

December 9, 2007

To The Nova Scotia Department of Energy,

Thank-you for taking the time to ask Nova Scotians how we want to be supplied with energy. Nova Scotia is built on a history of pioneers and people who were not afraid to work hard in order to do what is right. I believe that we should continue this tradition and that we should be proud of our abilities. We should work hard to establish an energy system that will provide us with power, but will not make us reliant on other countries, provinces or states. We should be establishing a system that improves the future of our children, not one that causes them economic, environmental and medical hardships.

The key to our economic success is a system that promotes competition because that is what will give Nova Scotians the most efficient, reliable and cost-effective source of power possible. Monopolies do not promote efficient economies and they do not allow consumers the ability to choose. You can see this with any consumer product. We do not have one company to choose from when it comes to telephones, cell phones, cable TV or home heating oil. Therefore, we should not have just one power company.

The future of Nova Scotia and all other provinces should be one where we have control of our own resources. We should not be reliant on others to provide us with energy from their resources, whether those resources are petroleum hydrocarbons, geothermal, wind, solar, or tidal. We should be able to harness energy from the cheapest sources available. The price of any resource should take all costs into consideration. This includes the cost of production, health and environmental costs, and the costs of distribution. When all of these costs are factored in renewable energy has a clear advantage over fossil fuels, both in the short and long term. We should not expect to stop using fossil fuels, but we should expect to reduce our reliance on them. I believe we can have a future where 40% of our power comes from renewable energy. You only need to look at the successes in Europe to see where we should be going.

The question is: How do we get there? We need a regulatory system that is open to innovation and competition. Nova Scotians should be free to produce as much renewable energy as is economically feasible and they should be able to sell it to whomever they wish. The standing-offer system in Ontario is a good example of how to accomplish this. Advanced renewable tariffs and feed laws will also play important parts.

As with any economic paradigm shift there is also a role for government to play in helping change the way people think. Nova Scotia has done a good job of this when it comes to home energy efficiency. However, we need to do more. Incentives have to be created for people to install solar panels, heat pumps and solar hot water heat. The current funding of 10% for solar hot water is not enough. Rebates of 30 - 50% would start to show some real results and changes in how people think. Guaranteed payments for energy produced from solar panels, similar to Ontario, but larger, would also cause people to switch the way they do business.

We also have to look at our current regulatory system and how we control resource use. For example, in the geothermal field we should be reducing the administrative burden and financial costs required to get an approval to withdraw groundwater. In areas where the resource is abundant and the risks to adverse impacts to the environment and other users of the resource is low, the work required to get an approval to withdraw groundwater should also be low. Your department should work with the Department of Environment to improve this system because there are benefits to both your areas of responsibility.

In summary, I would like to close with these comments:

Our economy and energy demand will require fossil fuels for some time

The long-term cost of wind and wave energy is lower than fossil fuels

To meet all of our energy demands, we need renewable energy

The government should remove legal obstacles to renewable energy

There are no limits to the amount of renewable energy available to use

Putting more wind power onto the grid will lower emission levels

Energy can be efficiently stored

Carbon sequestration is not a major solution

Nova Scotia is should be a leader in large-scale local clean energy sources

The opportunities to manufacture competitive renewable energy products in NS should not be limited

Renewable Energy will produce community benefits when Nova Scotians have the chance to participate in ownership of their resource

Renewable energy should be the focus of both the Energy and Climate Change strategies, as the only "sustainable" energy option

The real long-term cost of renewable energy is lower and far less volatile than fossil fuels

Although our current coal generation is considered "cheap", this does not consider the environmental or health costs associated with using it. The increasing focus on climate change guarantees the price of all fossil fuels will increase.

Sincerely,

Scott W. Lister
Halifax, NS