

[The following notes reflect comments made at a public workshop facilitated by Dalhousie oceanographer Bob Fournier in Halifax on December 6, 2007.

This was one of 13 public workshops held around Nova Scotia to solicit public views on a renewed energy strategy and climate change action plan for Nova Scotia.

The Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act sets ambitious goals for curbing greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining a prosperous economy. The government appreciates the time taken by the public to participate at the workshops and give advice on how best to achieve these important goals.

Please note that the views expressed in these notes reflect comments made by participants in the workshop. They have not been verified for factual accuracy.]

Halifax public consultation session – December 6

Over 80 participants

This session brought out a large cross-section of interest groups and associations. They had a variety of concerns and were primarily requesting government action in the Energy Strategy Renewal. Much of the discussion centered on renewable energy, electricity and the need for immediate, strong action on climate change.

Questions:

- Will targets and policies in the Energy Strategy renewal be accompanied by legislation?
- Why isn't the environment given priority over economic growth? Are the two compatible?
- What scientific evidence has the government made available on climate change and its consequences in Nova Scotia?
- What impact will national and international decisions and actions have on Nova Scotia climate change policy? i.e. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- What is being done to ensure that Nova Scotia would retain adequate food security while increasing agricultural materials availability for bio-fuels?

Concerns / recommendations

Electricity

- The time for studies is past – action is required to ensure feed in tariffs for small scale and renewable electricity generators

- The provincial electrical utility should not be a monopoly – competition needs to be encouraged
- Communities should be incented to participate in renewable energy projects as a means to sustainable prosperity
- All recommendations from the Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee should be implemented in the shortest possible timeframe
- An inclining block rate structure for electricity rates should be implemented
- Strong market signals need to be implemented to reflect the cost of electricity on the environment and encourage reduced demand
- Provincial regulatory bodies need to be more effective in dealing with utilities to ensure they adhere to all environmental standards
- Community wind power should be used to meet local electricity demand
- More renewable electricity storage should be made available in Nova Scotia – i.e. Emera pump storage facility located in New England
- The provincial government should agree to purchase all renewable energy that is not purchased by provincial customers or the utility

Renewable

- Renewable energy projects that have been successful in other jurisdictions and could be suitable for Nova Scotia need to be aggressively implemented
- All houses should be required by law to maximize passive solar energy
- More tax subsidies need to be offered for wind producers
- More cooperation between government, communities, businesses and stakeholders on renewable energy is necessary
- Solar hot-water heaters should be made available to all homeowners – government should launch an education and incentive initiative to encourage uptake
- All new development should be required to supply a percentage of its energy needs through renewable technology
- Underground thermal energy storage possibilities should be explored by the province
- Energy producers should have the option to make electricity available to consumers willing to pay a premium for environmentally friendly products
- The maximum amount of wind energy available (30%) of installed capacity should be used to cover as much of the electricity baseload possible

Conservation / efficiency

- Conservation and efficiency are integral to the success of the energy strategy and should be given the highest priority
- Peninsular Halifax should have a community energy plan that maximizes scale efficiency and distribution of waste heat
- Street lights should be turned off at certain hours of the night to improve energy efficiency

- Back-end energy efficiency plans should be mandatory in industrial processes – cogeneration and community heat distribution systems should be used to maximize efficiency gains
- Fuel mileage ratings on cars should include city, highway and 110 km/h as standard information
- All government departments should be held to the highest energy efficiency standards possible
- Enforce speed limits more vigorously then start lowering them to encourage fuel efficiency
- Where lighting is used that emits heat the lighting [should be located as close to the floor as possible to capitalize on heat rise

Government action / intervention

- The energy policy must ensure that all emissions reduction targets are met by entering penalties for non-compliance into legislation
- The energy strategy must be accompanied by an extensive public education and awareness program explaining the need for reduced energy use
- Comprehensive education programs on climate change mitigation and adaptation are needed as part of the energy strategy
- Cooperation between the provincial government, business, environmental groups, municipalities and community groups are the key to successful implementation of education programs
- There should be no further studies launched on climate change until action is taken to reduce emissions – the science exists to prove emissions are harmful to the environment
- The government should act on environmental goals before considering the impacts to the economy – the environment is more important than economic growth
- Government incentives should be put towards the establishment of renewable energy pilot projects that demonstrate and educate on the opportunities in Nova Scotia
- Rebates and incentives should be broadly distributed to renewable energy projects to stimulate implementation
- The most energy efficient technologies available i.e. LED lighting should be mandatory standards in all new applications – the government should mandate the purchase of “dark sky” streetlights in future projects
- The energy strategy should have restrictive measures like a hard cap on GHG emissions, minimum energy rating standards and minimum energy efficiency requirements for all end-use energy consumption products
- No action should be taken on climate change prior to the establishment of federal and international guidelines – the province needs to harmonize energy initiative regulations with larger jurisdictions
- More information on energy use and climate change should be made available to the public

- All provincial buildings should be retrofitted to the maximum energy efficiency standard possible
- Public transport should be available in more municipalities
- The province of Nova Scotia should eliminate the use of fossil fuels by 2020
- Building codes need to be modified to require the most energy efficient technologies be used in all new constructions – i.e. LEED certification
- Stricter penalties need to be established and enforced for all companies that harm the environment
- More transparency is required in energy initiatives – “full cost accounting” should be used to assess the costs and benefits of all future energy projects
- Government needs to outline and enforce a clearer direction for Nova Scotia – i.e. the government leads and the people follow
- Consumers that use more energy should pay more for it – The government should mandate and manage an inclining block rate structure for all energy products
- The energy strategy should include incentives for real estate companies that operate in an environmentally sustainable manner
- A minimum energy standard of living should be established for Nova Scotia – i.e. rising energy costs should not be detrimental to the lifestyle of low-income Nova Scotians
- The government’s role through the energy strategy should be leading by example rather than by legislation

Natural gas

- Natural gas should no longer be used for electricity generation until it is used at maximum capacity for space heating
- Offshore exploration should no longer be an area where government encourages activity – resources used to promote the offshore should be diverted to the development of hydrogen as a commercial scale energy source

Energy opportunities

- Energy security should be a focal point of the energy strategy renewal – opportunities for being energy self-sufficient must be explored