

June 2, 2009

Celebrating Newfoundland and Labrador's Environmental Leaders

Environmental leadership in Newfoundland and Labrador was highlighted today when the Newfoundland and Labrador 20th Annual Environmental Awards were presented by the Honourable Charlene Johnson, Minister of Environment and Conservation; Mike Samson, Interim Chair and CEO, Multi-Materials Stewardship Board (MMSB); and Barbara Taylor, President, Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes.

"Today's event marks an opportunity to showcase the accomplishments of our environmental leaders and to say thank-you for their dedication and efforts," said Minister Johnson. "This year's winners demonstrate tremendous ingenuity and determination, and I congratulate them and encourage them to continue to be extraordinary role models for others."

The Environmental Awards is an annual celebration of environmental achievements in Newfoundland and Labrador. The awards raise awareness of the individuals, groups and businesses that are taking action to protect and sustain Newfoundland and Labrador's environment. In addition to being celebrated at the awards ceremony, each of the winners also received a \$1,000 honorarium from the MMSB to go towards furthering their own environmental projects or to donate to an environmental cause of their choice. This year's winners were selected from more than 75 nominations.

This year's winners are:

- Individual: Geneva Woodward
- Community Group or Organization: Deer Lake Community Improvements Committee
- Youth, Youth Group or School: Youth for Environmental Awareness (YEA!)
- Municipality or Regional Waste Management Committee: Town of Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook
- Business or Industry Leader: The Sprout
- Lifetime Achievement: Robert O'Brien

"The MMSB is honored, once again, to be involved in recognizing our province's environmental leaders," said Mr. Samson. "Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have made it known that the environment is a top priority. We should all be proud of the environmental initiative taken by this year's winners – they are committed to helping protect, preserve and sustain our environment and they are influencing others in their respective communities to take action."

"Daily, we become more aware of the need to protect our environment. Our future and our children's futures depend on the ways we respond to the need to sustain our basic elements of earth, water and air. Each of us has a part to play, be it physical or vocal," said Ms. Taylor. "The Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes congratulates this year's winners. The diversity and originality of the projects that citizens throughout the province are participating in show an increased awareness of the needs and advantages gained by becoming environmentally active."

Minister Johnson also recognized Mr. Robert O'Brien on receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award. This award is given to an individual who is committed to environmental stewardship and has made a significant lifetime contribution to environmental protection and sustainability.

"Mr. O'Brien's environmental spirit and lifelong dedication to marine conservation in Newfoundland and Labrador is to be commended," said Minister Johnson. "I extend my deepest congratulations to him for the environmental contributions that he has made to ocean conservation and sustainability in Newfoundland and Labrador."

The Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Awards Program is a joint initiative sponsored by the Department of Environment and Conservation, the MMSB and the Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Institutes.

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BACKGROUNDER

Newfoundland and Labrador 2009 Environmental Award Winners

Geneva Woodward

Ms. Woodward is most known for her tireless work and dedication to protecting the Limestone Barrens habitat, especially the species at risk plant Long's Braya and other rare plants. She is a member of the Limestone Barrens Species at Risk Recovery Team, and plays an instrumental role in decisions being made regarding plant species at risk on the limestone barrens of the Great Northern Peninsula. As principal of Straits Elementary, Ms. Woodward was one of the driving forces behind the signing of the 2002 Stewardship Agreement between Straits Elementary, the Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The agreement was the first of its kind in Canada and the school won an environmental award for it in 2004 in the School or Educational Institution Category. Ms. Woodward was also one of the key forces behind efforts to have Sandy Cove designated as a Provisional Ecological Reserve.

Youth for Environmental Awareness (YEA!)

YEA! was founded by a group of young people in Baie Verte in 2006 and is dedicated to raising awareness of environmental issues in the community. Its most recent initiative is a campaign to make Baie Verte the first idle-free community in Newfoundland and Labrador, which involves businesses and organizations proclaiming their premises as idle-free zones. The group is committed to educating the public about harmful greenhouse gases that are released into the atmosphere from idling vehicles. YEA! has also partnered with a local grocery store to promote the use of reusable bags and teamed up with a local Sears outlet to help promote a catalogue recycling program. Other planned projects include household battery recycling drives, tire pressure clinics, and shoreline clean-ups.

Deer Lake Community Improvements Committee

The Deer Lake Community Improvements Committee is a sub-committee of the Town of Deer Lake that has been in operation for over 10 years. Most recently, the committee established a Community Compost Program that has proven to be very successful. A big part of establishing the program included carrying out extensive research on composting, visiting compost sites in other towns and consulting with residents involved in backyard composting. Since the opening of a community compost site, the amount of curbside garbage in the town has been reduced. This, in turn, has reduced the amount of waste going to the local landfill. The Community Improvements Committee has also been involved in beach clean-ups, integrated

pest management promotion, trail development, and an initiative with Green Streets Canada that has resulted in over 100 native trees being planted throughout the town.

Town of Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook

Situated within the boundaries of Gros Morne National Park, the Town of Glenburnie-Birchy Head-Shoal Brook has been involved in a number of environmental efforts, including the passing of a motion in 2007 to declare the town a sustainable community. The town also adopted the David Suzuki Nature Challenge in 2007 – the first community in Canada to do so. As well, the town passed a motion to prohibit the cosmetic use of pesticides and herbicides on gardens and lawns, making it the first municipality in Newfoundland and Labrador to implement such a by-law. The town has participated in a number of environmental activities such as distribution of compost bins and reusable shopping bags to residents; introduction of an LED Christmas lights initiative; energy audits; beach clean-ups; community gardens; tree plantings; removal of car wrecks; and purchase of a dishwasher and reusable dishes for the recreation centre. The town also played an instrumental role in the Sustainable Tourism Accord signed last year between the seven municipalities adjacent to Gros Morne National Park, Parks Canada and the Gros Morne Institute of Sustainable Tourism. The first initiatives under this accord will be an idle-free and a re-usable bags campaign that got underway on June 1, 2009 in all seven communities.

The Sprout

Since opening four years ago, The Sprout restaurant has implemented innovative programs that help lessen its impact on the environment and reduce waste by approximately 60 per cent. Each week, the restaurant throws out only about six bags of garbage, compared to its 12 bags of recycled material like cans, plastics, cardboard and paper. Given that as much as 70 per cent of all waste from restaurants is food waste, The Sprout fills approximately four 40-litre containers weekly, drastically reducing the amount of organic waste going to the landfill. The nutrient rich organic soil that is created from the composting is given to local farmers to use. It also has approximately 300 units of refundable glass recycling a week. The restaurant also reuses a number of items such as boxes for storage and paper from food catalogues, and it minimizes the amount of waste it produces through such actions as reducing the packaging on items served to customers and buying in bulk. Reusable bags are also used to pick up groceries and products for the restaurant instead of plastic bags. The Sprout also utilizes environmentally sound take-out containers, bio-degradable bags and 100 per cent post-consumer waste napkins and paper towels. It also buys local products that not only benefit the local economy, but also help to reduce harmful CO2 emissions.

Robert O'Brien

Robert O'Brien is the founder of Ocean Net – a non-profit organization committed to the conservation of marine environments in Newfoundland and Labrador and the cleanup of shorelines around the province. Mr. O'Brien founded Ocean Net in 1997 and, to date, he has inspired over 32,000 volunteers to clean up over 1,600 beaches, shorelines and underwater sites across the province, removing over 500,000 kilograms of garbage. Through Mr. O'Brien's efforts and commitment to sustained conservation awareness, the Provincial Government designated every third Friday in September as annual Ocean Net Day. He has been recognized regionally and nationally for his environmental work through such awards as Earth Day Canada Hometown Hero Award, 2007; Recognition Award, Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philips, 2007; Doug Wheeler Tourism Award, Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, 2006; Recognition Award, United Nations Environment Program, 2002; Newfoundland and Labrador Environmental Award (individual category), Department of Environment and Conservation/MMSB/Women's Institute, 2000 and Canadian Geographic Conservation Award, 2000.