

[The following notes reflect comments made at a public workshop facilitated by Dalhousie oceanographer Bob Fournier in Digby on November 20, 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.]

Digby public consultation session – November 20

21 participants

The public in Digby was well informed and aware of the energy strategy renewal. Most participants were able to speak to specifics contained in the consultation paper and seemed to have had prior knowledge of the document's existence. Much of the discussion centered on green house gas reduction, local energy generation and transmission as well as renewable energy sources.

Questions:

- To what extent will electricity costs remain the same if new transmission capacity is added and source diversification is effective?
- Where do NSPI, deregulation and grid access fit in to the energy strategy renewal? How much grid access will be given to renewable electricity not generated by NSPI? At what price?
- Why isn't Nova Scotia coal used to generate electricity? Is there no combination of coal gasification and purification technology that would enable the province to have an environmentally and economically sustainable energy for NS coal?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of intermittent renewable energy (i.e. wind and tidal? Is electricity storage a viable option?
- Using imported coal has associated costs (i.e. transportation, lower labour standards in some of the countries of origin) to what extent does that impact its long-term sustainability?
- Is the consultation process going to be used to decide where government funds are allocated?
- Is the province of Nova Scotia giving consideration to "peak oil" theories in establishing its energy strategy?

Concerns / recommendations

Electricity

- NSPI has too large a role in generation and transmission market dynamics; its role should be reduced
- Digby county could generate and transmit electricity locally; community energy policy should have a more prominent role in the energy strategy – i.e. meeting local needs with local resources .
- Allow municipalities to have unfettered access to the transmission grid: they must be allowed to transmit and sell to local consumers, sell excess power to NSPI at standing offer rate and be guaranteed electricity by the utility when it is needed in the local area .
- Don't build more transmission capacity if local resources are going to be sold outside of the province
- Net metering practices for homeowners needs to be expanded to include an increased standard offer for renewable generation and the guarantee that NSPI will purchase all surplus electricity added to the grid – i.e. not just 100 kW .
- Net metering with the same conditions should also be established for neighbourhoods and groups that want to generate, distribute and consume electricity locally – i.e. greater incentives for micro generation, transmission and consumption .

Renewable

- Individual homeowners generating renewable electricity must be allowed full access to the transmission grid, be able to sell excess power to NSPI at standard offer rate and be guaranteed electricity by the utility when it is needed .
- More emphasis should be put on tidal energy generation, storage and transmission – the geographic area and scope of projects should be expanded
- There should be more local tidal energy project development both generation and transmission i.e. Digby neck as well as technologies other than in-stream - like lagoon
- An R&D centre of excellence in tidal generation technology should be established in the Digby area i.e. – PEI centre for wind technology .
- As renewable energy comes onto the grid, best practices should be adopted to prioritize replacement of high GHG emission generating facilities i.e. Texas energy zones
- The impact of biomass development on provincial forests must be established prior to policy initiatives in that direction
- An agricultural capacity to produce biomass should be created

Conservation / efficiency

- Promote conservation as the fastest and most cost effective way to achieve GHG reductions – “Conservation is the largest source of energy for the future”

- New housing must be regulated to be built to the highest efficiency rating possible
- Regulate that all new homes built be required to maximize passive solar energy by being built with south-facing orientation
- Recuperation of waste heat from industrial application and local heat distribution must be considered more prominently in the strategy renewal

Government action / intervention

- The consultation paper hits the nail on the head with its idea for a GHG cap and trade system – “Large emitters have to pay or change their ways”
- A carbon tax similar to that in the United Kingdom would send appropriate price signals to energy consumers
- More needs to be done to educate the public on the “societal and environmental” costs of energy .
- Municipal and community involvement in energy affairs / technologies / projects need to be given more consideration – Better cooperation and communications between the province and municipalities on energy initiatives must also be enhanced
- Incentives must be provided to municipalities that develop innovative / creative environmentally friendly energy solutions that increase energy self-sufficiency i.e. Gussing, Austria
- The provincial government needs to lead by example – they should only be in green buildings, drive green vehicles and establish procurement process that supports green products
- The government must intervene with appropriate price signals for energy use as well as through encouraging industry to innovate
- Low-income individuals should be guaranteed a minimum energy standard of living through programs that enable them to increase efficiency and limit the negative impacts of high-energy prices

Energy opportunities

- Hydrogen should be given consideration in the energy strategy renewal
- Hydrocarbons should no longer be given consideration – research should focus on alternative sources of energy so Nova Scotia can lead in the field
- Mass transit and public transportation options need to be made available to more geographic areas of the province

Natural gas

- Any future natural gas production agreements should include clauses ensuring Nova Scotia’s demand for natural gas, current and future, is met prior to exportation