

Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act

CHAPTER 20 OF THE ACTS OF 2021



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**An Act Respecting Environmental Goals
and Climate Change Reduction**

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Short title

1 This Act may be cited as the *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*. 2021, c. 20, s. 1.

Interpretation

2 In this Act,

(a) “circular economy” means an economy in which resources and products are kept in use for as long as possible, with the maximum value being extracted while they are in use and from which, at the end of their service life, other materials and products of value are recovered or regenerated;

(b) “core active transportation network” means a central and connected network of active transportation facilities for walking, biking or rolling to and from key community destinations;

(c) “equity” means the recognition of people’s differences and the attempt to counteract unequal opportunities by considering fairness and justice;

(d) “Etuaptmumk” means, as defined by the Mi’kmaq, two-eyed seeing;

(e) “extended producer responsibility” means an environmental policy approach in which a producer’s responsibility for a product is extended to the post-consumer stage of its life cycle;

(f) “Fund” means the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund established under Section 18;

(g) “green business” means an enterprise that prioritizes sustainability principles and socially responsible behaviour in its business model and takes into consideration its impact on the well-being of both the natural world and society;

(h) “Minister” means the Minister of Environment and Climate Change;

(i) “Netukulimk” means, as defined by the Mi’kmaq, the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the community by achieving adequate standards of community nutrition and economic well-being without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity or productivity of the environment;

(j) “Round Table” means the Round Table established pursuant to the *Environment Act*;

(k) “sustainable development” has the same meaning as in the *Environment Act*;

(l) “sustainable prosperity” means prosperity where economic growth, environmental stewardship and social responsibility are integrated and recognized as being interconnected. 2021, c. 20, s. 2.

Supervision of Act

3 The Minister is responsible for the general supervision and management of this Act and the regulations. 2021, c. 20, s. 3.

Principles of Act

4 This Act is based on the following principles:

(a) the achievement of sustainable prosperity in the Province must include

- (i) Netukulimk,
- (ii) sustainable development,
- (iii) a circular economy, and
- (iv) equity;

(b) the achievement of sustainable prosperity is a shared responsibility among all levels of government, the private sector and all Nova Scotians;

(c) climate change is recognized as a global emergency requiring urgent action; and

(d) such others as may be prescribed by the regulations. 2021, c. 20, s. 4.

Sustainable prosperity long-term objective

5 (1) The long-term objective of the Government is to achieve sustainable prosperity.

(2) To achieve its objective of sustainable prosperity, the Government shall

(a) establish, adopt, support and enable goals that foster an integrated approach to environmental sustainability and economic well-being;

(b) raise awareness of the importance of sustainable prosperity and the climate change emergency and the elements that contribute to them;

(c) encourage the growth of the clean economy and work to support all Nova Scotians in benefiting from its growth;

(d) support the well-being and quality of life of all Nova Scotians;

(e) create conditions necessary for making progress toward sustainable prosperity, including regulation, programs and initiatives that encourage actions and innovation by local government, business, non-government organizations and Nova Scotians; and

(f) work toward continuous improvement in measures of social, environmental and economic indicators of prosperity. 2021, c. 20, s. 5.

Greenhouse gas emissions reductions targets

6 The Government's targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions are

(a) by 2030, to be at least 53% below the levels that were emitted in 2005; and

(b) by 2050, to be net zero, by balancing greenhouse gas emissions with greenhouse gas removals and other offsetting measures. 2021, c. 20, s. 6.

Climate change response and greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals

7 The Government's goals with respect to climate change mitigation and adaptation and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions are

(a) to complete and release a Province-wide climate change risk assessment by December 31, 2022, an update by December 31, 2025, and an update every five years thereafter;

(b) to support, strengthen and set targets for energy efficiency programming while prioritizing equitable access and benefits for low income and marginalized Nova Scotians;

(c) 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;

(d) to build climate change adaptive capacity and resilience by requiring climate adaptation planning across every Government department;

- (e) to adopt the 2020 National Energy Code for Buildings within 18 months of it being published by the Government of Canada;
- (f) to require any new build or major retrofit in government buildings, including schools and hospitals, that enters the planning stage after 2022, to be net-zero energy performance and climate resilient;
- (g) to encourage landlords who currently lease office space to Government to transition existing office space to meet net-zero energy performance;
- (h) to prioritize leased office accommodations in buildings that are climate resilient and meet net-zero energy performance starting in 2030;
- (i) to decrease greenhouse gas emissions across Government-owned buildings by 75% by the year 2035;
- (j) to develop and implement a zero-emission vehicle mandate that ensures, at a minimum, that 30% of new vehicle sales of all light duty and personal vehicles in the Province will be zero-emission vehicles by 2030;
- (k) to develop and implement supporting initiatives for the goal in clause (j);
- (l) to have 80% of electricity in the Province supplied by renewable energy by 2030; and
- (m) to phase out coal-fired electricity generation in the Province by the year 2030. 2021, c. 20, s. 7.

Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth

8 (1) The Government shall create a strategic plan, prior to December 31, 2022, to be known as the “Climate Change Plan for Clean Growth” that addresses

- (a) achieving the greenhouse gas emission targets set out in Section 6;
- (b) adapting to the impacts of climate change and building a climate resilient Province;
- (c) accelerating the integration of sustainable and innovative technologies and approaches; and
- (d) clean inclusive growth.

(2) The Government shall release annual progress reports on the plan outlined under subsection (1) and review and renew the plan within five years of its release. 2021, c. 20, s. 8.

Active transportation goals

9 The Government’s goals with respect to active transportation are

- (a) to establish a Provincial Active Transportation strategy to increase active transportation options by 2023; and
- (b) to complete core active transportation networks that are accessible for all ages and all abilities in 65% of the Province’s communities by 2030. 2021, c. 20, s. 9.

Land protection goals

- 10** The Government's goals with respect to the protection of land are
- (a) to conserve at least 20% of the total land and water mass of the Province by 2030 as protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, including Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, in a manner consistent with national reporting criteria;
 - (b) to support the goal in clause (a) with a collaborative protected areas strategy to be released by December 31, 2023;
 - (c) to implement by 2023 an ecological forestry approach for Crown lands, consistent with the recommendations in "An Independent Review of Forest Practices in Nova Scotia" prepared by William Lahey in 2018, through the triad model of forest management that prioritizes the sustainability of ecosystems and biodiversity in the Province; and
 - (d) to identify by 2023 the percentage allocation of Crown land dedicated to each pillar of the triad model of forest management referred to in clause (c). 2021, c. 20, s. 10.

Water and air goals

- 11** The Government's goals with respect to water and air are
- (a) to develop provincial water quality objectives to guide activities that affect water quality by 2026;
 - (b) to address and mitigate barriers Nova Scotians face to testing and treatment of rural wells by 2026;
 - (c) to manage the Province's air zones consistent with the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards; and
 - (d) to review and update the Province's air emission targets and ambient air quality standards by 2025 and conduct reviews and updates every five years or sooner if the Minister so directs. 2021, c. 20, s. 11.

Environmental assessment goal

- 12** The Government's goal with respect to environmental assessments is to modernize the environmental assessment process by 2024 taking into consideration
- (a) cumulative impacts;
 - (b) diversity, equity and inclusion;
 - (c) independent review;
 - (d) Netukulimk; and
 - (e) climate change. 2021, c. 20, s. 12.

Sustainable procurement goal

- 13** The Government's goal with respect to sustainable procurement is to demonstrate leadership in sustainable procurement by increasing innovation, sustainability, diversity and inclusion in government procurement and considering community benefits attached to procurements. 2021, c. 20, s. 13.

Aquaculture and food goals

- 14 The Government's goals with respect to aquaculture and food are
- (a) to support low-impact sustainable aquaculture through a licensing process that weighs environmental considerations and includes provincial regulation for potential environmental impacts, animal welfare and fish health; and
 - (b) to develop a Provincial food strategy for enhanced awareness of, improved access to and increased production of local food to achieve 20% consumption of local food by 2030. 2021, c. 20, s. 14.

Circular economy growth goal

- 15 The Government's goal to encourage the growth of the circular economy includes, but is not limited to,
- (a) expanding extended producer responsibility and reducing the use of single-use plastics;
 - (b) reducing solid waste disposal rates to no more than 300 kilograms per person per year by 2030; and
 - (c) developing a plan, including specific actions and interim targets, by 2023 to meet the solid waste goal in clause (b). 2021, c. 20, s. 15.

Business, training and education support goals

- 16 The Government's goals to support business, training and education are
- (a) to actively encourage innovative, sustainable and green businesses to establish or relocate to the Province and create an environment for innovative, sustainable and green business start-ups;
 - (b) to work with small businesses across the Province to get their input on ways to reduce emissions, including through rebates, targeted investments and other supports;
 - (c) to work collaboratively with businesses, the Nova Scotia Community College and the labour sector to modernize apprenticeship programs to ensure the Province has the tradespeople needed to meet the demands of the clean economy;
 - (d) to support youth to engage in the clean economy through sustainability-based youth employment leadership programs in the Province; and
 - (e) to promote and support climate change education and sustainability through the knowledge and teachings of Netukulimk and environmental stewardship with ongoing curricula renewal, the development of inclusive and accessible resources and professional learning that incorporates diversity and honours Etuaptmuk. 2021, c. 20, s. 16.

Diversity, equity and inclusion goal

- 17 The Government's goal with respect to diversity, equity and inclusion is to initiate in 2022 ongoing work with racialized and marginalized communities to create a sustained funding opportunity for climate change action and support for community-based solutions and policy engagement, and to create a panel to address

environmental racism by the end of 2022 with recommendations for redress coming to the Province by the end of 2023. 2021, c. 20, s. 17.

Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund

18 (1) The Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund is established.

(2) The money in the Fund must be managed and used in accordance with the regulations to create competitive opportunities that encourage communities in their climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. 2021, c. 20, s. 18.

Premier to meet annually with Round Table

19 The Premier shall meet with the Round Table annually to discuss progress on sustainable prosperity and may include at the meeting any member of the Executive Council the Premier deems appropriate. 2021, c. 20, s. 19.

Sustainable prosperity to be mandated

20 The Premier shall ensure that sustainable prosperity is included in the mandate of every Government department. 2021, c. 20, s. 20.

Minister to report progress annually

21 (1) The Minister, in consultation with such members of the Executive Council as the Minister deems appropriate, shall report annually to the House of Assembly on the progress made toward the long-term objective of sustainable prosperity, including progress toward achievement of sustainable prosperity goals and initiatives established pursuant to this Act.

(2) In preparing the annual report referred to in subsection (1), the Minister may seek advice from the Round Table.

(3) The Minister shall table the annual report referred to in subsection (1) in the House of Assembly on or before July 31st of the year in which it was completed or, where the House is not then sitting, file it with the Clerk of the House. 2021, c. 20, s. 21.

Public reviews by Round Table

22 The Minister shall request the Round Table to carry out a public review of this Act and the regulations

(a) no later than five years after this Act comes into force; and

(b) at any other time the Minister considers appropriate. 2021, c. 20, s. 22.

Regulations

23 (1) The Governor in Council may make regulations

(a) setting additional goals to achieve sustainable prosperity consistent with the principles and focus areas established pursuant to this Act;

(b) establishing further principles to achieve sustainable prosperity;

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- (c) respecting initiatives to achieve sustainable prosperity consistent with the principles established pursuant to this Act;
- (d) respecting the acquisition of money for the Fund;
- (e) respecting the management and use of money in the Fund;
- (f) governing reporting and record-keeping requirements for any purpose related to this Act;
- (g) respecting the information and content required for the climate change risk assessment referred to in clause 7(a);
- (h) defining any word or expression used but not defined in this Act;
- (i) further defining any word or expression defined in this Act;
- (j) respecting any matter that the Governor in Council considers necessary or advisable to carry out effectively the intent and purpose of this Act.

(2) The exercise by the Governor in Council of the authority contained in subsection (1) is a regulation within the meaning of the *Regulations Act*. 2021, c. 20, s. 23.

Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act repealed

24 Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2007, the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act*, is repealed. 2021, c. 20, s. 24.

Sustainable Development Goals Act repealed

25 Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2019, the *Sustainable Development Goals Act*, is repealed. 2021, c. 20, s. 25.

