

Environment and Labour's P2 Program:

Helping Business Go Green

The Opportunity

Nova Scotia is celebrated as a world leader in waste management. The Department of Environment and Labour wants to build on that reputation by going one step further – preventing pollution before it happens.

In Nova Scotia Pollution Prevention, or P2, uses the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment's definition of pollution prevention: "the use of processes, practices, materials, products or energy that avoid or minimize the creation of pollution and waste at the source."

Traditional pollution control methods – waste recovery, treatment and disposal – have their limitations. They are expensive. And when pollution cannot be cleaned up or treated, the costs to human health, ecosystems, fisheries and other resources can be high.

P2 does what traditional control measures don't. It shields the environment from contamination in the first place, so that after-the-fact cleanups are avoided. This protects the environment for future generations. Pollution prevention saves taxpayers the cleanup costs, can save businesses money by using less energy and fewer resources, and also reduces the need to create new laws to manage the environment.

The Response

In 1995, Nova Scotia's *Environment Act* established pollution prevention as a big element in the protection of the environment. The then Department of Environment launched the Pollution Prevention (P2) Branch in 1998. The branch has been promoting and coordinating pollution prevention initiatives for business, industry and municipalities across the province ever since.

In 2001, the Pollution Prevention Team began a three year Pilot Project with the Town of Lunenburg. The goal of the project was to develop a comprehensive municipal pollution prevention approach that involved the whole town, in order to produce tools and activities that could be shared with other communities. The project also included P2 training and a planning session for municipal staff.

P2 Branch has worked with many business sectors to help them reduce the costs of pollution. The branch has launched a number of exciting initiatives, including:

P2 workshops – In 2005 and 2006, the P2 Branch held pollution prevention workshops for the metal finishing industry and for wineries and breweries in Nova Scotia. Participants learned about the relevant environmental laws and how to comply with them. They also gained much information specific to their particular businesses, such as P2 measures for metal finishing that prevent hazardous chemicals from being released into the environment and keep workers safe. Brewers and winemakers learned to reduce waste and quantify savings. The workshops were well received by business owners, and more are planned.



Eco-Efficiency Business Assistance Program – The P2 Branch – in partnership with delivery agency Eco-Efficiency Centre and other funding partners – provides support and guidance to the ambitious Eco-Efficiency Business Assistance Program (E2BAP). The program has helped participating companies identify ways to save \$1.1 million, and to prevent 19 000 cubic metres of wastewater, 7370 tonnes of greenhouse gases, and 3090 tonnes of solid waste. If they are able to successfully apply all these recommendations, these firms will make substantial strides in controlling pollution while also saving money.

The program also offers free eco-efficiency reviews and P2 workshops to small and medium businesses. Other P2 services include data collection, assessments and action plans.

Businesses have embraced E2BAP enthusiastically. Acadian Seaplants saw an opportunity to grow a very successful business within a sustainable, environmentally friendly concept. The company harvests its product carefully and sustainably. It turns surplus plastic barrels into municipal recycling containers. At one site, a waste stream has been converted into a soil amendment that is sold to local farmers.

Since it began as an 18-month pilot project in 2002, 15 companies have used P2's services. The program has been so successful that it was renewed for three more years in 2005.

Pollution Prevention Workbook – Launched in 2005, this free workbook gives businesses easy-to-follow environmental management principles and techniques. It also provides information that will help them comply with municipal, provincial and federal environmental laws. For companies wanting to explore P2 further, it describes how they can set up environmental committees or 'green teams' to develop their own activities.

Improving Competitiveness and Compliance

By helping businesses prevent pollution, Environment and Labour's P2 Branch helps businesses reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase profitability. Businesses are often pleasantly surprised that P2 improves employee morale and health and creates better relationships with the larger community. P2 can help businesses comply more easily with environmental laws, saving money that might otherwise be spent on pollution control or costly cleanups. It also helps companies go beyond compliance to become greener, more profitable enterprises.

Pollution prevention shows that environmental sustainability can go hand in hand with economic prosperity. Environmental responsibility gives a significant competitive advantage. Investors and consumers are increasingly interested in supporting 'green' companies. By preventing pollution, companies improve their public image and open the door to potential new growth opportunities. Their actions also reduce the need for additional regulations.

Where can I get more information on P2 initiatives?

You can get more information at the following website:
www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pollutionprevention/

The "Pollution Prevention Workbook for Business in Nova Scotia" is also available by following the link at the following website: www.gov.ns.ca/enla/pollutionprevention/pubs.asp

About CCI

These P2 initiatives support the goals of Environment and Labour's Competitiveness and Compliance Initiative (CCI). 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