

To:

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Energy Strategy/Climate Change Action Plan
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From:

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This is my input as part of the public consultation process for Nova Scotia's Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan. My comments are organized under various headings.

The Economy and Energy/Climate

First and foremost, politicians and policy makers must embrace the fact that the economy is not a separate entity from energy issues and climate change. At this time, governments and business leaders must immediately change priorities within the present economic system. Eventually, a global economic paradigm shift will have to take place in order for humans and other species to survive and thrive. Ever-expanding economic growth ("infinite" economic growth) can no longer be the goals of governments and multi-national corporations. This demands a huge shift in our collective value system – including giving up our addiction to material goods (i.e. over-consumption of the earth's resources). It is beyond my ability to make specific suggestions as to how governments and business leaders need to change their economic priorities. Other people have expertise in this area.

Semantics

There are many words and phrases floating around at this time related to energy strategies and climate change plans. These words and phrases include the following: sustainable; green; alternative energy; environmental impacts; global warming; greenhouse gas; emissions reductions; emissions targets. These words and phrases being thrown around like balls in the hands of a juggler. Government leaders, business leaders, and policy makers must be clear about the words they use, and they must be clear about the definitions of these words and phrases.

For example, there is often disagreement with respect to the environmental impacts of a project or undertaking. Two parties might examine the impacts of a particular project. One party might classify the impacts as "significant" while another party might classify the very same impacts as "insignificant." The proposed quarry on Digby Neck exemplified this.

Another example can be found in the case of a liquid natural gas (LNG) and petrochemical production project, which is proposed for Goldboro, N.S. The proponents of the project state that the project is "sustainable." This is false. There is no way that importing LNG or producing plastics can be considered sustainable.

These examples highlight the need for alignment in both the use of terminology and in the definitions of terminology.

Nova Scotia Power Inc. Must Change

Ralph Surette said it succinctly in his recent column in The Chronicle Herald on December 01, 2007:

“The ultimate key energy matter involves electricity, and in reality nothing can change as long as policy is more or less dictated by Nova Scotia Power Inc., a private monopoly in the service of shareholders. And changing that is apparently not on the table.

“NSPI keeps making announcements. It will call for contracts for 240 megawatts of wind power, almost double what the government called for. It will spend millions for prototype tidal power units.

“This all sounds good, but in fact NSPI, almost by definition, remains wedded to a fossil fuels policy, and will bring on alternatives only insofar as they can be an adjunct to their coal generators, because keeping the dirty stuff going pays more (although it doesn't take into account the environmental costs).

“The best international reports (including that by Sir Nicholas Stern a year ago, which finally cracked the most recalcitrant skulls) all point out that NSPI-type command-and-control, in which tenders are called for large wind farms and other projects, does not give good results. The jurisdictions that have "feed-in" laws, also called standard offer contracts, in which even the smallest energy producers can sell power at set prices, are the leading ones. These are mostly European countries, but now Ontario has introduced the system and other provinces and U.S. states are moving into it.”

Get Tough with Business / Developers

Nova Scotia must clearly define its Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan with respect to development, especially industrial development. And, Nova Scotia must stick to its guns in seeing that the new energy and climate policy is enacted. Nova Scotia needs to clearly say to potential developers: “We are open for business, but only under these conditions....”

Nova Scotia clearly has the potential to become a leader in sustainable energy practices and practices which have a low impact on the earth's climate. But it will take strong leadership and firm policies to realize this potential.

The following is from a letter to the editor in The Chronicle Herald, November 20, 2007:

“Hopefully, our government officials will finally show some backbone and take a stand against international corporate pressure, influence and greed, and stand up for its own land and people.”
– Eugenie Wilkins, Sandy Cove

Supporting Community Initiatives and Small Business

Many individuals, organizations, and small businesses are working at the grassroots level (the local community level) to create efficient use of energy and to address climate change. They want changes now. They are fed up with waiting for policy changes at the top levels of government to trickle down to their specific situations. These local initiatives need to be acknowledged and supported by the all levels of government.

“People have begun to recognize that while we wait for the senior levels of government to update their plans to address global warming, the local decisions are the ones that will have the largest impact on the future health of our planet.”

– Nicholas Simons, MLA
Powell River-Sunshine Coast, British Columbia

The Hypocrisy Must End – the Case of Keltic

“Attempts must be made to stop the hypocrisy of politicians who mouth platitudes of publicly espousing green projects, but support an enormous environmental degradation such as an LNG facility.” – as stated by Andrew J. and Pam Mackenzie in a letter to the editor, Powell River Peak newspaper, dated 10/17/2007.

Keltic Petrochemicals Inc. is proposing to construct a liquid natural gas (LNG) and petrochemical plant on the coastline of Goldboro, Nova Scotia. The purpose of the petrochemical plant is to produce plastics.

This is a massive energy-related project for Nova Scotia that has been kept out of the realm of public awareness. How can Nova Scotians be expected to offer adequate input on an Energy Strategy and Climate Change Plan if they are not aware of what is going on in their own back yard?

Consider the following, which I quote from a resident of Goldboro:

“In Goldboro, we recycle. We get a rejection sticker if a bottle is placed in the wrong bag because that is harmful to the environment. We watch T.V. and read the news. We see all the ads pleading people to be aware of global warming and do all we can to help. We know about wind turbines, their benefits, and other sustainable options. We also know the agonizing reality of our air, water and soil becoming irreversibly destroyed if Keltic Petrochemicals Inc. is granted permission, from our very own "knowing" government, to build in Goldboro.

“How can our municipality say NO to a misplaced mustard bottle but say YES to greenhouse gas emissions, methyl mercury, contamination, methane, ethane, aldehydes, ketones, petroleum hydrocarbons, benzene, toluene, xylene, particulates, arsenic, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, chlorofluorocarbons, hydrochlorofluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, chloroform, and cancers?” [end of quote]

It is both unethical and hypocritical for the N.S. government to randomly approve new energy projects – including the Keltic project – before finalizing the new Energy Strategy and Climate Change Plan. Why has the government of Nova Scotia given its approval of this massive energy-related project, which is not sustainable?

Approval of this project by the government means the government is catering to corporate interests at the expense of energy strategies, climate change plans, public safety, and the environment. Perhaps the same can be said for other developments. I am highlighting the Keltic project because I am familiar with it.

Furthermore, the government needs to formulate a coastal management plan as part of the Climate Change Plan.

Furthermore, the imported liquid natural gas is largely not intended for use in Nova Scotia by Nova Scotians. Most – or all? – of it will be piped to the northeastern United States. What kind of energy strategy is this? This is not an energy strategy. It is a sick economic strategy, catering to multi-national corporations.

Furthermore, why is the Nova Scotia government endorsing a plastics production facility? A petrochemical production plant is a toxic operation, contributing to climate change. Plastic items in our world have resulted in numerous environmental and health problems. We need to pursue alternatives to plastic.

If the Keltic project goes ahead, it will truly be a scar on Nova Scotia's land, water and air. This project does not serve sustainable energy practices or climate protection, nor does it support coastal preservation.

The government of Nova Scotia could, and should, put the Keltic project on hold until the Energy Strategy and Climate Change Plan are completed. Perhaps there are other Nova Scotia projects that need to be put on hold until the Energy Strategy and Climate Plan are in place.

Goldboro, located in Guysborough County, is a more isolated place with a low population, and so it seems the corporate stakeholders and the government can get away with the Keltic project by having it "slip through the back door," so to speak. This is blatant hypocrisy on the part of the Nova Scotia government. According to my thesaurus, other words for hypocrisy are: deceit, deception, dishonesty, duplicity, fraud, irreverence, lie, lip service, mockery,

The Nova Scotia government must be accountable for the following questions:

- 1 – Why has the government of Nova Scotia approved the Keltic project in light of the fact that an adequate Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan have not yet been formulated?
- 2 – Petrochemical production is a highly polluting industry. It is energy intensive, and contributes to climate change. It is paradoxical that Nova Scotia has a good reputation for recycling practices, yet is permitting a plastics production plant to take root in Nova Scotia soil, water, and air. Why does this paradox exist? It is pure hypocrisy.
- 3– Isn't it wise to put the Keltic project on hold until the new Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan are in place? Isn't this in the best interests of energy policy, climate change policy, and the environment?
- 4 – Why must Nova Scotia take the risks of LNG for the benefit of the United States, especially in light of the fact that there is excessive energy consumption in the United States?
- 5 – Why is Nova Scotia importing LNG for the purpose of exporting it to the United States, while continuing to burn dirty coal in the facilities of Nova Scotia Power Inc.?

These questions must be answered, and the answers must be provided to the Nova Scotia public.

Conclusion

As you can see, I am no expert in matters of energy strategies and climate change. Like many "ordinary people," I am eager for changes to be implemented. Therefore, I have to have faith and trust in both the experts and the leaders who have the power to enact the ideas and advice of the experts. So far my faith is not very strong, given the actions – or lack thereof – of our leaders. I have very little faith in the federal government of Canada to clean up our country's act with respect to energy strategy and climate change action. I sincerely hope the Nova Scotia government can do much better.

In some cases, tough decisions need to be made. In such cases, detailed explanations need to be given to the public so that the public will understand the reasons for tough policy changes. This is called public education.

There is also a need to leave behind the status quo – the “old way” of conducting business and politics – and embrace a new paradigm for the sake of the Earth and all species on the Earth. We certainly hear lots of promises from politicians, but it is hard to have faith when the old ways prevail. The approval of an LNG and petrochemical project in Nova Scotia exemplifies that the old ways still prevail, despite the need for urgent change. This sort of behaviour on the part of government leaders rather defeats the purpose of public input into sound government strategies.