

## APPENDIX C

### SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FEEDBACK

#### 2011 REVIEW OF THE *ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS AND SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY ACT*

##### BACKGROUND

This document provides a summary of the public feedback gathered by the Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity in our review of the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act (EGSPA)*. This review was part of the requirements of the Act, which states that a public review must be conducted every five years by the Round Table. The Round Table includes volunteer members from the legal and academic communities, industry, and environment sectors (both private and non-governmental organizations) from many regions of the province. Members are appointed by the Minister of Environment.

The Act was established in 2007 with the vision to fully integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity.

The Act has two primary objectives:

- demonstrate international leadership by having one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020; and
- improve the Province's economic performance to a level that is equal to or above the Canadian average by 2020.

To achieve these objectives, the Act sets out 21 specific goals spanning as far as 2020 in areas such as natural resources, air quality, water quality, climate change, and energy.

##### CONSULTATION PROCESS

The Round Table received a mandate letter from the Minister on September 26, 2011 to request that we begin the review process of *EGSPA*. The objective of the review was to consider the Act and determine if it could be refined or improved in order to better fulfill its purposes. The Act specifies that the Round Table report back to the Minister within six months, with recommendations for amendments and improvements in the implementation of the Act.

In order to conduct the review, the Round Table invited Nova Scotians to submit written feedback, during the period from October 24 to December 16, 2011, on a set of ten questions. The deadline for written feedback was later extended to January 31, 2012 to allow more time for submissions. In total, the Round Table received 95 written submissions.

For the written feedback, we asked the public to comment on:

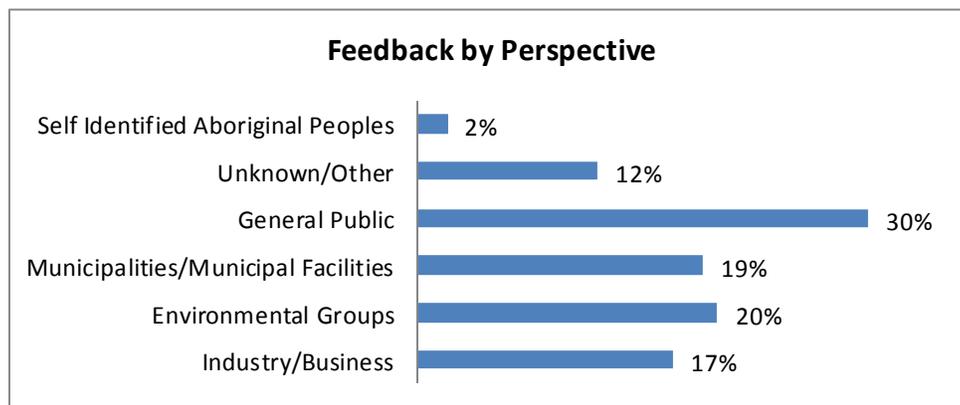
- the vision, principles, and goals of *EGSPA*;
- whether economic goals were needed in the Act;
- other provincial initiatives that could be linked to *EGSPA*;
- best practices from other places;
- stakeholder roles in *EGSPA*;
- benefits seen from the implementation of the Act;
- aspects of the Act that should be changed or refined; and
- whether economic and environmental gains could be strengthened by focusing on key strategies.

In addition to the written feedback, five workshops were held throughout the province in late January and February of 2012. The workshops were held in Truro, Wolfville, Yarmouth, Dartmouth, and Sydney and had approximately 74 participants. At the workshops, participants discussed the vision of *EGSPA* and how the Act could be changed or refined.

The responses received during the consultation process are summarized in the following section. The information gathered helped us to develop our recommendations to the Province. Round Table members wanted meaningful public consultations and invested additional volunteer hours to ensure that there were public meetings across Nova Scotia.

### **RESPONDENT PROFILE**

The Round Table collected written feedback from the public and held five workshops around the province on *EGSPA*. In total we received 95 written comments and had approximately 74 participants at the workshops. Below is a breakdown of the groupings of individuals who provided feedback for the review.



## **FEEDBACK**

From the feedback that was received respondents generally felt that that the overall vision and purpose of the Act, to integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity, is worthwhile. The responses received came from a wide range of views and produced numerous ideas of how the vision could be more fully implemented.

Below is a summary of the views and suggestions that the Round Table received through the consultation process.

### **VISION AND PRINCIPLES**

There was a general consensus among the respondents that the vision and principles of EGSPA should remain unchanged. Many of the respondents felt, however, that the implementation of the Act thus far had mainly focused on the environmental goals with very little focus on the economy. They stated that there is a need for a more balanced approach between the environment and the economy and that neither can be sacrificed at the expense of the other. Some also noted that both economic and social well-being are part of, and dependent on, a functional and healthy environment. Some possible improvements noted regarding the principles of the Act include strengthening them, providing a definition for sustainability, and more work toward realizing them.

### **GOALS**

Many general comments were received regarding the goals of the Act. Respondents felt that the timelines associated with the goals are helpful as they demonstrate government's commitment and create accountability. Although many liked the timelines associated with the goals, some felt that there should still be an ability to refine the goals as needed. There were some suggestions that goals should be reviewed annually or continuously and that goals should be kept current to address both increased demands on individuals and government finances. If goals are refined, respondents felt they should be made clearer, stronger, and more relevant. They felt that there should be public discussion and consultation before changes are made to existing goals or new goals are added. It was also felt that primary stakeholders should be involved in the development of goals and that funding agreements should be established at the beginning for meeting the goals. There were also some comments stating that the goals should be prioritized.

## **THEMES FROM THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED**

### **Benefits Seen from Implementing EGSPA**

Respondents were asked to identify some of the benefits they have seen in their communities that have resulted from implementing EGSPA. Some of the benefits mentioned include improved air quality, improved water quality, new protected areas, increased jobs in the renewable energy sector, an increase in the supply of renewable energy, and new provincial strategies for the management of resources. Others stated that they were unaware of any

clear benefits that can be attributed to the Act or that more time is required to see positive changes resulting from the Act.

### **Initiatives That Should be Linked to EGSPA**

When asked about other provincial initiatives that should be linked to *EGSPA*, a number of respondents stated that *EGSPA* should be linked to the provincial economic growth strategy, JobsHere. Other frequently mentioned initiatives were the Municipal Integrated Community Sustainability Plans and Climate Change Action Plans produced by the municipalities as well as agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture initiatives. Some stated that all government initiatives should be linked to *EGSPA*.

### **Best Practices from Other Jurisdictions**

There were a number of jurisdictions mentioned that respondents felt demonstrate best practices for linking the environment and economy. Some of the more frequently mentioned were British Columbia for its energy policies, Ontario for its product stewardship and work on protected areas, Vancouver for its greenest city initiative, Europe for its green energy industry, the Scandinavian Countries for their solid waste programs, and GPI Atlantic for its research on connecting the environment, economy and social wellbeing.

### **Public Education**

There was a general consensus that more education and awareness is needed for the Act to truly be beneficial. People indicated that the Act states what has to be done but it's not clear why these goals have been set or how they will achieve the vision. Some suggestions for an education component included setting goals to integrate sustainability into the curriculum in schools, creating improved online sustainability information tools for the general public, hosting a conference on *EGSPA*, creating incentive programs, advertising, and selecting a slogan that people can get behind.

### **Greater Collaboration**

There was a general consensus that there is a need for more collaboration within the provincial government concerning *EGSPA*, as well as among different levels of government. Many felt that the work of the Act tends to be limited to the Department of Environment and that the Act needs to involve all government departments and play a central role in developing public policy. Others stated that more support and dialogue are needed between the provincial government and the municipalities, as many of the goals require work on the part of the municipalities. There was also a suggestion that the Province should review sustainability goals in the Municipal Integrated Community Sustainability Plans to determine where there are shared interests which could result in shared goals.

## **Enforcement and Accountability**

Another theme that came up frequently was the need for *EGSPA* to have an enforcement or penalization provision. It was felt that by making the Act enforceable, it would be more effective and add to the accountability of government. A number of respondents also stated that there is a need to establish an independent Environmental Commissioner who could monitor the progress made under *EGSPA* and hold the government accountable. Others felt that accountability could also be increased through the inclusion of an Environmental Bill of Rights which would state that all Nova Scotians have a right to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment and that the provincial government has an obligation to protect this right.

## **Proponent Responsibilities**

A number of respondents stated that businesses need to prove that their economic activities will not adversely affect the environment including water, soil, air quality, human health or wildlife. They felt this could be included in the Act through adopting the precautionary principle. It was also suggested that businesses that exploit the environment must possess an insurance policy to cover any events that might cause damage to the environment. Another suggestion was that industries that cause negative impacts to the environment should have to pay user fees or fines. Respondents felt this would create incentives for innovation and the development of new technologies.

## **Review and Reporting**

Respondents stated that regular progress reports are needed and that public consultation should be carried out frequently. Specific suggestions included consulting with the public annually to gather feedback on the achievements and failures over the previous year and to gather ideas for new potential goals and targets. It was also suggested that the annual reports should measure and track economic performance in the same way that environmental performance is currently being reported.

## **Measurement**

A number of respondents made comments related to measurement tools for the Act. Some stated that in developing goals, the costs and benefits need to be considered, while others stated that measurement needs to be included as a way to measure progress. Items identified as needing to be measured to determine progress were economic metrics such as number of jobs by sector; businesses that boost the environment; GDP; job growth; government debt; and economic cost per job. It was also indicated that the Genuine Progress Index (GPI) could play a role, as there is a need to include metrics that focus on the quality of life. One respondent thought a target for developing and performing triple bottom line accounting at the provincial level should be included in the Act.

## **Energy Efficiency**

Energy was the focus of many comments received. The main focus was on reducing energy consumption in Nova Scotia by ensuring that there are targets for energy efficiency improvements. There were many comments on the need to increase energy efficiency in buildings. Some of the ideas proposed were to: require homes being sold in Nova Scotia to display an energy efficient rating; require new residential dwelling units be built to an EnerGuide rating higher than 80; create an energy code for institutional, commercial and industrial buildings; develop a Mi'kmaq Home Energy Efficiency Program; retrofit older buildings; and require government facilities to be constructed in accordance with a leading standard for building energy efficiency. Other comments included a recommendation to add a goal for how efficiently we convert our purchased energy to energy sources and that demand-side management should be available in all communities.

## **Renewable Energy**

Another energy topic that emerged in the feedback was around renewable energy and the need to end our dependence on fossil fuels. Respondents stated that goals should be developed for all forms of energy (electricity, heating fuels, transportation fuels, and embodied energy) which encourage and support, through positive measures, viable actions to reduce the use of fossil fuels. There were also comments concerning biomass, with some indicating that biomass should not be considered a renewable energy and that a biomass policy is needed. Another topic that was discussed was energy security and the need to develop regulations that recognize the nature of Nova Scotia's energy system.

## **Forestry**

Forestry was the topic of a number of submissions, which focused on the need to reduce clear-cutting to no more than 50% of all harvests. Comments were also made on the need for 50% of funding to be directed to uneven-aged silviculture practices. One respondent stated that the Forest Strategy was released with inadequate analysis of economic considerations.

## **Procurement**

It was felt that more work was needed around procurement and that the sustainable procurement policy should be extended to municipalities, schools, and hospitals. Respondents also suggested that government procurement should focus on purchasing local products, energy efficient products, and products made of recycled materials when practical and affordable.

## **Protected Areas**

There were many comments on the protected areas goal, coming from varying view points, with some interested in expanding the goal while others saw the need to reevaluate the goal and how it is being reached. There were a number of suggestions that the goal should be increased

from 12% to between 14% and 20%. Others were concerned about the economic impacts of land protection, and felt that more thought should be given to the long term economic prosperity of the land when selecting protected areas. Concerns were also raised around the definition of protected areas. A number of respondents stated that the definition should come from the International Union for Conservation of Nature management categories, while another respondent stated that “legally protected” should focus on the protection of biodiversity and natural processes. Others stated that there should be some consideration given to protecting riparian areas and establishing marine protected areas. There was also a comment stating that more recognition should be given to the work done by non-governmental land trusts.

### **Solid Waste**

The solid waste goal was another theme that received a fair bit of attention. Respondents suggested that the province should work with industry to increase the number of products that have stewardship funding and consider extended producer responsibility as voluntary stewardship is falling short. Others stated that policy measures need to be developed to support the municipalities’ growing costs related to meeting the solid waste regulations. It was also stated that there should be a uniform recycling program across the Province.

### **Water**

A number mentioned the need for increased legislation around the protection of our water. Some of the suggestions included creating a water act which would include groundwater/drinking water protection, water conservation and efficiency, and watershed protection. Others stated the need for a stronger understanding of water resource management in government, along with the supporting regulatory structures.

### **Transportation**

Many mentioned the need to include a goal for developing a sustainable transportation strategy. There were also suggestions around creating protective measures for Nova Scotia’s railways, conducting assessments of alternatives to adding more lanes to congested streets, and looking at incentives for people who purchase environmentally sustainable electric cars.

### **Economic Targets**

When asked if there was a need for economic goals to parallel the environmental goals found in the Act, there was a general consensus that economic goals should be included. Some felt that the goals should run parallel to the environmental goals while others felt that economic and environmental goals should be tied together for a more holistic approach. There were recommendations to include the economic goals in the following areas: developing a green jobs strategy; diversifying and greening local economies; and developing strategies and programs to increase the education, training, and capacity of a skilled workforce to install energy efficient solutions.

## **Agriculture and Local Food**

A number of respondents mentioned the need to increase local food production and consumption. Some suggestions included encouraging more farmers' markets and buy local initiatives, such as having schools buy locally produced food. Another suggestion was to develop a provincial food security strategy. Others stated that the province should aim for self sufficiency by supporting local farmers and protecting agricultural land for farming.

## **Aquaculture**

Aquaculture was touched on by a number of respondents, who felt that salmon and finfish aquaculture, should move to a closed containment or land-based tank system. It was suggested that through practicing environmentally safe waste management, this would provide for clean harbours and bays and prevent parasite transmission to wild fish. The need for an aquaculture strategy that would ensure the sustainability of the industry and for regulations to ensure local resources will not be adversely affected was also mentioned. Some talked about the market opportunities for sustainable or closed containment finfish aquaculture.

## **Hydraulic Fracturing**

A number commented that a moratorium or ban should be placed on hydraulic fracturing in the province. Many expressed their concern that hydraulic fracturing is still an experimental technology that can contaminate groundwater, affect air quality, and pose a risk to human health.

## **Round Table**

Some respondents felt that the membership of the Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity should be expanded. They felt the Round Table needed to have more geographical diversity, more members from the environmental community, and representation from all sectors of industry in Nova Scotia. One respondent also stated that they felt that the Round Table should be appointed by, and report to, the Premier.

## **Other Themes Identified**

The major themes identified above appeared more frequently in the feedback. Below are some other themes that came through in the feedback, but not as often.

- Develop strategic environmental assessments (e.g. aquaculture and wind power).
- Review and update land use planning legislation and regulations to complement and support the principles and objectives set out in *EGSPA*.
- Consider the use of urban forests as a way to achieve the vision of *EGSPA*. Urban forests aid in storm water management, improving air quality, providing human health benefits, and providing green infrastructure.
- Implement a wetlands policy that states no net loss and includes buffers.

- Encourage ecotourism as Nova Scotia has many unique habitats which need to be marketed better.
- Develop a coastal management strategy or legislation to ensure coastal land conservation and consistent coastal development standards.
- Better regulate mink farming in Yarmouth County.
- Re-instate the mandatory labeling goal for energy usage in new residential buildings.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

The Round Table appreciates the time and effort that each of the respondents took to provide their thoughts on *EGSPA*. We received many thoughtful, articulate submissions from a wide variety of stakeholders, including environmental groups, industry associations, municipalities, members of the public, and many more. These diverse viewpoints meant that in some cases there were divergent opinions on issues and differing suggestions on the best path forward. The Round Table did not follow-up on certain suggestions because they were considered beyond the mandate of the Review and Act or there was not consensus among Round Table members on next steps. The feedback was a key consideration for the Round Table in forming our recommendations on amending and improving the Act. It was used to help us draft our recommendations for our report on amendments and improvements to the Act which was presented to the Minister of Environment on March 30, 2012. The full report and an executive summary are available on the website at: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/dept/egspa.review.asp>.