

APPENDIX B:

A history of water management in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's rivers, lakes, and coastlines have always been essential to the people of the province. From early First Nation societies to the modern day lifestyle, we have always relied on Nova Scotia's water assets.

Early government protection of water resources

In 1919, the passage of the *Water Act* asserted that water would be a public resource. The Act would enable the province to address evolving issues such as hydro-electric power generation, and municipal and industrial water requirements.

1960s to 1990s

It was during the 1960s that the provincial government strengthened efforts to control water pollution and establish wastewater standards. The government also focused on regulating water wells to ensure people had safe drinking water. In 1963, it established the Nova Scotia Water Authority, later replaced by the Nova Scotia Water Resources Commission in 1968.

Five years later, the government passed the *Environmental Protection Act* of 1973, which enabled broader environmental protection of air and soil, and complemented the *Water Act*. With this Act, it formed a new department, called the Nova Scotia Department of Environment, to replace the Water Resources Commission. The department is now called simply Nova Scotia Environment (NSE). During the 1970s and 1980s, the government continued protecting water resources with a growing body of environmental legislation and programs.

Water management in the 1990s

In the 1990s, provincial attitudes towards water resources remained strong. In 1991, NSE published *Water for Nova Scotia: New Directions for Water Resource Management*. This was a final report for the Minister's Clean Water Task Force. It was followed by the 1992 *Sustainable Development Strategy for Nova Scotia*. This ultimately led to the 1995 *Environment Act*. This Act replaced the *Water Act* of 1919 and gave primary authority for water resources to the minister of NSE. The department is now responsible for managing water resources, allocating water, and charging fees for water use. It gets input from other departments, agencies, and the public to help with the task.

In addition to the *Environment Act*, the province developed the *Water Resources Protection Act* in 2000, prohibiting the bulk removal of water from Nova Scotia. In 2002, the province released *A Drinking Water Strategy for Nova Scotia*. It focused on strengthening the protection of municipal and public drinking water supplies. This strategy laid the foundation for a more comprehensive approach to managing all water resources in the province.

EGSPA and the water strategy

In 2007, all members of the legislature passed the *Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act* (EGSPA). The act sets specific targets for Nova Scotia so that by 2020, it will have one of the cleanest and most sustainable environments in the world, including its water resources. One of the targets is to develop a comprehensive strategy for water resource management by 2010.

An interdepartmental water management committee, led by NSE, was formed to oversee development of the water strategy. Since April 2007, the committee and NSE have undertaken extensive consultation with the public, Mi'kmaq, municipalities, key stakeholders and government in order to develop the strategy.

In early 2008, NSE released a discussion paper called *Towards a Water Resource Management Strategy for Nova Scotia*. Using this paper, NSE held 14 public consultation sessions around the province to discuss the possible content of the water strategy. The results of the sessions and written feedback from individuals and stakeholders were compiled in a summary document called *What We Heard: A Public Feedback Report*.

In early 2010, Nova Scotia held targeted consultation sessions, this time with Mi'kmaq and key stakeholder groups including municipalities, health professionals, non-governmental organizations, and industry. These consultations were to obtain feedback on a document called *Options for a water resource management strategy for Nova Scotia*.

NSE used information from these consultations to help form the content of this document—*Water for Life: Nova Scotia's water resource management strategy*. This strategy from the provincial government is a significant commitment to protect water resources in Nova Scotia for years to come.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

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