

To Whom It May Concern:
Energy Strategy for Nova Scotia

The South Shore chapter of the Council of Canadians (SSCC) recognizes that we are in a crucial time for developing proper alternatives to current energy resources. Firstly, because it is widely acknowledged that the environmental and climate change issues must be addressed now. Secondly, because the economic stresses from higher fossil fuel costs and transportation need to be faced as well.

Therefore SSCC recommends these actions be implemented:

1) Government support for renewable energy, particularly small scale. This could be implemented in many different ways. Subsidizing manufacturers, small installation companies, homeowners, and others involved in setting up these systems. One form of subsidizing could be tax breaks as is done so often with other companies, although grants and interest free loans would be preferable. Government could also support municipalities in developing their own regional renewable resources.

2) Nova Scotia Power (NSP) returned to the public sector. NSP has a monopoly on the generation, distribution and sale of electrical energy in Nova Scotia. They have no competition and therefore can choose to ignore the environmental and health costs created by burning fossil fuels. Politicians have continued to support NSP purely on the assurance they can deliver the energy as needed with little regard for the other costs. NSP should not be allowed to continue to control the generation, distribution and sale of electrical energy in Nova Scotia. It should be broken up and placed in the hands of three different entities as is the case with electric utilities in other provinces. It is obvious from the experience of other provinces that tried to go the route of privatizing their power companies that the public resistance is strong, and for a good reason. Costs only go up, sometimes sharply, and quality of service goes down. Just what we have experienced here in Nova Scotia. Instead of high salaries for CEOs and managers, profits could be kept to a minimum and stay more in the hands of the consumers in the form of lower costs, more linemen hired to do preventative maintenance and upgrading lines and equipment.

3) Feed laws need to be changed to increase the production of renewable energy and reduce the burning of fossil fuels. Individuals, community groups and municipalities producing their own renewable energy should be able to feed their renewable power in to the grid for profit to recover the cost of their investment. Feed laws promoting clean renewables work well in many other jurisdictions. The present net metering program of Nova Scotia Power (NSP) only offers credits which if not used within one year are taken as profit for NSP. Changing feed laws is the most important initiative to start the transition away from burning coal to produce electricity. Again, a public corporation would be more accepting of these regulation changes as it is more accountable to Nova Scotians.

4) Reducing CO2 footprint. Government also has a role in supporting the public to lessen it's impact on the environment. There could be a whole host of incentives: price controls; tax breaks on more fuel efficient vehicles or goods; costlier permits on those vehicles or goods that are inefficient or wasteful; building energy conservation programs; lowering highway speed limits, etc. There should be more promoting, improving and expanding mass transportation, particularly in rural areas. This would take an unnecessary burden off those needing to travel regularly for work, medical conditions or other needs and have no other option but to drive or be driven.

5) Changing existing vehicle laws to allow low-speed all-electric vehicles to be used on our roads. Currently they are not. The ZENN (Zero Emissions No Noise) vehicle that is made in Quebec cannot sell it almost anywhere in Canada (exception is BC). Their main market is the US. There is also an electric truck that is made in Canada but only sold in the US because of existing laws.

6) Biomass alternatives. There are many new experiments in dealing with wastes to run steam or other powered generators. These should be looked into and considered. There are cogeneration methods (more than one result, such as electricity and heat or gasification) with different kinds of waste that would include digestion and fermentation methods. Wouldn't it be interesting to see every waste disposal site turned into a power generation plant?

7) Tidal and wave technologies. There are some very promising and already existing systems for both tidal and wave power generators. Many other countries are way ahead in utilizing this resource. There have been scientists working on this here. The government should promote this kind of technology, first, because it is so obvious, we are surrounded by water with some of the highest tides in the world. The second, that compared to something like wind, where it has to be in someone's backyard, this form of technology can be invisible or of minimal notice to the public.

8) Building code changes. Some countries (Austria is one example) have made it part of the building code for developers to include solar, water collection, green spaces on roofs of office buildings and other green technologies into new developments, particularly in cities. It is obvious how helpful this is for the amount of resources that cities need. But there is another benefit, which is esthetic. The city starts to look more varied and "green."

Conclusion: To help make Nova Scotia energy more sustainable and resistant to outside pressures, whether economic or environmental, there needs to be a real effort to promote and develop renewable resources. Monies that are spent on this now can only be a wise investment. Sooner or later we will have to adopt these more sustainable technologies and it has been shown that countries (or provinces) that first develop or install new methods are usually the ones that can manufacture and export their expertise to other areas creating many skilled jobs. Many of these technologies will more than pay for themselves, since the resource is free and renewable, and many new jobs will be created for the installation, maintenance and further development of these systems. The government should take a very proactive role in making this transition as soon as possible.

There has been no mention nuclear energy in our proposal because there are such serious environmental issues around uranium mining and the problem of nuclear waste. These are costs not normally factored into the price of nuclear energy production which is already quite significant. Nuclear energy is not the 'clean' resource it is sometimes promoted as.

Respectfully submitted by Richard Wurtz on behalf of South Shore Council of Canadians. Contact: (902)624-6295 & backofbeyond@auracom.com