



green tourism

in newfoundland and labrador

Going Green: Know Your Space

No matter the nature of your operations, they are having an effect on the ecosystem directly surrounding your business. This can include wildlife, vegetation, water quality, air quality, etc. As most tourism operations in Newfoundland and Labrador depend at least in part on the beauty and scenery offered by nature, it is important for the long term sustainability of the industry for business owners to consider and understand what the environmental effects of their operations are.

AN EXAMPLE

Imagine a B&B which was visited often because of its proximity to a hiking trail. Over time, heavy use and sub-standard hiking practices have left the trail barren, with wildlife scared away and garbage to be seen at every turn. Suddenly the attraction the B&B relied on is no longer of interest. Though the environmental impact was not directly caused by actions of the B&B, it was contributed to by the increased traffic and activities in the area which the B&B generated.

This is just one example where an increase in tourism can have unforeseen and undesirable effects on the environment and the sustainability of the tourism itself. Had the owners considered the possible impacts of their business from the beginning, they would have had a better chance at maintaining the long term prosperity of their business as their patrons would still be able to enjoy the trail today.

Below are aspects of your business to consider when determining its environmental impact.

➤ BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Whether you operate a boat tour, a bed and breakfast, a restaurant, or a ski hill, you are having a direct impact on your local environment. Your environmental impacts can affect your surrounding air quality, water quality (ocean, fresh water, and ground water), noise levels, water use, waste generation, and energy consumption.

➤ CUSTOMER ACTIVITIES

An indirect impact of your business on the environment is through the activities of the customers you service. In the bed and breakfast scenario above, the business itself was not causing damage to the trail, however the customers which it attracted to the area were. As a result, the long term sustainability of the business is threatened.

➤ THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

If your operation includes the use of buildings or structures, they too can have an environmental impact. Inefficient or poorly designed buildings can waste significant amounts of energy. As energy use directly contributes to your bottom line, it is in your interest to ensure your structures are built properly or that appropriate upgrades are made. Even your property's landscaping should be considered. Poor landscaping can directly affect local hydrology and contribute to the degradation of your water quality.

➤ ACCIDENTS

You understand the environmental implications of your regular business activities, but it is also prudent to consider the implications of accident during the normal course of operations. We hope for the best, but it is important to plan for when things go wrong as well. How likely is an accident in your business activities? How environmentally damaging would an accident be? Do you have a plan in place to deal with accident? An accident could be bad for the environment, but the damages caused won't be good for business either.

➤ LOCATION

The severity of the impact your business is having can depend on your location. If you operate near an environmentally sensitive area, such as freshwater, a wetland, or the home of wildlife, the repercussions of your business activities can be significantly greater. The same is true if you are close to a park, protected area, or a geological, historic, or cultural feature of interest.

➤ CLIMATE CHANGE

It is important to not just consider how your business may affect the environment, but also *how the environment may affect your business*. Climate change studies in Newfoundland and Labrador predict sea levels will rise, extreme weather will be more frequent, seasonal weather conditions will change, and there will be more flooding and coastal erosion. The results of the changing climate may threaten your business activities, and it would be prudent to prepare.

NEXT STEPS

You have identified areas where your business may be impacting the environment. You have identified threats to your business *from* the changing environment. So how can these effects be mitigated? There is no one-size-fits-all-environments solution. Your business, and its effects, are unique. Continue reading for information on local organizations which excellent resources on business sustainability strategies and solutions.

