

The Environmental Compliance Model

The Opportunity

Nova Scotia's companies, citizens and government agencies share responsibility for protecting the province's environment. The Nova Scotia *Environment Act* and its regulations ensure that Nova Scotians have "a responsive, effective, fair, timely and efficient administrative and regulatory system" to protect the environment. The province's Department of Environment and Labour supplies that system.

Nearly 70 department environment inspectors help citizens comply with the act and its regulations. By conducting 18,000 inspections a year, they monitor activities affecting the environment and public health. Inspectors work to protect watercourses, wetlands, and groundwater; to manage pesticides and solid waste; and to monitor industry. They also respond to public complaints about alleged violations of environmental laws.

The Response

The Environmental Monitoring and Compliance (EMC) division recognizes the benefits of providing a transparent and predictable framework that encompasses the three basic principles of compliance – education, inspection and enforcement. Because of the complexity and public nature of environmental regulation, the Division needed a model that clarifies inspectors' roles and responsibilities, and ensures accountability to the public for fulfilling our mandate.

In 2002, the EMC division developed its first compliance model. Since its initial development, the model has been updated in an effort to continually improve how the department enforces its environmental laws. It is supported by an operational policy guide for inspectors. They

emphasize the need to integrate modern compliance approaches into the everyday work of an Environment and Labour inspector. The overall compliance model now includes:

- consistency of policies and procedures that have been standardized across the province.
- rating inspection sites on a scale to show how urgently they need inspection. By doing this, inspection priorities are easily set – and met.
- adopting a new computerized approval tracking system. It conveniently tracks all provincial environmental applications, inspections and enforcement data in one place.
- hiring four compliance co-ordinators in 2004 – one each in Bedford, Kentville, Truro and Sydney. These professionals provide advice and help inspectors in their field operations. The compliance co-ordinators are also helping train inspectors in modern compliance techniques, including improved evidence gathering. The first training session was held in January 2006.
- delivering an education program to help the public and businesses comply with all environmental laws more easily.
- creating a Web-based plain-language guide to compliance and enforcement under the *Environment Act*. This easy-to-read guide gives a general overview of how Nova Scotia Environment and Labour protects the province's environment.
- an operational policy guide that gives inspectors a clear description of the tools available to them, including non-punitive or voluntary means, to promote compliance with the law.



This model outlines the roles and responsibilities of inspectors. It gives them definite principles to follow – and the best methods to use in promoting compliance with environmental laws.

With this model, staff members have all the best information, structure and guidance they need to do their jobs, and protect the environment even better than ever. Policies, procedures and processes are consistent across the province. Since all policies and procedures have been standardized across the province, Nova Scotians get consistent service – no matter where they live or do business.

These initiatives represent continual improvement in the EMC division's compliance program. Continual improvements in the program ensure that the inspectors always have the most up to date information, structure and guidance to meet new challenges.

Improving Competitiveness and Compliance

By giving staff more modern tools to do their jobs, the EMC model gives staff the means to help businesses and the public comply with the law. Improved compliance means the environment remains protected, while the business sector stays competitive. Better compliance with our existing laws can reduce the demand for unnecessary new laws. Better compliance creates a level playing field on which our businesses can compete.

Through public education and communication, businesses and the general public learn more about our environmental laws – and how to comply with them more easily. The model's ability to set priorities for inspection ensures that sites needing the most attention get checked most often.

Better tracking of all provincial environmental applications, inspection and other data in one place means that all necessary records are easy to find – but remain secure. Better environmental record keeping helps staff protect the environment better.

By using a wide variety of tools, the department offers highly effective environmental protection. All the measures in the new model create two important results: more consistent, reliable and predictable service delivery across the province – and better compliance.

Where can I get more information on this initiative?

For more information on the new Environmental Monitoring and Compliance Model, call 902-424-2547 or call toll-free across the province to: 1-877-9ENVIRO (1-877-936-8476). You can also e-mail: emc@gov.ns.ca. You can view the plain language guide to compliance and enforcement under the *Environment Act* at the following website: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/airlandwater/envactcompliance.asp

About CCI

The new EMC Model is a good example of Environment and Labour's Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI) in action. The CCI is a key part of *Better Regulation – Everyone's Business*, the Government of Nova Scotia's far-reaching plan for improving regulation in the province.

Environment and Labour is the main regulatory body in Nova Scotia. Through the CCI, the department is changing the way laws are designed, communicated and enforced in Nova Scotia.

The CCI is a multi-year and systematic approach to making sure that our regulatory programs meet the needs of Nova Scotians. In short, the CCI is working to make a brighter future for our people, economy, environment and communities.

Where can I get more information on the Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative?

Find out more about the CCI at its Web site at: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/cci or call 902-424-3081.



Environment and Labour