

**Item No. 2**  
**Halifax Regional Council**  
**December 13, 2011**

**TO:** Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

Original Signed by Director

**SUBMITTED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Phillip Townsend, Director, Planning & Infrastructure

**DATE:** November 21, 2011

**SUBJECT:** HRM Submission: EGSPA Review

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**INFORMATION REPORT**

**ORIGIN**

Province of Nova Scotia: 5 year review of Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act.

**BACKGROUND**

The *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (EGSPA) were established in 2007. EGSPA's vision is to fully integrate environmental sustainability and economic prosperity, which is essential to the well-being of the Province. To this end, EGSPA currently has two primary objectives:

1. To demonstrate international leadership by having one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world by 2020; and
2. To 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. Nova Scotia Environment continues to work with government partners to achieve EGSPA's over-arching objectives, and ensure that the 21 goals contained within the Act are met within a reasonable time-frame.

Nova Scotia Environment releases an Annual Progress Report each year to report on the implementation of the Act. As of October 2011, 12 targets have been met, 1 target has been extended, 2 targets are still in progress, 1 target is due the end of 2011, and 5 more targets have deadlines later than 2011.

Summary of Targets:

Land Conservation	Natural Resource Strategy	Wetland Policy	GHG Emissions
Air Quality Standards	Renewable Electricity	Wastewater Policy	Drinking Water Policy
Storm Water Policy	Contaminated Site Redevelopment	Solid Waste Diversion	Sustainable Procurement
Energy Efficiency			

The Act requires that a review be conducted every 5 years by the Minister's Round Table on Environment and Sustainable Prosperity.

The 5 Year Review asks the questions (in Bold) in the Discussion Section of this report.

A collection of Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) staff, including representation from Greater Halifax Partnership, reviewed the questions and have prepared this response based on past Council direction and current approved strategies.

With this submission, staff is expressing the hope that future reviews involving provincial policy or legislation which poses potential impact on municipal budgeting and service delivery are given more duration to enable deeper consultation and preparation of submissions and responses.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1) How do you see the Act achieving the vision of linking a sustainable environment with growing our economy, now and in the future?**

EGSPA was a pioneering piece of legislation that helps all members of society understand that economic progress and environmental stewardship are not competing interests, but genuinely linked. The Principles of EGSPA are very similar to the Community Outcome Areas that direct HRM policy and planning, including the 2006 HRM Regional Municipal Planning Strategy:

1. Well Planned and Engaged Communities;
2. Clean and Healthy Environment;
3. Diverse Lifestyle Opportunities;
4. Economic Prosperity;
5. Safe and Welcoming Communities; and
6. Integrated and Affordable Transportation Networks.

Provincial and Municipal policy development recognize that decisions are interconnected between these outcome areas. As policy and planning work continue overtime, we are seeking stronger and stronger connections between Economic Prosperity and Environmental Sustainability. This connection is important to continue to emphasize and guide policy and program development.

**2. Would you change the principles on which the Act is based? If so, how? If not, why?**

No. The principles of social, economic, and environmental sustainability are interconnected. The principles lead to sound long term decision making. The HRM Regional Plan is based on that same foundation of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

**3. Have the 21 goals moved us toward our overall vision? Should we have economic goals to parallel the environmental goals?**

Yes. The goals have been very effective in moving the province forward to a vision of sustainability. Greater improvement could be achieved with vigorous support of municipal planning and strategies, such as the Greater Halifax Economic Strategy and Regional Plan.

Economic Goals need to be paralleled to the Environmental Goals. The following 5 goals of the Greater Halifax Economic Strategy demonstrate this well:

- Build a vibrant and attractive Regional Centre that attracts \$1.5 billion of private investment and 8,000 more residents by 2016;
- Promote a business climate that drives and sustains growth by improving competitiveness and by leveraging our strengths;
- Creating a welcoming community where the world's talent can find great opportunities, engaged employers and resources for career advancement;
- Create a unique, international city brand for Halifax; and
- Capitalize on our best opportunities for economic growth.

A focus on infrastructure investment in the capital of Nova Scotia, and specifically in the HRM Regional Centre, will yield economic and environmental prosperity.

**4. Policies evolve over time. Is an Act with strict timelines the best approach? How can we keep our goals current as things evolve? Should the existing goals be refined?**

Timelines and measurement is very important. The targets in the original goals ensured government action.

Collective goal setting with the municipalities will ensure better alignment of government resources and progress on objectives.

It is time to review the goals during the 5 year review. Some of the goals have been accomplished; some are still a work in process. There are also new issues and opportunities requiring goals which require embedding in the Act. Currently, the biggest opportunity is to

look at the opportunities to align economic and municipal planning objectives with EGSPA goals.

Looking through the lens of Economic Development, HRM offers the following topics requiring Goal establishment:

- Transit ridership and frequency;
- Intensification of housing and investment; and
- Provincial support of Municipal land use, economic, and sustainability planning.

For these topics, The Province of Nova Scotia has the ability to increase strategic investment and support.

**5. Are there other provincial initiatives, such as the JobsHere economic strategy, that could be linked to EGSPA to advance its objectives and goals? If so, how?**

Yes. Examples include: The Water Resource Management Strategy; The Climate Change Action Plan; The Renewable Electricity Plan; and The Coastal Management Strategy. Aside from the Provincial Strategy, the requirements of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) for Gas Tax Funding eligibility is used as an opportunity through the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) requirement and the Climate Change MOU with Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities (UNSM). As well, the Natural Resources Strategy highly supports the objectives of EGSPA. All this work is logically interconnected.

A critical initiative is the Select Nova Scotia marketing of local food and agriculture. Local food is an element missing in EGSPA goals. The 2010 Agriculture report measured that only 13 cents of every Nova Scotian food dollar is going to Nova Scotia agriculture. This would appear to be a significant opportunity to incorporate a new EGSPA goal which is very much aligned with both the environmental and economic objectives of the Act. HRM has an agricultural sector that deserves government support. This is environmentally, socially, and economically sensible.

A further opportunity that the Province currently has limited policy on or investment in, is related to District Heating and Cooling opportunities. HRM in particular, is suited for district energy solutions and the economics of these projects makes sense. This opportunity can introduce significant economic and environmental benefits. The technology is already proven.

**6. Are there a best practices or ideas from other places that do an effective job linking the environment and the economy? Please explain or give examples.**

The HRM Municipal Regional Planning Strategy (Regional Plan) does an exceptional job of linking environment and economy. Provincial support of Regional Plan implementation would have substantial economic and environmental impact in Nova Scotia.

**7. How can the various stakeholders help Nova Scotia achieve the vision and objectives of the Act?**

Municipalities play a very key role in reaching environmental and economic objectives of EGSPA. Further, HRM is the economic hub for Nova Scotia. Progress on both the Environment and Economy in the province comes through HRM. As such, it is strongly recommended that consideration be given to inviting HRM to be a member of the EGSPA Roundtable.

Further, development of goals must be performed collectively to ensure optimal intergovernmental alignment.

**8. What benefits have Nova Scotians seen in their communities that have resulted from implementing this Act, its objectives and goals?**

Very clearly, as demonstrated in the Annual Reports, Nova Scotians have seen better air quality, more protected land, and other environmental progress. In addition, the Act has catalyzed the synergy between environment and economy. We are seeing a focus on growing the Green Economy and understanding what that means.

**9. Are there other aspects of the Act that you suggest changing or refining?**

The Province of Nova Scotia and HRM must coordinate the implementation of policies and strategies in order to align the EGSPA and HRM's Regional Plan. As the largest municipality in the province and the centre of the Atlantic Region, for the province of Nova Scotia to succeed, HRM has to have the same success. As such, HRM should have a position on the Ministers EGSPA Round Table. This position is consistent with HRM's request for representation on the RRFB Board. Additionally, to ensure success of EGSPA, Municipal Charter Amendments that support Regional Centre and Economic Development objectives must be fast tracked.

In addition, while HRM is fortunate to boast a world class solid waste management program, the funding impacts of achieving the EGSPA goals continue to grow and place increasing burdens on HRM's budgets. The most significant of which is the diversion from landfill which demands ever increasing capacity and investment in organics and recycling processing while landfill program costs continue to increase. This factor requires acknowledgement and liaison in terms of developing policy measures to support HRM's growing costs.

HRM was officially notified by the Minister that the EGSPA 300 kg/capita target was a Provincial target. However, a recent RRFB mandate review report, commissioned by the Province, indicates that there remains uncertainty by stakeholders across the Province, and specifically at the RRFB, in terms of this target being a regional target. The RRFB continues to use 300 kg/capita as a regional target for some of its incentive program funding, which

unfairly penalises HRM. In a recent regional Chairs meeting called to review the RRFB mandate review report this issue was raised and it was noted that Provincial clarification is required since the official position was only made to HRM, and not the other regions or RRFB. As HRM has previously confirmed to the Province, with the largest industrial sector in the province, the calculation methodology of kg/person is excessively burdensome and assessed as impractical in terms of HRM meeting the EGSPA goal as an independent Region. Formal clarification to the RRFB and other regions on this matter is requested. In terms of assessing diversion, it is strongly recommended that *energy from waste* be included as a form of diversion and that evolving technologies in this sector be further explored for their potential to advance EGSPA goals.

Nova Scotia has one of the strictest landfill cell lining specifications in the country, if not the strictest. These specifications were implemented to support environmental protection prior to the Province being the only Province in the country to achieve the 50% diversion target. Nova Scotia currently has the lowest kg/capita/year of waste in the country. This equates to Nova Scotia having one of the least detrimental residual waste streams in the country. Cell construction costs as a result of the liner specifications are exorbitantly high and while they may have initially been justified, are currently assessed as being a unjustifiable or warranted tax burden on Nova Scotians given their diversion successes achieved. HRM requests a working group be established to review the cell liner specifications.

**10. Can economic and environmental gains be strengthened through focus on key strategies such as energy efficiency and renewable energy?**

Yes, however, it is important to expand energy beyond electricity and speak about fuels as well. Currently the provincial focus is on Electricity. This needs to be expanded to all fuels, which will broaden the focus to transportation and building heating/cooling, etc.

Land use and Transportation planning have an exceptionally higher impact on energy consumption than single renewable or energy efficiency initiatives. This is the domain of the municipalities and where support to HRM's Economic and Environmental policy and strategy will reap Provincial success.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

There are no impacts to the 2011/2012 Operating or Capital Budgets.

**FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES/BUSINESS PLAN**

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Project and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Project and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

None

**ATTACHMENTS**

None

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A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

Report Prepared by: Richard MacLellan, Manager, Energy and Environment, 490-6056

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