



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.

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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 for more information.

For more information about The Natural Step, please see www.naturalstep.ca.