

AHOI Report Reveals Serious Gaps in Western Newfoundland's Waste Management System

We can't recycle our way out of this mess - big changes needed to end this plastic crisis

FOR RELEASE

Norris Point, NL, March 16, 2022 – A new report by Atlantic Healthy Oceans Initiative (AHOI) highlights serious gaps in western Newfoundland's waste management system. The report lists **more than two dozen actionable steps** that businesses, towns, parks, and key players in the waste management system can take to reduce or eliminate plastic pollution from entering our landfill and environment, including river and ocean systems.

The findings documented in the report called, "Assessing the Waste Management System in the Gros Morne Region" come from research conducted by AHOI's Plastic Team and Julia Fracassi, a talented intern from the Master of Arts in Environmental Policy program at Grenfell Campus - Memorial University. Fracassi performed an in-depth analysis of the research using a Functional Resonance Analysis Method (FRAM) model, which analyzes the functions of a system and highlights gaps and areas where opportunities for improvement exist.

"Since 2019 we have been conducting coastal clean-up audits and research on plastic pollution and we realized there are still a lot of unknowns, such as 'what happens to our plastic waste?' and 'how effectively is it getting recycled?' Without these answers we cannot make recommendations regarding the use of plastics because we don't know how they impact our environment, communities, and other areas of the world, especially once they leave the island." says Rebecca Brushett, ED of AHOI.

Recycling in the Gros Morne region is relatively new and while it is a method to divert plastic waste, the likelihood of it combating the plastic pollution crisis is limited since **only 9% of plastics get recycled**¹ and **Canada is the world's second highest user of plastics on a per person basis**². As plastic pollution continuously increases, communities are faced with major challenges to reduce their waste generation. AHOI's report and focus was to identify the gaps and necessary steps needed to eliminate or divert plastic waste out of our landfills and into a more circular system.

AHOI secured funding through the Department of Environment and Climate Change Canada's Zero Plastic Waste Initiative to help move the Gros Morne region towards a more circular economy. A portion of this project involved AHOI reviewing government

¹See Oceana Report <https://oceana.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/18/Exposed-Amazon-enormous-and-rapidly-growing-plastic-pollution-problem-2021.pdf>

² See The International Energy Agency: <https://www.iea.org/data-and-statistics/charts/per-capita-demand-for-major-plastics-in-selected-countries-in-2015>

reports, conducting jurisdictional scans of comparable waste systems, and connecting with residents, businesses, various waste management authorities, the 7 local municipalities and Gros Morne National Park, to identify target areas of plastic pollution that could be fixed. The robust body of research created a holistic map of the waste management system in the Gros Morne region.

“In order to identify gaps and opportunities for increased waste diversion, we had to look at every aspect of this complex system, from the moment a business or consumer purchases a product to the moment it is recycled or sent to the landfill. Where waste ends up is influenced by many factors.” says AHOI Plastic Program Coordinator, Jackie Bauman.

The overall report reveals many gaps in our system including the **lack of transparency** for end-market use of recyclables, **poor compliance** by residents and businesses, **lack of enforcement** against non-compliance and illegal dumping, **lack of accountability** of waste haulers, as well as **disjointed decision-making** and **poor public outreach**.

The report goes on to identify solutions to address these gaps and help create a system resilient enough to function despite instances of human error and non-compliance.

These recommendations, which can be scaled to the provincial level, include but are not limited to:

- Install washing stations at waste facilities and where possible, place recycling bins near water sources where plastics can be rinsed to prevent contamination and improve their recyclability.
- Install informative signage on trails and high-traffic areas to reduce littering and unnecessary plastic use.
- Improve education and outreach materials for communities and visitors to the province.
- Increase Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) programs to ensure the producers of plastic packaging are responsible for the waste they create.
- Replace single-use plastics with compostable and reusable alternatives in the food service industry and at public events.

Plastic and other mis-managed waste impacts wildlife, poses health risks to communities, and overburdens municipalities with waste fees. If big changes are not made to create a strong waste management system, we will never be able to move towards a sustainable, circular economy and we will continue seeing the impacts our waste has on our communities, environment and ocean that sustains them, for generations to come.

For more information, please contact:

Tara Howse, Logistics and Communications Coordinator, AHOI
ahoi.info@gmail.com

(709) 899-2468

BACKGROUND

AHOI was created in 2019 and is located in Gros Morne, NL. It collaborates with various parties to protect the long-term health of our oceans while promoting innovative ways to grow sustainable coastal communities in western NL. AHOI's work aligns with the NL government's 2025 target to reduce waste by 50%, and with the Canadian government's Strategy on Zero Plastic Waste and the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan through landfill emissions reduction.

AHOI has several initiatives including but not limited to, a sustainable take-out pilot program that helps businesses replace plastic food ware with compostable or reusable containers; it introduced the Blue W program to the region, helping eliminate single-use water bottles by allowing members of the public to refill their water bottles with safe drinking water for free. It also conducts beach cleanups and waste audits in the region and national park, which helps to identify the types of plastic waste ending up on our shores, its sources, and solutions to combat it.

###