

To: The NS Dept. of Energy in response to the 2007 Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan

We are writing on behalf of the Atlantic Regional Solidarity Network (ARSN) to push the Nova Scotia Government to implement measures that will actually result in significant reductions of green house gas (GHG) emissions in this province.

Climate change has become a grave concern of ARSN's for several reasons. As a solidarity network working with people in Latin America and the Caribbean, we realize that when it comes to its effects on people, climate change is proving so far to be the most harmful to the people who are the least responsible for it. Per capita green house gas emissions are much much lower in poorer countries, many of which are in hotter parts of the world and are experiencing water shortages as well as hurricanes and floods. Indigenous people in northern Canada are also disproportionately affected by climate change. Unequal distribution of resources between rich and poor countries and also between indigenous people in Canada and the rest of the population, means that the people facing the worst effects of climate change have the least access to the resources required to adapt to it.

ARSN has become active in a loose coalition of groups all working on exposing and opposing the damage done by mining and burning coal. ARSN's area of concern has been the human rights violations and environmental destruction associated with the Cerrejon mine in Colombia where much of the coal burned in Nova Scotia Power's (NSP's) coal-fired generation plants has come from. At this point NSP is not purchasing coal from the Cerrejon mine, but the mine remains on NSP's list of approved coal suppliers. We have coordinated with the following groups and individuals:

. Citizens Against Strip Mining and Mi'kmaq elder Albert Marshall, working to oppose open pit coal mining on Boularderie Island, Cape Breton;

. Hillside-Trenton Environmental Watch which has brought the issue of the fly ash and other pollution caused by burning coal to the public's attention, particularly at NSP's Trenton #5 generating plant;

. Ecology Action Centre, whose members have spoken out about Nova Scotia's green house gas emissions and how to reduce them.

Working with these groups has given us a fuller picture of how damaging Nova Scotia's addiction to coal is. Open pit coal mining on Boularderie Island, Cape Breton, threatens healthy forests and wetlands, violates First Nations land rights and could potentially contaminate the water table and residents' well water. People living in the area of the Cerrejon mine in Colombia are being cut off from fishing areas and their health is being affected by the coal dust in the air and the contamination of the water. Whole communities have been forcibly removed without fair compensation. People who live near the Trenton #5 plant are justifiably afraid to grow vegetables on their land and are surely breathing pollution strong enough to corrode the paint on their cars. On top of all this, coal is a very inefficient fuel which creates high levels of greenhouse gases. NSP's heavy reliance on coal to produce electricity has a lot to do with Nova Scotia's per capita greenhouse gas emissions. In 2006 Pollution Watch found that NSP was Canada's 5th largest GHG emitter, responsible for almost half of Nova Scotia's green house gases.

The earth climate is already changing due to human activity. We want Nova Scotia to do its part to prevent the catastrophic consequences of runaway climate change that would likely result if global temperature rises more than 2 degrees Celsius. This means changing the way we do things in this province in a way which prioritizes conservation rather than profits, so that deep cuts in greenhouse gases can be made. As Albert Marshall has said, "... The natural world has rights and we as people have responsibility." Therefore, in response to Nova Scotia's 2007 Energy Strategy and Climate Change Action Plan (which, in view of the urgency of climate change, should be not two, but one coordinated strategy aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions in NS), we recommend that the strategy include conservation, efficiency, education and renewable energy development. Specifically we recommend the following:

Re Renewable Energy Development:

- a.. Prioritize renewable energy production and use which includes wind, solar hot-water, solar thermal, photo-voltaics, geothermal, small hydro, tidal, but not nuclear.
 - b.. Deliberately and consistently move away from the promotion, use, dependence upon and development of fossil fuels.
 - c.. Adopt a policy of electricity feed-in laws (called standard offer contracts or set, fair price policy for renewable energy based on the cost of production). The lack of such a policy is a major obstacle to widespread generation of renewable energy in NS. More than 30 countries worldwide - and the province of Ontario - have implemented a fixed price policy for renewable energy. This has been the most successful policy in stimulating the rapid development of renewable energy and, at the same time, stimulating local economic development by giving communities an opportunity to earn money by producing clean energy.
 - d.. Establish provincial guidelines for wind and other green power producers - including criteria for appropriate locations, size and other aspects of wind and other renewable energy production.
 - e.. Establish regulations that require that energy from wind and other green/renewable power sources produced in NS be used for Nova Scotia first - and that prohibit exporting green/renewable energy that is produced in NS.
- Re conservation, efficiency and education:

- a.. Make energy conservation and efficiency key criteria in all energy related policy, project and technology decisions of the province (re electricity, space heating, transportation and land use planning) for example, Nova Scotia should be making public transport available throughout the province and creating active transport infrastructure, not working with the federal government to twin highways for the Atlantic Gateway initiatives - which would increase emissions.
- b.. Set targets and establish timelines and mechanisms to implement all cost-effective energy efficiency improvements in Nova Scotia.
- c.. Promote public engagement in conservation and sustainable energy through media campaigns, linking consumer choices with sustainable energy, teacher training and involvement, and making government employees leaders by examples.

We also recommend that the provincial government of NS and its Department of Energy report to the public regularly and hold 'accountability sessions' so that the public is aware of how their input has been heard and responded to, what has been successful in working toward the stated priorities, and what needs to be improved and/or changed.

Thank you very much for reviewing and seriously considering implementing energy policies for the province of Nova Scotia in keeping with these and other recommendations from the citizens of NS.

Yours truly,
Catherine Hughes and Linda Scherzinger for the
Atlantic Region Solidarity Network