environmental and biodiversity education is integrated into the provincial public school curriculum, at all grade levels, by 2023.

Nova Scotia is lagging in meeting its 2020 commitment to biodiversity education, per Canada's Biodiversity Target 18: "By 2020, biodiversity is integrated into the elementary and secondary school curricula." Knowledge and caring about our fellow species is being lost with every generation, but the formal education system can help reconnect students with nature. To foster leadership in sustainability, and citizens who truly understand and strive towards sustainable prosperity, we need to provide young learners with a journey that teaches them about the environment, lets them explore

their connections to it, and equips them with the skills take action in favor of sustainability, wherever they go.

- **Local Food Systems**

Local food consumption is supported and encouraged, with the goal of 20 per cent of the money spent on food by Nova Scotians being spent on locally produced food by 2025.

Local food production is supported and encouraged, with the goal of increasing the number of local farms by 5 per cent by 2025.

In 2012, the above local food goals were added, with target dates of 2020. While some progress has been made, the goals were not met by 2020. These goals should be retained, with an updated target date of 2025. The province must renew its commitment to supporting local food systems by investing in regional food centres, farmers' markets, and local food hubs, providing support to small- and medium-scale farms, and working with communities to address food insecurity.

Additional Measures

Not all people are affected equally by environmental issues. Climate change exacerbates the existing disparities and inequities within our communities. We must meet all environmental and climate goals and transition our economy in a way that recognizes the structural inequities of race, gender, income, ability, and the ongoing impacts of colonization and environmental racism in our province.

We are pleased to see that a renewed Roundtable is incorporated into the Act, and that sustainable prosperity is to be included in the mandate of all government departments. The Act should also include provisions to measure more effectively the growth of the green economy and a just transition to a low carbon economy. As the Roundtable is renewed and continues its work to review and advise on implementation of this Act, the Province should ensure there is strong Mi'kmaq, African-Nova Scotian and youth representation, so that the voices of those who stand to gain or lose the most from our success or failure in creating a sustainable future are prioritized and given equitable ownership in the process as we move forward in building that future.

We recognize that COVID-19 has made public consultations more challenging. Despite these challenges, we would strongly encourage a robust public consultation process: one that is comprehensive, transparent in how the data will be used, and that involves focused and culturally sensitive outreach to traditionally marginalized communities. For this Act to be successful and the goals to be achieved, we need the broader Nova Scotia community to engage with the goals and be invested in the outcomes.

Finally, the Act and regulations must be enforceable. There must be clear repercussions for industries and others who do not operate according to the principles of sustainability, environmental conservation, social inclusion, and climate responsibility which are laid out in the Act, or who contravene the regulations which are adopted. Without clear accountability measures, we risk continuing down the path of the status quo, which is already failing communities and future generations. This is a crucial opportunity for the provincial government to answer the call from its citizens and take clear leadership in this unprecedented time to ensure a sustainable future for all Nova Scotians.

ⁱ Gardner Pinfold Consultants Inc. (2019): Nova Scotia Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act Economic Costs and Benefits for Proposed Goals. Available: <https://ecologyaction.ca/greenjobsreport>

ⁱⁱ ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Dunsky Energy Consulting (2020): Electric Vehicle Adoption in Nova Scotia 2020-2030. Available: <https://ecologyaction.ca/press-release/fuelling-change-electric-vehicles-ecology-action-centre-calls-provincial-action>

^{iv} IPBES (2019): Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services - Summary for Policymakers. Available: <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>