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

What have Environmental Goals Done for Nova Scotia?

The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act became law in Nova Scotia in 2007. It had the backing of all parties in the Legislature and continues to enjoy all party support. The Act was innovative in its integration of environment and economy and the first to enshrine these kinds of goals in legislation. To this day, there is no comparable legislation in Canada, and perhaps North America.

Setting and meeting climate and other goals has resulted in a number of benefits for Nova Scotia:

- Environmental benefits: Almost 13% of Nova Scotia's land is now protected, and nearly 40% of our electricity will be from renewable sources by 2020.
- Economic benefits: Investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, local agriculture, and eco-tourism are creating thousands of jobs and entrepreneurial opportunity for Nova Scotians.
- Policy benefits: Strong, clear climate and environmental targets have helped to place Nova Scotia in a leadership position in reducing GHG emissions in the past and can help our Province regain this lead when it is most needed and beneficial in the years to come.
- Province-wide benefits: Goals on local food, renewable energy efficiency, water quality and more have brought economic and environmental benefits to communities across Nova Scotia.

The green and sustainable economy is one of the fastest growing and vibrant areas of the Nova Scotian and global economies. If well managed, the green economy can be a source of technological and product innovation and entrepreneurial opportunity, that attracts and retains immigrants and youth, and benefits both urban and rural communities in Nova Scotia.

What More Could Goals Do?

Our planet is experiencing a climate and biodiversity crisis. A renewed Act with ambitious and legislated goals would help ensure healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities for all Nova Scotians, by addressing these ecological challenges through a just transition to a more sustainable economy. Nova Scotia is uniquely positioned to be a world leader in working toward a sustainable future.

With the integration of inclusion, equity and justice in the Act, Nova Scotia can ensure that a transition to a cleaner and greener economy benefits all Nova Scotians. We invite Nova Scotians to consider how a renewed Act could advance reconciliation and social cohesion in Nova Scotia, honouring the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The Government of Nova Scotia recently released an action plan to support the International Decade of People of African Descent and advance equity for African-Nova Scotians. A renewed act can support and align with this initiative.

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.

This means that those who already face greater risks, will be impacted the more by environmental and climate change issues, and they will benefit the least from actionable progress. It is critical then that communities deeply affected by environmental issues should be highly involved throughout decision-making processes in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways, and that solutions to these collective problems are designed specifically to benefit these communities.

Our transition must centre the rights of Mi'kmaw people and follow treaty rights and responsibilities under the Peace and Friendship Treaties here in Mi'kma'ki. Our transition must also centre the voices of African Nova Scotians and other peoples at the margins. Finally, our transition must respect traditional and local perspectives, knowledge and experiences, and the findings of inclusive, accessible, transparent, culturally appropriate, and timely consultations. Together, we must work toward a fair, sustainable, and prosperous future to ensure we leave no one behind.

The Government of Nova Scotia recently released an action plan to support the International Decade of People of African Descent and advance equity for African-Nova Scotians. A renewed act can support and align with this initiative.

We have set out 13 possible new goals below, which we believe will result in significant environmental, economic and social benefits for our Province. We think these goals would be strong goals for Nova Scotia to adopt, but we also offer them in the spirit of fostering dialogue. The following goals will ensure that:

- **Reduced GHGs**

The Province Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions to 50% Below 1990 Levels by 2030.

Nova Scotia's current climate goals are not science-based, do not reduce emissions enough to avoid catastrophic climate change, and are not legislated. Meeting this new goal would put Nova Scotia in line with its fair share of emissions reductions to keep global warming below the Paris Agreement's target of 1.5°C. This goal is supported by more than 40 other organizations through the 2030 Declaration and would create more than 180,000 jobs-years¹ in Nova Scotia between now and 2030. This is an overarching goal that would be met by reaching EAC's other climate and energy goals.

- **Renewable Energy**

90% of Nova Scotia 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 2030.

- **Reducing Energy Poverty**

100% of Eligible Social Housing Net-Zero is 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. This goal is achieved through reducing energy consumption in all eligible existing social housing by 60% or more, and ensuring all new construction is built to NZER standards. This goal would create more than 9,000 jobs-years in Nova Scotia between now and 2030.

- **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 per cent zero-emission vehicles by 2040, with sales goals of 10 per cent by 2025 and 30 per cent by 2030 along the way.

The 27% of GHG emissions in Nova Scotia are from the transportation sector. Electric vehicles are approximately 50% cleaner than single combustion engine vehicles and 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 the number of vehicles sold in Nova Scotia.

- **More Green Jobs**

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

Meeting the first five 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. 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.

- **Zero Waste**

Nova Scotia will achieve zero waste by 2030 through the creation of a circular economy.

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 would 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 making resources available to Nova Scotia municipalities to take action on their adaptation priorities by 2022.

In 2013 municipalities across Nova Scotia developed Municipal Climate Change Action Plans (MCCAPs) focused on how their municipality planned to respond to climate change. These plans are a great resource for Nova Scotia. They need to be updated to reflect current climate science and the concerns of communities disproportionately affected by climate change. A provincial Climate Change Action Fund funded by Nova Scotia’s Cap & Trade Green Fund and which also leverages additional Federal Government funds would make it possible for municipalities to implement the plans and achieve their adaptation priorities.

- **Ensure Environmental Equity**

The Province will establish a Provincial Environmental Equity Working Group to address inequities in climate action and adaptation, and foster resiliency in 2020.

The Environmental Equity Working Group will have representatives from multiple provincial departments, impacted communities, community groups and academia and will prioritize the active participation of Mi'kmaw and African-Nova Scotian communities in decision-making, recommendations and actions. The Working Group would 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. Approaches would 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 and waste sites are no longer disproportionately sited near or in Mi'kmaw and African-Nova Scotian communities. By 2022, the government will identify and facilitate remediation of sites, so that the long history of environmental racism is no longer a factor in Nova Scotia. This will be accomplished in partnership through shared decision making with Mi'kmaw and African-Nova Scotian communities.

- **Protecting Areas**

At least 17 percent of the total land mass of Nova Scotia is legally protected by 2025.

A major new United Nations Report 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 Nova Scotia has the ability to protect species and conserve ecosystem services, through more protected areas.

- **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 - and it has made many commitments to

reduce clearcutting and other ecologically harmful practices, but 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.

- **Environmental Literacy**

Environmental and Biodiversity Education is integrated into the provincial public school curriculum by 2023.

As per Canada's Biodiversity Target 18: "Youth education and awareness of biodiversity is essential if Canada is to grow its next generation of conservation and sustainable development leaders, mainstream biodiversity and meet its biodiversity conservation goals. Mainstreaming the understanding and importance of biodiversity will create a culture of appreciation, conservation, and action." Environmental education relates to all school subjects, and can be taught in a place-based, age-appropriate way at all grade levels, as part of life-long learning about our connection to nature.

- **Additional Measures**

These goals should be embedded into an updated and renewed Act. Goals that have been met should be removed. Goals that have not been met, such as the local food goals, should be retained with a new target date. 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. The Roundtable should advise not only the Minister of Environment but the Premier; a renewed Act needs to be part of the Government's core economic policy. The membership of the Roundtable needs to be renewed and the Province should ensure there is Mi'kmaq, African-Nova Scotian and youth representation.

For more information please contact Mark Butler, Policy Director, action@ecologyaction.ca or the staff member most knowledgeable about a particular goal.

