



Sustainable Development Goals Act: Discussion Paper

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Sustainable Development Goals Act Discussion Paper

Department of Environment and Climate Change

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The consultation

Nova Scotia is working towards having cleaner, healthier communities. We're moving to cleaner energy. We are adapting to our changing climate, reducing waste, and supporting biodiversity. We are positioning ourselves to thrive in a clean economy.

We are asking for your thoughts on:

- New goals under the Sustainable Development Goals Act
- The new Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth.

In 2019, the provincial government passed a new law, the Sustainable Development Goals Act. It also promised a new climate change plan for Nova Scotia. This paper is about options and directions for our goals under the Act. You can read more about the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth and actions related to it, here:

cleanfuture.ca

This is only one way we are talking to Nova Scotians, but it's a very important one. Your feedback is one factor we'll take into account when setting new goals. We're looking forward to hearing from you

Preface

The Sustainable Development Goals Act will replace an earlier law called the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.

This law allows government to set goals in six areas. It also promises a Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth. This plan will determine how we reach our greenhouse gas reduction targets, and prepare for the impacts of climate change.

The Act includes strong new greenhouse gas reduction targets:

- **By 2020, reduce greenhouse gases to 10 per cent below what Nova Scotia was emitting in 1990**
- **By 2030, reduce greenhouse gases to at least 53 per cent below what Nova Scotia was emitting in 2005**
- **By 2050, net zero: this means we will balance greenhouse gas emissions with measures to remove greenhouse gases and other offsetting measures (e.g., managing forests to be a carbon sink, purchasing carbon offsets)**

You can find the Sustainable Development Goals Act [here](#).

Premier's commitments

The Premier recognizes that a cleaner and healthier Nova Scotia, focused on equity, is one where all Nova Scotians can thrive. This is why the government's recent announcements that contribute to this clean future include:

- Committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 53 per cent below the levels that were emitted in 2005 by the year 2030 and be net zero by 2050.
- Committing to closing coal plants by 2030.
- Committing to reaching 80 per cent renewable energy for the electricity sector by 2030.
- Committing to powering core government operations with 100 per cent renewable electricity by 2025.
- Investing \$9.5 million in the Home Warming and the Affordable Multi-Family Housing energy efficiency programs to help ensure low-income Nova Scotians' homes are comfortable.
- Providing rebates for new and used electric vehicles, and new electric bikes.
- Creating a Clean Agriculture Technology program to support farmers and food production.
- Eliminating single-use plastic bags at check-outs.
- Committing to designating and identifying additional lands in the Parks and Protected Areas plan to bring Nova Scotia to 14 per cent protected land.
- Investing \$2 million over five years in the Clean Leadership Program, which supports youth interns in working on climate change projects across the province.
- Passing the Biodiversity Act and Crown Lands Act amendments.
- Creating the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism Initiatives to ensure government-wide focus on social equity, address underlying and systemic differences of opportunity and access to social resources.

Our work continues, and we know we need to do more. This work can be done through the creation of goals. These goals will align with the focus areas laid out in the Sustainable Development Goals Act and will be driven by the principles of the Act, and ongoing learning.

Focus areas

The Sustainable Development Goals Act sets out six areas we want to focus on.

1. Leadership in sustainable prosperity, which includes the health of our economy, our communities and the planet
2. Moving to cleaner energy, improved energy efficiency, and cleaner transportation
3. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change
4. Moving toward a circular economy, where we use products for longer, and eliminate waste
5. Making sure all Nova Scotians can share in economic growth, including African Nova Scotians, the Mi'kmaq, young people, and those of all abilities
6. Protecting nature and biodiversity.

What's most important

As we make decisions about our goals, we must keep our guiding principles in mind. These are:

- Netukulimk, a Mi'kmaq concept that means using the natural bounty provided by the Creator to feed and support people and communities without jeopardizing the environment.
- sustainable development, which considers the health of our economy, our communities and our planet.
- a circular economy, which aims to use products for as long as possible and eliminate waste.
- an inclusive economy that allows all Nova Scotians to share in our economic success.

The Act recognizes that government can't achieve sustainable prosperity alone. It must work with the private sector, other levels of government and all Nova Scotians.

The Act also recognizes that climate change is a global emergency that requires urgent action.

Leadership in sustainable prosperity

What does this mean?

We believe Nova Scotia can grow our economy and protect our environment at the same time. The province can't do it alone, though. We need to work with other levels of government, businesses and all Nova Scotians.

Government can lead by developing policies and programs that consider both the environment and the economy. It can start pilot projects, support communities and businesses, do research, and educate Nova Scotians. Government can also support communities and businesses to do the same.

What could this look like?

Greening government operations

The provincial government has already promised that all its offices will use only renewable energy by 2025. Other options might include making government buildings more energy-efficient, and buying electric vehicles for government fleets.

Teaching sustainability in school

If children learn about protecting the environment when they're young, they are more likely to consider waste, pollution and the value of nature when they are making decisions as adults. They may grow up to be entrepreneurs, creating products and businesses that protect the environment. Educating children about sustainability will also prepare our youth for jobs of the future.

Using government's buying power

Government can use its buying power to support Nova Scotian businesses that are protecting our environment and hiring our people. We can use government purchasing power to support our local business owners, including those who are Indigenous, African Nova Scotian, immigrants, those with different abilities, and women in non-traditional work.

Working to ensure no one is left behind

The pandemic has hurt those who are already struggling, including people of colour, Nova Scotians experiencing low-income and the accessibility community. As we respond to both the pandemic and climate crises, we must make sure no one is left behind. The province will work with those who are impacted the most so everyone can benefit from our move to a clean and sustainable Nova Scotia.

Supporting the transition to cleaner energy, energy efficiency, and cleaner transportation

What does this mean?

Burning fossil fuels to generate electricity, heat our homes, and travel within the province impacts Nova Scotians' health, and contributes to climate change and air pollution. Moving to a net-zero Nova Scotia will mean shifts in how we make energy, where we live, and how we travel. We must shift toward generating electricity without any greenhouse gas emissions, with sources like wind and solar. The buildings where we live and work will change as they become more energy-efficient and heated with heat pumps, and other green heat sources. We'll make more trips by transit, walking, biking, and in zero-emission vehicles like electric cars and buses.

What could this look like?

There are many options and factors to consider in how we make cleaner electricity, improve energy efficiency, and move towards clean, active, and accessible transportation for all. For more details, read the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth Discussion Paper at cleanfuture.ca

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

What does this mean?

Nova Scotians care about a clean and healthy future for our province. We have the resources and the know-how to prepare and adapt to the impacts of climate change and thrive in a zero-carbon future.

Although climate change affects everyone and all sectors, it does not affect everyone equally. People who already face barriers to their well-being and equality may also face disproportionate impacts from climate change. Tackling the climate crisis is our opportunity to build back better for everyone.

What could this look like?

There are immense opportunities for taking climate change mitigation and adaptation action in Nova Scotia. For a more detailed discussion of climate change mitigation and adaptation, read the Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth Discussion Paper: cleanfuture.ca

Circular economy

What does this mean?

A circular economy means fewer disposable items used just for one purpose. It means sharing, reusing, repurposing and repairing, to keep physical goods and materials in use for as long as possible. This requires innovation and creativity. It's more than recycling. A circular economy is very different from the traditional 'take, make, use, dispose' system we are all used to.

What could this look like?

Reducing waste

By sharing, repurposing, and repairing, we will use fewer natural resources, send less waste to landfills and create new businesses and jobs. This will help the environment and help us build better connections to our neighbours. It will also reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

Extended producer responsibility

Extended producer responsibility makes companies responsible for the waste their products create. Right now, Nova Scotians can return paint, electronics, used oil, filters and containers, and used glycol containers through extended producer responsibility. Managing more products through extended producer responsibility would encourage companies to reduce packaging, make their products more environmentally friendly and recyclable.

Provincially coordinating our approach

Nova Scotia has many opportunities to be a leader in a circular economy. These opportunities are often connected to one another. They often impact other waste streams. A coordinated approach will make better use of products and wastes. It will also reduce environmental impact, support education, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, and create more local jobs.

Research and Development

We'll need new research and new ideas on climate change, waste reduction and conservation, and that means supporting researchers and students. We have universities and research institutions that work closely with the private sector, and we need them to keep doing that. With support, they can be leaders in Nova Scotia's circular economy and clean future.

Inclusive economy

What does this mean?

An inclusive economy is one where all Nova Scotians have an opportunity to build a good life in our province. All of us will have a chance to share in the jobs and opportunities we create in the clean economy, no matter what our ability, geography, gender, race, or income is.

What could this look like?

Accessible digital services

Internet connection allows more Nova Scotians to work remotely, including those with transportation or mobility challenges. They allow us to stay connected with the people we love, no matter where they live. They allow us to live in our community of choice, and reduce greenhouse gases by not commuting. Improved digital connection also supports businesses in reaching new customers and markets. It improves rural economic development by allowing Nova Scotians to work from home. It supports remote access to health services.

Retrain Nova Scotians for work in the digital, clean economy

As we move to a clean economy, it is important that no one is left behind. We need to help workers with retraining, and upgrading their education. We also need to help businesses to help them improve their environmental performance and create jobs. Together these efforts will allow Nova Scotian businesses to competitively meet growing demands for green goods and services in the province, across Canada and internationally, while employing Nova Scotians with good jobs.

Improving food security

Food is the single biggest industry in Atlantic Canada. Enhancing food security for the most vulnerable Nova Scotians will help people. Supporting innovation, and clean technology in the agriculture, aquaculture and fisheries sectors will lead to a more sustainable food supply and continue to strengthen our local food systems.

Protecting our natural assets

What does this mean?

We need clean air for our health, and clean water for our people and ecosystems to thrive. We must protect these assets so they support us now, and for years to come.

What could this look like?

Implementing ecological forestry

Forestry plays an important role in Nova Scotia. It is important that we implement the triad model in the [Lahey report](#). It is one part of an ecological forestry approach. This model allows us to use our forests sustainably while supporting biodiversity on Crown land.

Supporting protected areas

Protected areas are essential. They protect soil and watersheds. They protect our communities from natural disasters. Now, more than ever, protected areas are important for Nova Scotians' physical and mental well-being.

Protecting biodiversity

Biodiversity, which is the number of plants and animals in an ecosystem, is crucial to our environment. We know that when plant, insect, and animal species start to disappear, it affects how we grow food, how animals survive, and so many other aspects of our lives. Biodiversity is important for a healthy environment, for our communities, and for a strong economy.

Biodiversity must be managed for the benefit of present and future generations. This concept is in keeping with the Mi'kmaq concept of Netukulimk. The Mi'kmaq define Netukulimk as the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the community. It means achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity, or productivity of the environment.

Clean air

Air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, and particulate matter cause smog and acid rain. Poor air quality can affect our health, increase health care costs, and harm nature. Reviewing and updating our air quality standards will help keep our people and our province healthy.

Clean water

Safe, good quality water is important for our environment, our wildlife, and our people. It provides a place for fish, plants, and insects to live and grow. It feeds our forests, meadows, and crops. Unplanned and unmanaged water use can lead to water shortages, especially in dry years. Chemicals, wastewater discharge, and sediment in our water can harm our water quality and aquatic life.

Natural solutions to climate change

Our natural assets can also be an important component of our climate action. For example, we may be able to sink and store more carbon in our forests, soils, and wetlands. We'll need to study existing carbon sinks, and protect more lands that can store carbon. This can help us fight climate change, protect plants and species at risk, help us keep our air and water clean.

We want to hear from you

Your input will help shape our new goals under the Sustainable Development Goals Act. These are guiding questions only. You can choose to use them to help with your input, but it's not required.

Tell us about **your community**:

- What are the most pressing environmental sustainability issues in your community? Examples might include protecting our wildlife or our forests, solid waste, single-use items, supporting green businesses or food security options.
- What would you do to address these issues?
- What are the barriers to environmental sustainability you see? How do we remove them?

Tell us how **we can make sure no one is left behind**:

- How can environmental sustainability include all cultures, such as African Nova Scotian and Indigenous communities?
- How can we collaborate so all cultures learn from each other to ensure that we can protect our environment for generations to come?
- How do we ensure that African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and marginalized communities benefit from the jobs and business opportunities we create as we move to a cleaner Nova Scotia?

Tell us about **your vision for Nova Scotia**:

- When you think of Nova Scotia in 2030, what does it look like to you?
- Are there other principles that should guide our work towards sustainable prosperity?
- What does success in environment, economy, and equity look like for you?
- What else would you like to tell us?

Please send your input to:

E-mail address:

info@cleanfuture.ca

Mailing address:

Attention: Engagement Coordinator
Clean Foundation
126 Portland Street
Dartmouth, NS
B2Y 1H8

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