



## Environmental Home Assessment Program

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: Why is there a need for this program?**

A: Nova Scotians want to do their part to protect their environment. Often, people do not realize the environmental, health and financial impacts of not regularly testing well water and properly maintaining oil tanks and septic systems.

This program is designed to raise awareness of the importance of regular well water testing, septic system and oil tank maintenance and provide information to help Nova Scotians fix potential problems before they escalate into something that can cost them money, harm their health and the environment.

**Q: Will this program cost me any money?**

A: This program is free of charge for Nova Scotians who rely on wells and septic systems. All participants are also eligible for \$50.00 rebate to get their septic system pumped by March 2007. In addition, a septic repair grant is available to a maximum of \$3000.00 for lower income earners to help toward repair costs.

**Q: Is the information that I provide to the home assessor confidential or will it be shared with Nova Scotia Environment and Labour and/or other government departments?**

A: The information that you provide to the home assessor during an environmental home assessment is confidential and will remain with the community group who is delivering the program in your area. In the event that the home assessor finds issues of concern with anything on your property you will be advised of the problem/potential problem and provided with information on who to contact and how to address it. However, if you choose to apply for the septic repair grant your application will be processed by Nova Scotia Environment and Labour. In the case of clients of Community Services the application will be reviewed by both Environment and Labour and the Department of Community Services. This review will result in information about your situation being brought to the attention of one or both departments.

**Q: How many grants are you giving out?**

A: We are pleased to offer a maximum of 85 grants in year one and a maximum of 200 grants in year two. Those grants will help those who require immediate assistance in repairs to their septic systems.

**Q: How will the grant program be delivered?**

A: To access the grant program, Nova Scotia homeowners need to first have an environmental home assessment completed. If the household meets the income criteria for the grant, the home assessor will then assist the homeowner to complete the grant application. The homeowner must then submit the application to Nova Scotia Environment and Labour for approval

**Q: What will the assessment entail?**

A: The Environmental Home Assessment Program offers home assessments to hundreds of individual homes served by water wells and on-site septic systems. Homeowners who participate will receive:

- a water use and wastewater assessment for their property
- \$50 rebate on septic tank pumping carried out within one year
- a water quality sampling kit
- water saving devices
- samples of environmentally friendly cleaners
- and a home oil tank system checklist.

**Q: When can I expect my home assessment to take place?**

A: The community groups who are delivering the program are currently taking appointments. You must call the community group in your area delivering the assessment to schedule an appointment.

**Q: Who do I call in my area?**

**Eastern Region**

Cape Breton County  
Victoria County  
Inverness County  
Richmond County  
Communities of Aulds Cove and Mulgrave

**Contact:**

**ACAP-Cape Breton, (902) 567-1628**

**Northern Region:**

Cumberland County  
Antigonish County  
Guysborough County  
Colchester County  
Pictou County

**Contact:**

**Clean Nova Scotia, 1-800-665-5377**

**Central Region:**

Halifax Regional Municipality  
East Hants County  
West Hants County

**Contact:**

**Clean Nova Scotia, 1-800-665-5377**

**Western Region:**

District of Argyle  
Lunenburg County  
Shelburne County  
Queens County

**Contact:**

**Bluenose ACAP, (902) 624-9888**

**Western Region:**

Annapolis County  
King's County  
Digby County  
Yarmouth County

**Contact:**

**Clean Annapolis River Project, (902) 532-7533**

**Q: Do the community groups have the knowledge and skills to be able to point out problems with oil tanks, wells and septic systems?**

A: The community groups that have been contracted to deliver this program were selected because they have a history of successfully delivering environmental programs to home owners in their regions. Environment and Labour staff will be providing them with any additional training that they need to successfully carry out the program.

**Q: Are home owners required to test their water?**

A: For home owners on well water, regular water testing is key to protecting the health of your family. Homeowners are advised to test their water for the presence of bacteria on a semi-annual basis. A number of chemical tests should also be performed on a less frequent basis depending on which area of the province that you are located in.

**Q: Does the program include free water testing?**

A: No, homeowners will be provided with sample bottles and advised how to take a proper water sample and where to go to get their water tested in Nova Scotia but the homeowner is responsible for paying the fees and taking the sample to the lab.

**Q: Where can I get my well water tested?**

A: A list of water testing labs is on the our website at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/water/waterlabs.asp>

**Q: Where can I get information on water wells & water testing?**

A: On line at [www.gov.ns.ca/enla/water/privatewells.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/water/privatewells.asp) or by calling any one of the Environment and Labour regional or district offices.

**Q: How long does a septic system last?**

A: In general, a properly maintained and regularly pumped septic system can last for up to 25 years. Homeowners can do a lot of things to extend the life such as having a lint filter installed on your washing machine, using liquid laundry detergent and reducing your water consumption.

**Q: Where can I get more information on septic system maintenance?**

A: On line at [www.gov.ns.ca/enla/water/wastewater.asp](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/water/wastewater.asp) or by calling any one of the Environment and Labour regional or district offices.

**Q: What does the department do when they get a complaint about failed systems?**

A: Staff receive the complaint and respond with a visit to the site. The inspector would direct the homeowner to hire a qualified person (e.g., septic system installer) to follow up and assess the situation.

**Q: How much does it cost to pump a septic system?**

A: It costs approximately \$100 - \$300 depending on where you are located in the province.

**Q: How big a problem is oil tank failure in the province?**

A: Nova Scotia Environment and Labour and industry have undertaken a large educational effort over the last 5 years and the number seems to be declining but there are still hundreds of oil spills in Nova Scotia each year.

**Q: Where can I get more information on oil tank maintenance?**

A: The Homeowners Guide to heating oil tank systems is available on line at [www.gov.ns.ca/enla/petroleum/docs/OilTankGuide.pdf](http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/petroleum/docs/OilTankGuide.pdf) or by mail from any one of Nova Scotia Environment and Labour regional or district offices.