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SAINT JOHN, NB - Saint John Students Grapple with Harbour Issues

Students at Saint John High School and Woodlawn Learning Centre are getting up-close and personal with something Saint Johners hold dear: the Saint John Harbour and its environment.

Over the past few weeks, students have explored Harbour management issues through innovative classroom exercises, such as a mock stakeholders meeting to debate Harbour management strategies.

Local stakeholders came into the classroom to help give further insight to students about the ongoing problems facing the Saint John Harbour. Presenters included local lobster fishermen, Canaport LNG, the Saint John Waterfront Development Corporation, and the Saint John Port Authority. Issues discussed by the presenters included problems surrounding shipping-lane traffic and concerns regarding fishing gear loss.

Students played the roles of Saint John Port Authority, lobster fishermen, harbour industrial players, the City of Saint John and the federal departments of Transport Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. They debated issues that need more public discussion. Given what they learned through the meeting, students then worked on media assignments to communicate their perspectives on what can be improved in the operation of Saint John Harbour.

Velta Douglas, a Masters student at UNB's Faculty of Education, developed the program. She is very happy with the response:

"Studying local issues is a key element in environmental planning. The students took on positions that they normally wouldn't and put themselves in roles they may not have been so comfortable with. Yet each student rose to the challenge and this allowed for great debate and deliberation on the Harbour issues."

Ms. Douglas hopes this experience has helped students develop informed opinions about environmental management options in Saint John Harbour, building capacity in young people to plan and steward this vulnerable and strategic aquatic environment.

A short video clip is available on the school curriculum project. To view the clip, go to:
<http://vimeo.com/10908331>