



## Unlikely partners support each other in journey towards sustainability

**HALIFAX, NS** – What do Atlantic Canada's largest municipality, a credit union, a spiritual group, and an international consulting company have in common? Usually, not very much. But these organizations are just some of the diverse partners that have worked together over the last year as part of the **Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative**.

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI) is a collaborative project that supports project partners in better understanding the challenges and opportunities of sustainability and in moving their respective organizations toward more sustainable solutions, using The Natural Step framework as a guide. It is the only regional, multi-sector sustainability project in North America, bringing together partners who would not normally be working together to share ideas and support each other in their journeys towards sustainability.

The ACSI recently celebrated the successful completion of its first year of training and capacity-building with a group of 13 Sustainability Partners. Committed Sustainability Partners who have signed the ACSI Project Charter, committing their organization to taking action on sustainability, are:

- Aliant (Atlantic)
- Bathurst Sustainable Development (NB)
- Halifax Shambhala Centre (NS)
- Jacques Whitford Ltd. (Atlantic)
- P'lovers, the Environmental Store (NS)
- Stewardship and Outreach section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NS)
- Town of Stratford (PE)
- Antigonish Sustainable Development (NS)
- Halifax Regional Municipality (NS)
- iNova Credit Union (NS)
- Just Us! Coffee Roasters (NS)
- City of Saint John (NB)
- Town of Wolfville (NS)

These varied organizations have worked together over the last year, attending intensive training sessions, working with coaches to embed sustainability into their organizations, creating a collaborative network to support each other, and serving as role models and champions for sustainability in their sectors. While the partner organizations varied in size, sector, geographical location, and level of knowledge about sustainability prior to starting the project, they were all able to learn from and support one another through the sometimes challenging process of making their organizations more sustainable.

Some of the accomplishments of the partners include:

- Educating and building awareness, both internally among staff, and externally with other partners and stakeholders.
- Shifting towards integrating sustainability thinking into decision-making: several organizations have developed sustainability filters to ensure sustainability factors are taken into account in the decision-making process.
- Partners conducted a baseline analysis of their operations and identified areas for short-term and long-term action.

Although excellent progress has been made in the last year, the sustainability journey is a long-term process. ACSI Sustainability Partners have all committed to continue working on improving their organizational sustainability. Sustainability Partners and other supporters and stakeholders



in the ACSI network also plan to continue working together, sharing ideas and information, and most importantly of all, to continue growing the ACSI network by bringing in new partner organizations.

“Sustainability is the greatest challenge of our time,” says the Director of the Centre for Rural Sustainability and Sustainability Partner coach, Dr. John Colton. “It is by working collaboratively, as the diverse organizations that the ACSI partners represent have all done in the last year, that we will make Atlantic Canada one of the healthiest, most vibrant, and most sustainable regions in the world.”

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**Note that interviews may be scheduled with individual partner organizations as well.**

**For more information, please contact:**

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#### **About the Centre for Rural Sustainability**

The Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS) is a community non-profit organization that facilitates learning, planning, and strategic decision making around issues of long-term and short-term sustainability for rural Nova Scotia communities. The organization envisions a not-too-distant future where the financially stable economies of rural communities are fuelled by ecologically sustainable means that foster quality of life, social justice, and health. See [www.ruralsustainability.org](http://www.ruralsustainability.org) for more information.

For more information about The Natural Step, please see [www.naturalstep.ca](http://www.naturalstep.ca).



## Background on the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative

A grass-roots network of municipalities, businesses and NGOs are part of a regional initiative in Atlantic Canada to better understand the challenges and opportunities of sustainability and to move the region toward sustainable solutions. The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative ([www.atlanticsustainability.ca](http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca)) is a collaborative project designed to build capacity and momentum around sustainability in Atlantic Canada using The Natural Step framework as a guide.

This is a year-long project with 3 key milestones. The project opened with a launch dinner on Monday, May 14, followed by a training and networking workshop, Strategic Sustainability: Helping Atlantic Canada Move Toward Sustainable Development, on May 15-16, 2007 at Oak Island Resort. This workshop provided participants with awareness, understanding and a common language of sustainability, and the tools needed to begin addressing these issues at the both the organizational and regional levels.

The first workshop is followed by some “homework” for participating organizations, as well as some individual coaching from The Natural Step Canada. November 13-14, 2007, participants reconvened in Moncton, New Brunswick for a second workshop, Sustainability in Action: Sharing, Learning and Implementation for Sustainability, to discuss their progress, share success stories, and increase their knowledge in key areas.

Homework and coaching followed the November workshop, leading up to the ACSI Regional Sustainability Summit, which took place April 17-18, 2008 at White Point Beach in Nova Scotia. The Summit celebrated the successes of the 13 ACSI Sustainability Partners over the last year, provided further learning for participants, and helped to promote the ACSI as a network. It also engaged new organizations in the ACSI network.

The 14 partner organizations (Sustainability Partners) participating in this capacity-building program include municipalities, large and small businesses, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

The Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative is coordinated by the Centre for Rural Sustainability, a non-profit organization that works with grassroots groups, educators, youth, and community leaders to nourish the growth of sustainable communities and economies in Nova Scotia. For more information, please see [www.ruralsustainability.org](http://www.ruralsustainability.org).

### Helpful website links:

ACSI website: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/>

Workshop # 1, Strategic Sustainability: Helping Atlantic Canada Move Toward Sustainable Development: <http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#wkshp1>

Workshop # 2, Sustainability in Action: Sharing, Learning and Implementation for Sustainability: [www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#wkshp2](http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#wkshp2)

ACSI Regional Sustainability Summit:

[www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#summit](http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/events/prevEvents.htm#summit)

ACSI Sustainability Partners: [www.atlanticsustainability.ca/partners/partners.htm](http://www.atlanticsustainability.ca/partners/partners.htm)



## ACSI Sustainability Partners

The ACSI has 13 Sustainability Partners. Each Sustainability Partner signed a Project Charter (see a copy of the Project Charter below in Appendix B), committing their organization to taking action on sustainability. The 13 organizations that completed the year as sustainability organizations are:

### **Aliant**

Environmental protection is a vital part of doing business at Aliant. We are committed to minimizing the impact of our activities and operations on the environment while working to create a sustainable future by integrating long-term economic, environmental, and social considerations into the way we operate our business.

Contact: Marcus Goodick, [Marcus.Goodick@aliant.ca](mailto:Marcus.Goodick@aliant.ca)

Website: [www.bell.aliant.ca](http://www.bell.aliant.ca)

### **Antigonish Sustainable Development**

Antigonish Sustainable Development seeks to assist our community to identify and set goals related to sustainable development, and to come up with a framework required for success.

Contact: Kuli Malhotra, [kmalhotra.asdp@gmail.com](mailto:kmalhotra.asdp@gmail.com)

### **Bathurst Sustainable Development**

The concern for quality of life and water quality in our watershed led to the establishment of the Bathurst Sustainable Development Project in mid-July 1995. The overall objective of the project was to set up a long-term mechanism for the communication and action among government, business and the community. The project also encouraged residents to take a more active part in mitigating the impact of watershed effluent in the Nepisiguit Drainage Basin and addressing Climate Change. Bathurst Sustainable Development is a non-profit organization.

Contact: Brenda Kelley, [rosewood@nb.aibn.com](mailto:rosewood@nb.aibn.com)

Website: [www.bathurstsustainabledevelopment.com](http://www.bathurstsustainabledevelopment.com)

### **Halifax Regional Municipality**

Halifax Regional Municipality, the capital of Nova Scotia, is committed to being a "healthy sustainable vibrant community" and is proud to be the one of the founding partners of the Atlantic Canada Sustainability Initiative (ACSI).

Contact: Stephen King, [kings@halifax.ca](mailto:kings@halifax.ca)

Website: [www.halifax.ca](http://www.halifax.ca)

### **Halifax Shambhala Centre**

The Halifax Shambhala Centre is the local centre of Shambhala, an international community dedicated to meditation practice and to the establishment of enlightened society inspired by basic goodness. Halifax is the capital city of Shambhala's worldwide centres.

Contact: Richard Peisinger, [rpeisinger@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:rpeisinger@ns.sympatico.ca)

Website: [halifax.shambhala.org/sustainability/index.html](http://halifax.shambhala.org/sustainability/index.html)



### **iNova Credit Union**

On April 1, 1936 twelve postal employees met on a porch on Parker St. in Halifax and formed the Halifax District Postal Credit Union Ltd. It was founded to give postal workers a place to save and obtain loans. After two name changes and another 70 years iNova Credit Union now serves the entire community.

Contact: Willy Robinson, [wrobinson@inovacreditunion.coop](mailto:wrobinson@inovacreditunion.coop)

Website: [www.nspostalcreditunion.com](http://www.nspostalcreditunion.com)

### **Jacques Whitford Ltd.**

Jacques Whitford Limited is a Nova Scotia based leader in environmental, engineering, scientific and planning consulting, dedicated to resolving challenges in the natural and built environments. For more than 35 years, our mission has been to listen and learn from our clients as the basis for delivering exceptional customized, value-added solutions. Our focus has always been on earth and environment, so it is natural that our commitment has evolved to place sustainability at the heart of everything we do internally, and with clients.

Contact: Brent MacDonald, [Brent.MacDonald@JacquesWhitford.com](mailto:Brent.MacDonald@JacquesWhitford.com) or Ian Houseal, [ian.houseal@JacquesWhitford.com](mailto:ian.houseal@JacquesWhitford.com)

Website: [www.jacqueswhitford.com](http://www.jacqueswhitford.com)

### **Just Us! Coffee Roasters**

Just Us! Coffee Roasters Co-op is Canada's first Fair Trade coffee roaster. We are also one of Canada's most successful worker-owned businesses based on a firm belief in "people and the planet before profits". Fair Trade is an innovative model for international trade, which offers not only a fair price, but respect and empowerment for Third World producers. All Just Us! products – coffee, tea, chocolate and sugar – are grown naturally, without chemicals, to enhance the well-being of farmers, their communities, the environment and wild-life.

Contact: Debra Moore, [deb@justuscoffee.com](mailto:deb@justuscoffee.com)

Website: [www.justuscoffee.com](http://www.justuscoffee.com)

### **P'lovers, the Environmental Store**

P'lovers Environmental Store was created in 1992 in Halifax to help people live in harmony with the earth. At P'lovers, we believe that the actions of each and every one of us can positively affect the quality of the world in which we live.

Contact: Liz Crocker, [crockerbrainliz@eastlink.ca](mailto:crockerbrainliz@eastlink.ca)

Website: [www.plovers.net](http://www.plovers.net)

### **City of Saint John**

The City of Saint John's process of continuous improvement called Vision 2015 Program of Excellence is underway. This program is a multi-year undertaking of planning, projects, and change strategy designed to set a clear and attainable course of action to align the services delivered by the City of Saint John to community goals and objectives.

Contact: Andrew Beckett, [andrew.beckett@saintjohn.ca](mailto:andrew.beckett@saintjohn.ca)

Website: [www.saintjohn.ca](http://www.saintjohn.ca)



### **Stewardship and Outreach Section, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources**

Primarily through education programs, the Stewardship and Outreach Section of the Department of Natural Resources promotes sustainable natural resource use and management to youth, woodland owners, hunters, trappers, guides, Christmas tree growers, other groups and the general public. It is a part of the Operations Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources.

Contact: Tim Whynot, [WHYNOTTW@gov.ns.ca](mailto:WHYNOTTW@gov.ns.ca)

Website: [www.gov.ns.ca/natr/extension](http://www.gov.ns.ca/natr/extension)

### **Town of Stratford**

Stratford, Prince Edward Island, is a new community incorporated in 1995 through the amalgamation of several small farming and summer cottage communities. Though new in name, the area was first settled by Acadians in the 1750s. Farming, shipbuilding and brickmaking were its original industries.

Contact: Doug Deacon, [DDeacon@town.stratford.pe.ca](mailto:DDeacon@town.stratford.pe.ca)

Website: [www.town.stratford.pe.ca](http://www.town.stratford.pe.ca)

### **Town of Wolfville**

Several years ago the Town of Wolfville and the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS) embarked on a collaborative partnership known as the Wolfville Sustainability Initiative (WSI). This initiative sparked exploration of The Natural Step framework and other strategic planning tools concerned with long term community vitality and viability. These early efforts laid the ground work for future planning projects and helped to create an environment that fostered acceptance by both management and Council, for the importance of community planning and development from a sustainability perspective

Contact: Karen Dempsey, [kdempsey@town.wolfville.ns.ca](mailto:kdempsey@town.wolfville.ns.ca)

Website: [www.town.wolfville.ns.ca](http://www.town.wolfville.ns.ca)



## **Press Conference Speakers**

John Colton, Chair, Centre for Rural Sustainability

Marcus Goodick, Manager, Environment & Sustainability, Aliant

Kuli Malhotra, Executive Director, Antigonish Sustainable Development

Mayor Kay Chisholm, Town of Antigonish

Stephen King, Manager of Environmental Performance, Halifax Regional Municipality

Cathie O'Toole, Director, Infrastructure and Asset Management, Halifax Regional Municipality

Richard Peisinger, Halifax Shambhala Centre

Willy Robinson, General Manager, iNova Credit Union

Ian Houseal, Sustainability Planner, Jacques Whitford Ltd.