

[The following notes reflect comments made at a public workshop facilitated by Dalhousie oceanographer Bob Fournier in Yarmouth on November 18, 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.]

Energy Strategy Renewal - Public Consultation Workshop Yarmouth – November 18

18 participants

Summary:

The public consultation session had a very balanced focus and discussed a broad array of energy options for the strategy renewal. Efficiency, renewable energy, electricity and government action were the most widely discussed elements at this session with the general feel that the strategy is on the right track and should include further initiatives to reduce GHG emissions. There was much positive discussion on the municipality of Clare's energy audit and plan to become energy self-sufficient and petroleum free like the Austrian town of Gussing.

Questions:

- Talking about environmental sustainability is an admirable goal but what concrete actions are being taken that will produce tangible results for citizens?
- Why doesn't Nova Scotia ban "high-consumption" passenger vehicles?
- Is GDP the best measure of progress and development available to assess the quality of life that would be achieved in Nova Scotia through the reduction of GHGs and enhanced air quality?
- Is there a provincial audit on the "true costs" (societal, environmental) of imported coal?
- What is the status of research initiatives underway exploring "clean coal" and coal purification?

Concerns / Recommendations

Efficiency

- The conservation and efficiency aspects of the energy strategy are a step in the right direction; it is the easiest way to reduce GHGs quickly
- Provincial highway speed limits should be reduced to ensure that optimal vehicle fuel efficiency is achieved
- Any “feebates” or disincentives attached to the purchase of high-consumption passenger vehicles must be sufficiently prohibitive to stop people from buying them
- The tax on continuously variable transmission vehicles should be reduced because they are more fuel efficient
- The excise tax on air conditioned vehicles should be eliminated because modern systems are more environmentally friendly
- More information needs to be made available through government agencies and departments on provincial conservation programs, initiatives and incentives.
- More incentives need to be provided to municipalities for the promotion of energy efficiency and conservation – local action will be an effective compliment to the province’s high-level conservation information and action
- Low-income families need to have the same opportunities to contribute to energy conservation and efficiency in a positive manner – Incentives need to provide upfront capital so these people can retrofit their homes
- The current administrative process to access energy efficiency funding is too cumbersome and is also prohibitive to low-income Nova Scotians
Quote – “The high cost of energy is borne on the backs of those that can least afford it”

Renewable energy

- Wind and tidal energy must be added to the Nova Scotia energy mix
- Getting more renewable energy into the provincial energy mix has to be strongly supported by the government through incentives and subsidies
- Municipalities cannot be allowed to regulated renewable energy out of existence i.e. discourage municipal zoning laws that restrict wind, solar projects
- Support must be given to communities and municipalities striving to achieve energy self-sufficiency through renewable energy projects – the government should assist with energy audits as well as information on projects that mirror energy self-sufficient communities in other jurisdictions (Gussing, Austria)
- Approach renewable energy in the same way waste management was tackled so that Nova Scotia develops a world-leading industry and infrastructure

Electricity

- The “social and environmental costs” of imported coal must be determined and reflected in electricity prices to encourage citizens to move towards renewable alternatives
- People in Nova Scotia cannot afford substantial electricity rate increases in the short term – capital costs associated with developing cleaner electricity must be distributed over a long term
- Net-metering initiatives currently available need to allow homeowners to be compensated for any excess electricity they put into the grid – there should also be a standard offer available to all power generators
- Municipalities and local communities need net metering options – People should be allowed to produce, distribute and consume electricity locally while using the electric utility to supply them when needed
- The provincial government should regulate Nova Scotia Power Inc. profits
- Transmission capacity should be increased so that power can be imported into Nova Scotia when needed from Point Lepreau and Lower Churchill

Government Action / Intervention

- Administrative process and costs associated with LEEDs building standards must be reduced
- There should be less government intervention in energy matters – markets should establish energy costs
- The provincial government should mandate “ethical standards” for the energy resources used in the province – i.e. many people are “appalled” by coal mining conditions in Columbia
- The government should facilitate regional (Atlantic Canada) energy developments by working to harmonize regulations
- More educational initiatives need to be undertaken so that people understand the breadth of the climate change problem and how clean energy alternatives contribute to the solution
- Offshore royalties should be used to fund renewable energy products
- The energy strategy should go further – ensure that Nova Scotia is energy self-sufficient
- The government must help municipalities prepare for the impacts of climate change