

NEWSLETTER

Issue 4

October 2011

MUNICIPAL/PROVINCIAL JOINT ADVISORY GROUP ON WATER & WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT IN NOVA SCOTIA

Water & Wastewater Forum

—Elected Municipal Officials

Many Nova Scotians are dependent on access to municipal water and wastewater services. The benefits to our communities of continually providing clean, safe drinking water and quality wastewater services include:

- public health protection;
- economic development;
- recreation activities;
- fire protection; and
- an overall improved quality of life.

The delivery of water and wastewater services—a service that is delivered 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year—is challenging and complex for municipal officials. Effective delivery of these services requires knowledgeable, competent and committed staff and elected officials.

The Municipal/Provincial Joint Advisory Group (M/P JAG) identified the need for an educational mechanism, specifically targeting elected municipal officials. The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM) formed an organizing committee to identify objectives, assemble informational materials and coordinate the delivery of a water and wastewater forum that was held

on September 14 and 15, 2011 in Truro.

The first day of the forum was dedicated to site tours of the Colchester Wastewater Treatment facility and the Truro Water Treatment plant.

UNSM President, Mayor Billy Joe MacLean, opened the second day with thought-provoking linkages to the importance of water and the associated responsibilities. The remainder of the day was facilitated by Maria Medioli from RAMP Up Consulting.



Workshop participants.

The morning session included presentations on:

- Benefits of Water & Wastewater Systems;
- Council or Commission's Role

- Human Resource Management
- Case Study on Consumption-Based User Pay System (Town of Windsor); and
- Introduction to the Canada-Nova Scotia Infrastructure Secretariat.

The afternoon session focused on prioritizing issues and recommending strategies to address the issues. To jumpstart the discussion, the organizing committee suggested topics for consideration: **Financing, Leadership, and Staffing**. Participants were given the opportunity to select the topics most critical to them—the following were chosen: **Inter-Municipal Cooperation, Financing, and Biosolids**. Forum participants met in groups to discuss the topics in detail and develop recommendations for high level actions on each.

While overall the feedback from participants was positive, there is a desire for more detailed technical guidance and information. A final report will be provided to the UNSM Board for discussion and action. Consideration will be given to host the workshop again in the future.

Article by: Kevin Saccary, Councillor, CBRM

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M/P JAG—Discussion Points:

- Development of a water & wastewater education opportunity for elected officials
- Extension of the M/P JAG mandate beyond 2011 and renewal of the Terms of Reference
- Dedicated funding mechanisms for water and wastewater service delivery

Nova Scotia Water Advisory Group Formed

- Moving Forward With Our Water Strategy



On December 16, 2010, the Province of Nova Scotia released *Water for Life: Nova Scotia's Water Resource Management Strategy*. *Water for Life* has a central theme of "Integrated Water Management (IWM)", IWM is a comprehensive approach to managing water resources, including human activities and their effects on watersheds and ecosystems. It involves working closely with other provincial departments and other levels of government, as well as stakeholders such as researchers, businesses and other organizations.

One way Nova Scotia will achieve IWM is through

the advice and expertise of the newly formed **Nova Scotia Water Advisory Group** (NSWAG). The NSWAG will provide feedback and expert advice as the Province works with its partners to implement the 29 actions laid out in *Water for Life*. Members were chosen based on:

- their knowledge in any of the key action areas of the strategy (IWM—**Understand** the quality & quantity of our water; **Protect** the quality & quantity of our water; and **Engage** in caring for our water); and
- their representation of a cross section of water

stakeholders (i.e. municipalities; First Nations; industry; academia; and non-governmental organizations).

The Nova Scotia Water Advisory Group met for the first time on September 9, 2011 and another meeting will take place in November.

The Province of Nova Scotia looks forward to working with the NSWAG on implementation of *Water for Life!*

Article by: Krista Hilchey, Acting Water Strategy Coordinator, NSE



Nova Scotia Water Advisory Group Members

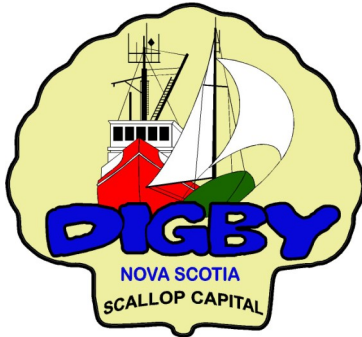
Name	Role	Action Area	Sector
Dr. Graham Daborn	Professor Emeritus, Acadia University	Understand	Academia
Fred Baechler	Chief Hydrogeologist and Senior Hydrologist, Exp Services Inc.	Understand; IWM	Service Provider; Consultant
Henry Vissers	Executive Director, Federation of Agriculture	Understand; Engage	Industry; Farming
Anna McCarron	Chair, Shubenacadie Watershed Environmental Protection Society	Engage	Non-Government Organization
Dr. Cathy Conrad	Professor, Department of Geography at Saint Mary's University, and Research Coordinator, Community Based Environmental Monitoring Network	Engage; IWM	Academia
TBD	First Nations*	Protect	First Nations
Dr. Graham Gagnon	Professor in the Department of Civil & Resources Engineering, Dalhousie University	Protect	Academia
Debbie Nielsen	Municipal Sustainability Coordinator, Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities	Protect	Municipalities

* We hope to have a First Nations member for the next meeting.

A Town's Diligent Response to a Wastewater Event

- Town of Digby

The picturesque town of Digby sits quietly on the shore of the Annapolis Basin. Settled in 1783, Digby has been an active fishing- and lumber-producing community. The town became an important regional transportation center in the 1890s with the arrival of the Dominion Atlantic Railway, connecting with a series of steamships. Fishing is a main economic engine and the town is known throughout the world for its famous **Digby scallops and Digby clams!**



The spring of 2008 brought much more rain than normal to the Digby area. The town's wastewater collection system and 35-year old treatment facility were hydraulically overloaded. This caused raw sewage bypassing of the treatment facility and solids carry-over events.

The town was unaware of an agreement between the United States Food & Drug Administration (USFDA) and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) called the Canadian Shellfish Sanitation Program (CSSP). The agreement requires an immediate closure of shellfish harvesting when

any bypass of untreated wastewater occurs in those waters.

Heavy rains on Victoria Day long weekend caused the first bypass and carryover event that initiated an automatic 7-day closure for the entire Annapolis Basin—an action taken as a precautionary measure to prevent potentially contaminated shellfish from reaching consumers.

What followed the first closure became a major ongoing challenge for the town—more closures followed . . . media coverage was intense . . . public meetings were held . . . local tourism was threatened . . . livelihoods of those depending on the fishery were in jeopardy as the closures came at the start of a busy season affecting over 265 licensed clam harvesters.

The town immediately agreed to respond positively to all requirements once CFIA made them aware of deficiencies at the treatment plant. Nova Scotia Environment and engineering firms were consulted to address the operational deficiencies.

Immediate changes at the plant included:

- hiring staff to monitor operations and increase the on-site sampling and testing; and
- installing equipment to improve solids wasting capabilities and further monitor operations.



Aeration cell - Digby treatment facility.

Addressing the deficiencies came at a significant cost—more than \$300,000 for 2008/2009 from the previous year. The majority of the costs were 'non-discretionary' and ultimately passed on to the Town's 2,093 residents through increased taxes. The Town's sewer rate increased from \$1.59/1,000 gallons in 2007/2008 to \$5.05/1,000 gallons the following year.

Faced with many challenges, the Town of Digby continued to move forward to identify the best long-term options—negotiations began with the District of Digby to expand its treatment facility to accept sewage from the town and consent was obtained . . . funding was secured . . . an easement was obtained for an abandoned rail corridor . . . archaeological assessment was required . . . purchase of 30 acres to expand the District's facility . . . hiring consulting engineers and project managers.

The challenges facing the town seemed overwhelm-

ing. Yet, Digby was diligent in their approach and collaboration with others was critical. The town is proud of their determination to work with Environment Canada and Nova Scotia Environment to ensure they could meet regulatory requirements, and with the Municipality of the District of Digby to create an operational structure for a regional system. Everyone worked together with one common goal—to mitigate and eliminate the negative environmental and economic impacts associated with raw sewage discharges into the Annapolis Basin. The Town continues to work diligently to protect the best interests of its residents and those who depend on the abundance the Annapolis Basin and to maintain the beauty and the fabric that makes Digby the great, and famous, town that it is.

Article by: Tom Ossinger, CAO, Town of Digby

MWWE Update

In early 2009 the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) endorsed the Canada-wide **Municipal Wastewater Effluent (MWWE) Strategy**. The Strategy's main focus' are:

- improved human health and environmental protection
- improved clarity on the way municipal wastewater is managed and regulated.

Since then, Nova Scotia Environment (NSE) has been working on the implementation of the Strategy. One of the first steps was to send a letter to all municipal owners of wastewater facilities listing their associated risk rankings of high, medium or low and outlined some of the deliverables expected under the Strategy.



Municipal units who did not receive the letter should contact their local NSE office.

In March 2010, Environment Canada released draft federal **Wastewater Systems Effluent Regulations**. NSE provided comments on the draft regulations including recommendations from Minister Sterling Belliveau that the regulations more closely match the Strategy endorsed by the CCME and that a dedicated funding program for wastewater accompany the regulations. NSE worked with Environment Canada through CCME to en-

sure our concerns are addressed. The regulations are currently being revised and are expected to be finalized by the end of 2011.

One of the next steps for Nova Scotia is the development of a provincial wastewater standard that will include the requirements of the Strategy, federal regulations and other requirements. The intent of the standard is to provide municipalities with one document with one set of rules to follow. We are also in the beginning stages of negotiating an administrative agreement with the federal government to provide a "one-window" regulatory approach— a key proposal from municipalities.

Article by: Stefan Furey, P.Eng., Nova Scotia Environment

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