

[The following notes reflect comments made at a public workshop facilitated by Dalhousie oceanographer Bob Fournier in Sydney on November 26, 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 - Sydney Public Consultation – November 26

19 participants

The public consultation session was largely related to environmental concerns discussing a very balanced and broad array of energy options for the strategy renewal. Electricity, renewable energy, efficiency and government action were the most widely discussed elements at this session with the general feel that the strategy is a positive step in the right direction and should include further initiatives to reduce GHG emissions.

Questions:

- Is there a lesson to be taken from the ramping up and declining of royalties? Are deferred royalties giving maximum value to Nova Scotians?
- Is it reasonable to predict a cut in GHG emissions in the coming years?
- What carbon-free alternatives are being considered to “firm up” renewable electricity generation?
- How much more cost effective is energy conservation than new energy generation?
- Is fuel switching (from coal to natural gas) an economically viable option for currently operating electricity generation plants in Nova Scotia?
- What is the status of commercial scale clean coal power generation facilities in Canada and world-wide?
- Why wasn't Sable gas used for electricity generation in Nova Scotia?
- What is the energy strategy doing to address security of supply concerns?
- How are the numbers used to measure GHG emissions calculated?

Concerns / Recommendations

Electricity

- The energy strategy renewal should identify and study carbon capture and storage projects elsewhere so Nova Scotia can try to implement those technologies locally
- The current competitive bidding process regulations need to be modified to calculate the full “societal and environmental costs” of electricity generation
- “Full cost accounting” needs to be used when calculating the cost of any future electricity generation projects in Nova Scotia
- All power generation project should be mandated to have the best available emissions reduction and cleaning technologies
- Firm deadlines should be established requiring power generation facilities to switch to cleaner burning fuels
- Standard offer contracts (based on the Ontario model) to encourage small scale renewable energy projects; this would have the added benefits of diversifying and decentralizing the province’s electricity sources
- “Feed-in” regulations should be modified to encourage community and regional electricity generation and distribution projects

Renewable energy

- Renewable energy must take a more prominent role in the Nova Scotia energy mix – the 18% discussed in the consultation document is not enough
- Any renewable energy generated in Nova Scotia should be used in Nova Scotia before export opportunities are explored
- Municipalities should be considered as valuable partners in the energy strategy renewal – they should be encouraged to be active participants in addressing their energy needs through renewable projects
- The impediments of renewable energy need to be assessed and solutions found – their capacity does not follow current demand forecasts and they are intermittent
- Renewable energy projects should have unlimited access to the electricity transmission grid

Conservation and efficiency

- Using the same amount of energy as today but using cleaner sources to generate does not adequately address the challenge facing Nova Scotia – Conservation and efficiency should be the top priority of the energy strategy renewal
- Reductions in energy consumption should be reflected in lower energy prices – those who consume less (conserve more) pay less
- Conservation is currently the cheapest and most effective solution available to reduce GHGs and that fact should be reflected in the energy strategy renewal
- The HST rebate on heating fuel should be eliminated – no further incentives to encourage the use of fossil fuels should be available to Nova Scotians

- Subsidies for energy efficiency retrofits (provincial and federal) must be made more broadly accessible – awareness needs to be increased and up-front payment assured for low-income families
- The number of cars on the road should be reduced – communities should have limited “urban sprawl” and essential services should be available in all communities to reduce traffic
- Further highway expansion and renewal should be limited and rail transportation encouraged as the most effective GHG reducing mode of transportation for goods and passengers
- An escalating tax structure should be implemented for transportation fuels in the province – the more you consume the more you pay

Government Action / Intervention

- Energy cost increases necessary to reduce GHGs and improve air quality should not be added to taxes but rather directly to energy bills to more accurately reflect the true cost of energy
- The government should implement an inclining block rate structure for energy resources – energy is relatively cheap to meet basic needs then prices increase substantially beyond that threshold
- The cost of increased energy prices should be borne by corporations rather than individuals
- Approval for energy projects must better reflect the desires of local communities and concerned citizens – more consideration must be given to public input : public stakeholders present felt the Pont Aconi strip mining project approval did not adequately reflect the community’s opinion
- Highway speed limits should be reduced as a means to reduce GHG emissions
- Interim targets for air quality and GHG reduction need to be included in the energy strategy as a measure of accountability and to demonstrate the progress being made as the 2020 deadline approaches
- Education programs that increase public awareness of climate change and its consequences need to be an integral component of the energy strategy renewal

Natural Gas

- The energy strategy renewal should focus on moving Nova Scotia away from fossil fuels – it should include a moratorium on all future oil and gas developments
- Natural gas distribution infrastructure should be made available in all municipalities over 5000 inhabitants

Energy Opportunities

- Studies should be undertaken that quantify Nova Scotia's energy resources (wind, tidal, oil and gas, coal) so that they can be developed in the most efficient manner
- Nova Scotia should attempt a pilot project that makes a community or region fossil fuel free – i.e. Gussing, Austria