

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE



BACKGROUND INFO

Nova Scotia's municipalities have worked to advance environmental goals for decades. This includes areas such as solid waste management and recycling, responsibility for watersheds and public water systems, park management, and provision of public transit services and active transportation infrastructure. Nova Scotian municipalities were required to develop Integrated Community Sustainability Plans (2010) and Municipal Climate Change Action Plans (2014) to be eligible to receive federal gas tax transfers which formed a foundation for current activities.

In 2019 and 2020 Nova Scotia's municipalities began developing climate change plans based on municipal policy priorities and not as preconditions for funding (e.g. HRM, Municipality of the District of Lunenburg, Bridgewater and others). This period also included some municipalities declaring climate emergencies (e.g. HRM, CBRM, Wolfville, Mahone Bay).

The Government of Nova Scotia's *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act* (EGCCRA) in 2021 was a key provincial milestone. EGCCRA set emission reduction targets for 2030 and a net zero target for 2050. EGCCRA also included a commitment "...to work with municipalities, First Nations, and African Nova Scotian communities in the Province to take immediate and long-term action on their climate change priorities". The Government of Nova Scotia's "Our Climate, Our Future Nova Scotia's Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth" details the implementation approach for EGCCRA with municipalities as key collaborators.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE

Municipalities are on the front lines of dealing with Climate Change impacts such as wildfires, drought, more intense rainfall, and increasing tropical storms and hurricanes. Their adaptation approach is to become more resilient and reduce the pressure for emergency response. Municipalities are also acting on greenhouse gas emission reduction (mitigation). These projects help attain provincial targets and municipal climate change plan objectives. They also help attain co-benefits such as cost savings and improved quality of life for residents.

Since 2018, about 34 of Nova Scotia's 49 municipalities have developed or are in the process of developing plans that set targets and recommend actions to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change.



NSFM ADVOCACY & RESEARCH

NSFM has a long history supporting municipal environmental objectives, including advocacy support for Extended Producer Responsibility, the Climate Change Leader Award, the Active Transportation Committee, and municipal environment projects at conferences and publications.

NSFM's Climate Change Advisory Committee leads advocacy on climate change and environment issues such as coastal protection and aerial herbicide spraying.

In 2025-26, NSFM started an Environment and Climate Change initiative to support municipal progress and share information. An inventory of municipal climate change activities that contribute to provincial goals and actions identified about 400 mitigation and adaptation activities across municipalities, most of which were implemented since 2020.

Greenhouse gas reduction (mitigation) activity examples include:

- **Energy efficiency** projects in municipal buildings and support for affordable housing developments, private households and community centres
- Addition of **sustainable transportation** options such as transit, active transportation and electric vehicle fleets and charging
- Investment in **wind and solar energy production**, especially in municipalities with their own electric utilities

Adaptation activity examples include:

- **Disaster response** and moving toward greater resiliency in anticipation of continued extreme weather events
- Conserving **nature and biodiversity** by using natural systems for coastal protection and watershed health as well as combating invasive species
- Preparing **municipal infrastructure** assets for extreme weather through new construction, updated design standards, improved knowledge and additional resources
- **Enhancing knowledge and understanding** through actions such as climate risk assessments and education for residents (e.g. water conservation)
- **Governance and leadership** initiatives to prepare for climate change such as dedicated municipal staff, collaboration between municipalities and co-ordination across sectors

NSFM delivers the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund on behalf of the Province, which has advanced municipal climate change projects.

NEXT STEPS

NSFM will continue to advocate for municipal environment and climate change priorities. NSFM has created a dedicated “Environment & Climate Change” page on their website to provide information and share resources on climate change initiatives. NSFM is also coordinating webinars, conference sessions, and other projects to build municipal capacity and provide educational opportunities for members.