

Why renew the strategy

Managing solid waste is not just about protecting the environment. It's also about improving how we live as a society and maintaining a healthy economy. That makes it an evolving process, one that occasionally has to be updated.

Where we were

In 1995 the Government of Nova Scotia committed the province to achieving a national waste diversion target of 50 per cent by the year 2000. This commitment reflected a growing understanding of the problems arising from the increasing amount of waste created by Nova Scotians. These problems affected the environment, society, the economy, and resource conservation. The 1995 Solid Waste Resource Management Strategy helped Nova Scotia achieve the national target.

This government strategy for dealing with solid waste is a blueprint of how to reduce the amount of waste going to landfills. It consists of programs and regulations that everyone in the province must follow.

Solid waste includes anything that isn't liquid or viscous waste and that can potentially head to a landfill. Much of that waste can be further reduced by prevention or by diversion. You can prevent waste in the first place by doing things such as using reusable shopping bags. You can also divert it into specific waste streams that will recycle, reuse, or remanufacture it into something different.

Where we are now

The original strategy helped the province lead the country in solid waste reduction by introducing an advanced recycling and diverting system. In 2007 and 2008, Nova Scotians threw out about 430 kilograms of waste per person annually. That disposal rate is almost half the Canadian average.

Where we want to be

By 2015, we want to cut that number by almost a third, to 300 kilograms per person per year. The government legislated this target in the province's 2007 *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (EGSPA).



The consultation process

NSE wanted input in three ways. It formed an advisory committee representing key stakeholder groups, held workshops for stakeholders across the province, and asked for written comments.

Strategy Renewal Advisory Committee

In September, 2008, NSE formed the Strategy Renewal Advisory Committee. The committee's job is to help NSE develop the updated strategy. Committee members have had much influence on the process. Because members come from groups with different views on how to manage solid waste, they saw the process from many angles. These groups included municipalities and provincial government departments, the Resource Recovery Fund Board (RRFB), business, industry, and non-governmental organizations.

Consultation workshops

NSE held nine workshops throughout the province in the winter of 2009. These workshops gave stakeholders a chance to discuss the future of managing solid waste in Nova Scotia. More than 160 people took part in them.

The workshops focused on the paper *Thinking Outside the Landfill*. It lists seven goals and related questions, which the workshop used to start discussions. The paper was based on earlier feedback from waste management professionals and the advisory committee.

Like the advisory committee, the participants were from a wide range of groups, including municipalities, business, industry, non-governmental organizations, and academics. This meant that when they joined into small discussion groups, they had wide-ranging opinions and experiences to share.

Goal A:

Develop and expand effective and environmentally sustainable waste reduction and diversion practices and programs.

Key findings

- Existing practices and programs are working well.
- The government must ensure programs are consistent across the province to reduce more solid waste.
- The government must consider differences between regions in the province.

Other suggestions

- Increase people's understanding of the problems and solutions.
- Introduce more programs for households and for the Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) sector.
- Introduce more policies, regulations, and product stewardship.
- Increase monitoring and inspection.
- Introduce financial incentives and deterrents.
- Improve access to programs, facilities, and services.

Comments from written submissions

- Regularly review and update the solid waste regulations and strategy.
- Define illegal dumping separately from litter.
- Review whether it's better to label municipalities or individual ICI operations as the waste generator.
- Change regulations to help NSE officers enforce bans on waste where it is generated.
- Focus on dealing with the most harmful waste products rather than simply focusing on volume.
- Ban waste from landfills that can be used as an energy source.
- Include a clear role in the renewed strategy for energy recovery.
- Create an information package for tourists that explains how to use waste management programs in the province.
- Require retailers and manufacturers to meet specific packaging-to-product ratios.



- Adopt new provincewide strategies for handling compact fluorescent lights, such as drop-off depots at retailers.
- Promote backyard composting.
- Increase the number of depots for such things as batteries, paint, electronics, and unused medication, and advertise these depots more broadly.
- Have one-stop recycling depots that can take all types of materials.
- Increase education and promotion of the depot network.



- Municipalities and residents currently can't afford to pay higher costs for waste management.
- NSE should have an incentive to help the industrial sector substitute carbon-neutral agricultural, forestry, and food-industry byproducts for carbon-intensive fuels.
- Have tax breaks for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified buildings.
- Introduce new plans such as an awards program to help ICI divert more waste.
- Increase enforcement of waste regulations.

Goal D:

Make sure Nova Scotia leads by example and reduces waste in all provincial government work.

Key finding

- The provincial government should lead by example.

Areas the government can have the most influence

- On all of Nova Scotia
- Improve infrastructure to manage solid waste.
- Encourage better communications, more partnerships and more collaboration.
- Set legislative and policy targets.
- License waste haulers.
- Ensure minimum environmental standards are met in tenders and contracts for renovations and demolition.
- Have a green policy on any new initiatives or funding partnerships.
- Encourage and fund research and development of new ideas.
- On the provincial government itself
- Audit, monitor, and enforce rules over its own operations.
- Educate government staff.
- Make all departments follow the same rules.
- Create a public report on the government's own green efforts.
- Have a green procurement policy.
- Reduce NSE "red tape."

Comments from written submissions

- Show government leadership by requiring that all provincial construction and demolition projects follow a strict policy.
- Have consistent stations for waste sorting at all provincial buildings and properties.
- A submission from a municipality stated that the province should lead enforcement by becoming the primary regulator.
- Have all public employees take mandatory training in waste management.
- Require that all new government buildings are consistent with LEED Silver certification after 2008 and LEED Gold or equivalent certification after 2010, which the government calls *Action 37* in its own climate action report. The province's report *Toward a Greener Future: Nova Scotia's Climate Change Action Plan* can be found on Nova Scotia Energy's 2009 Energy Strategy webpage at www.gov.ns.ca/energy.
- Require any organization seeking government funds for building projects to meet the LEED Silver standard, or an acceptable equivalent, for building materials.

Goal E: Increase product stewardship.

Right now municipal taxpayers bear most of the cost of managing waste. Programs for product stewardship try to shift at least some of that responsibility to producers and consumers.

Key findings

- Existing approaches to waste management can be improved and expanded.
- Producers and consumers must pay for recycling and disposal costs if we want to significantly reduce the amount of solid waste.

How to do it

- Introduce more provincial regulations to move the responsibility of product disposal from the taxpayer to the producer and consumer.
- Make packaging meet a certain environmental standard.
- Encourage people to make and buy more durable goods.
- Create programs that reward and recognize companies that endorse product stewardship.
- Increase use of recyclable packaging.
- Have incentives to reduce waste and to help develop solutions.
- Have tax incentives for reusing materials.
- Add disposal to the initial cost of products.
- Educate consumers to change attitudes about using disposable products and packaging.
- Help consumers make better choices by improving labels on products.

Comments from written submissions

- Have invisible fees on products to cover product stewardship.
- Establish steady markets for C&D waste that is earmarked for stewardship before the waste is banned from landfills.
- Together with other provinces, the Nova Scotia government should consider creating legislation for product packaging.
- The province should review the effectiveness of previous stewardship agreements before creating new landfill bans.
- Recognize and encourage materials substitution and energy recovery from waste as a part of the renewed strategy.

Goal G:

Stimulate opportunities to divert the amount of construction and demolition (C&D) waste sent to landfills.

C&D waste makes up 30 per cent of the waste generated in Nova Scotia.

Key finding

- Much more C&D waste could be diverted from landfills.

How to do it

- Have stewardship of C&D waste.
- Have more education to increase understanding.
- Have more infrastructure so waste can be reprocessed.
- More reuse and reclamation programs.
- Have more coordination and collaboration between municipalities.
- Be more consistent across the province.
- Increase provincial leadership.
- Increase or improve guidelines, standards, policies, and regulations.
- Have more monitoring and enforcement.
- Have more fines and fees.
- Increase incentives and funding.
- Have more research and development.

Comments from written submissions

- Develop a provincial tracking system for C&D waste.
- Review rules about using processed C&D waste as landfill cover.
- Have regulations for the dismantling of buildings that ensure reusable building materials are salvaged.
- Create laws that require companies to publish their C&D waste products in a public database.
- Create a partnership between the province and the Eco-Efficiency Centre to manage a C&D waste exchange program.
- Provide grants for industries that use C&D waste as raw materials.

Which goals are most important

At the end of each workshop, we asked participants to identify two of the seven goals that they thought should be priorities. The following is the goals listed in the order they thought were most important.

- 1** Increase product stewardship. (Goal E)
- 2** Stimulate opportunities to divert the amount of construction and demolition waste sent to landfills. (Goal G)
- 3** Stimulate research and development in waste prevention and diversion while creating potential economic opportunities in Nova Scotia. (Goal F)
- 4** Increase participation in waste prevention and diversion initiatives within all sectors (residential, commercial, institutional and industrial). (Goal B)
- 5** Use financial incentives and disincentives to keep waste out of landfills. (Goal C)
- 6** Develop and expand effective and environmentally sustainable waste reduction practices and programs, including waste diversion. (Goal A)
- 7** Make sure Nova Scotia leads by example and reduces waste in all provincial government work. (Goal D)

Glossary and list of abbreviations

C&D: Construction and demolition.

diversion credit formula: A formula used to determine the amount of money for waste management that a region gets from the revenue of the RRFB.

EGSPA: *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.*

energy recovery: The combustion of material in order to generate usable energy.

ICI: Industrial, Commercial and Institutional.

LEED: The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, a green rating system that is a widely used set of standards for sustainable construction.

NSE: Nova Scotia Environment.

procurement: The buying, selling, leasing and renting of goods and services.

product-to-package ratio: A ratio comparing package weight to the product.

product stewardship programs: Programs that shift some of the responsibility for managing a product's disposal to the producer of the product. According to the internationally-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, manufacturers should be responsible for the effects their products have on the environment, including the product's disposal.

RRFB: Resource Recovery Fund Board, a non-profit corporation that administers and funds most of the waste diversion programs in Nova Scotia. It oversees diversion programs such as bottle, tire and paint recycling, and supports businesses which manufacture new products from waste. It also educates schools and the public across the province about managing waste.

second generation waste facility: A waste facility or landfill that is engineered with measures to control pollution.

solid waste: Any waste product that isn't liquid or viscous and can potentially head to a landfill.

sustainability: The concept that people can fulfill their needs today without affecting the ability of future generations to fulfill their needs.

sustainable procurement: A sustainable approach to purchasing that considers the environmental, societal and economic value of the goods and services being purchased.

waste diversion: The treatment of waste by reducing, reusing, recycling or composting it rather than sending it to a landfill.

waste generator: A person or group of people who creates waste.

