
**NS ENVIRONMENT AND LABOUR
2006-07 Budget Highlights**

Environmental Home Assessment Program – \$850,000

What is the objective of this initiative?

The purpose of the environmental home assessment program is to protect the quality of drinking water and conserve water resources through proper maintenance and use of household wells, septic systems, and oil tanks.

A rigorous and accessible homeowner assessment and education program is recognized as an effective tool to change attitudes and behaviors to protect public health and the environment. Homeowners will receive an environmental assessment of their home by a trained team, and a package of environmental protection items and information materials. A complementary program to support the repair or replacement of failed septic systems for lower income Nova Scotians will help address a common environmental issue in Nova Scotia.

Why is the initiative important?

The Environmental Home Assessment Program supports neighbourhoods and communities throughout Nova Scotia.

Household water and wastewater services must function properly to protect public health and the environment. Approximately 400,000 people in rural Nova Scotia depend on these systems. Many individual homeowners are not aware of the requirements to look after these home systems, such as regular testing of their well water, pumping of their septic system, and maintenance of their oil tank. This initiative is designed to have an immediate impact by providing incentives and, in some cases, direct assistance, to address home environmental issues.

Who benefits from the initiative?

In Year One, the program will benefit 400 homeowners who are not on public water and wastewater systems. Home owners who participate will benefit from a two to three hour environmental home assessment, and receive the following:

- Home water and wastewater assessment results
- \$50 rebate on septic pumping (if not pumped within last 3 years)
- Grants for repair or replacement of failed septic systems (subject to income test)
- Water quality sampling kit
- Water saving devices
- Samples of environmentally friendly cleaners (manufactured in Nova Scotia)
- Oil tank check-up
- Oil tank gauge protector

A homeowner below the determined income threshold, can receive a grant of up to \$3,000 towards repair or replacement of a faulty septic system. This will have direct positive benefit for the homeowner and for surrounding properties which may be impacted by that faulty septic system.

This program will have economic impact by increasing rural property values, reducing future costs associated with clean-ups, and reducing potential health costs.

The department will work with environmental non-government organizations (ENGOS) to deliver the program across the regions. It is expected that partner ENGOS will be able to hire a total of eight staff for program delivery in 2006-07. In Year Two, the program will expand to benefit an additional 1000 homeowners. This is designed as a two year pilot program and results will be reviewed before a decision is made to continue or alter the program.

For further information, please contact:
Julie Towers, A/Manager, Environmental Assessment
Environmental and Natural Areas Management
424-4155