

Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan for Gros Morne Communities

Final Report



Prepared for
Gros Morne Cooperating Association,
the Communities of Gros Morne,
and Gros Morne National Park of Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the average person generates approximately two kilograms of garbage per day resulting in over 400,000 tonnes of solid waste produced annually. Municipalities in rural areas with variable physical geography, large travel distances, and limited capital resources to invest alone in an engineered sanitary landfill, face a key challenge as they strive to construct sustainable communities. Newfoundland and Labrador published a Provincial Waste Management Strategy in 2002 with the following goals: diverting 50% of the materials currently going to disposal by 2010; reducing the number of waste disposal sites by 80%; eliminating open burning at disposal sites; decommissioning incinerators; and phasing out unlined landfill sites. The following report offers an analysis of ways in which a locally-administered and integrated solid waste management strategy could be implemented in the Gros Morne area.

The area encompasses Gros Morne National Park of Canada and the Park adjacent communities of Trout River, Woody Point, Glenburnie – Birchy Head – Shoal Brook, Norris Point, Rocky Harbour, Sally's Cove, St. Paul's, Cow Head, and Parson's Pond. A population of 4,312 resides locally and is represented by eight town councils. Currently, this area is serviced by 3 landfills and one incinerator. One landfill is reaching capacity and open burning of garbage occurs at the other sites. No coordinated recycling and composting programme yet has been established. While Gros Morne is considered an icon of the Province, and the area is seen as an international heritage and nature-based tourism destination, tourism does bring additional challenges from the standpoint of waste management. Last year, 160,000 people visited Gros Morne National Park of Canada. 112,000 of these visitors were from out of Province. Total revenue generated in the Province directly associated to tourism in the Gros Morne area was approximately \$35.3 million. While tourism is vital to the local economy, it leads to a substantial increase in volume of waste generated.

Developing a regionally-based and integrated strategy became an agenda item in for the Forum of Mayors from Gros Morne National Park adjacent communities in 2003. In 2004, research was conducted with area businesses associated in some way to tourism. Findings provided some local baseline information and highlighted both the challenges and priorities of waste management for the business sector. In partnership with the Gros Morne Cooperating Association (GMCA), all 8 communities applied to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund for assistance in developing an integrated solid waste management strategy and business plan. Entitled *Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan for Gros Morne Communities*, project implementation began in June 2005. Local communities, Parks Canada, and the GMCA contributed with both financial and in-kind support. Intervale Associates, Inc. provided the consulting services for the project, the activities of which are detailed in the following report.

In line with the objectives outlined in the Newfoundland and Labrador Waste Management Strategy (2002), the sub-regional strategy for Gros Morne aims to significantly reduce waste transferred to landfills through waste minimization (education and incentive mechanisms) and waste reduction and diversion (enforcement of disposal bans, household hazardous waste separation, increased recycling and composting). The communities of Gros Morne will benefit in multiple ways from a sub-regional integrated solid waste management strategy:

- The strategy will prepare local towns and allow them to adjust incrementally to Provincial waste management standards and regulations as these become implemented.
- Improved waste management will help sustain the Gros Morne area as a sustainable tourism destination.
- The waste management strategy will serve as a catalyst for further environmental education efforts targeting both residents and visitors alike.



- The strategy will improve the environmental health and the quality of life for local residents including reducing soil, water, and air pollution through the diversion of hazardous products and organic waste contributing to leachate and through the elimination of burning.
- The landfill life-span will be extended through the diversion of recyclables and organics away from the waste stream.
- Jobs related to waste management will be created.
- Area aesthetics important to local residents and to the heritage and nature-based tourism sectors will be maintained.
- Municipalities will be able to share costs associated to an integrated management system.
- The area will have the opportunity to become a model region in the Province in working to establish more sustainable communities.

The proposed strategy is divided into 3 stages, starting in the short-term and then moving to longer-term changes. It is estimated that the transition will occur incrementally over 4 – 5 years. In stage 1, communities request endorsement by the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs as a formal waste management sub-region under the Provincial Waste Management Strategy and falling within the Western Region. Stage 2 focuses on temporary improvements at current sites, promoting public education, and advancing waste reduction and diversion activities locally. In Stage 3, the sub-region makes the transition to a consolidated landfill site with curb-side collection services for both garbage and recyclables. Public education remains a core component. Operations are centralized and revenue sources pooled to aid in providing public services. Stage 3 puts forward a tipping fee system for businesses. Since businesses generate more waste than households, adopting tipping fees will ensure that residents do not pay more than their share. Initiatives targeting the business sector and promoting creative waste reduction methods and cost savings are incorporated into the overall strategy. Tipping fees also will aid in covering the cost of properly maintaining a landfill and upholding the environmental standards being finalized by the Department of Environment. During the implementation of stages 2 and 3, the sub-regional committee applies for Authority status under the Service Board Act.

The following report provides a background to waste management in Newfoundland and Labrador, a description of the Gros Morne area, its current waste management systems, and the associated challenges and priorities. This is followed by a summary of the project design and activities. The third section outlines the proposed integrated solid waste management plan and presents an estimated budget. Finally, the fourth section provides information on future steps and funding opportunities.

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