

[The following notes reflect comments made at a public workshop facilitated by Dalhousie oceanographer Bob Fournier in Halifax on November 29, 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 – November 29

7 participants

The public in Halifax was primarily comprised of media and specific interest groups; as such they were well informed and aware of the energy strategy renewal. Much of the discussion centered on renewable energy, local generation, transmission and distribution as well as renewable energy sources.

Questions:

- What role has the government played in renewable development?
- What is the status of recommendation 51 from the Electricity Marketplace Governance Committee?
- To what extent are the environmental goals in the Energy Strategy Renewal modeled after the Kyoto Accord?
- Will environmental targets be accompanied by fines if they are not met?
- Is Nova Scotia partnering with regional provinces / states to meet its air quality and green house gas reduction targets?
- To what extent will renewable energy increases benefit Nova Scotia? What measures, if any, will discourage the export of renewable electricity to markets willing to pay higher prices (i.e. the northeast US)?
- What resources is the province dedicating to “clean coal”? Should resources be increased?

Concerns / recommendations

Electricity

- Companies should be mandated to dedicate a large percentage of renewable electricity generated in Nova Scotia to serving Nova Scotians
- Any increase in electricity rates should be accompanied by a detailed explanation of how the increase will benefit Nova Scotians
- Any competitive bidding process must take into account the needs and benefits to local economies and communities
- “Feed-in laws” should replace the competitive bidding process
- All new policy development must weigh the benefits of having local developers develop local projects
- All future electricity generation requests for proposals must include educational elements and incentives that encourage local communities to see the benefits of development to encourage their participation
- The Energy Strategy Renewal should strive to capitalize on opportunities by breaking away from the status-quo and increase competition in the electricity market
- The cost of electricity should include elements that account for all societal and environmental costs both inside the province and to jurisdictions from which resources are imported
- No nuclear energy from New Brunswick should be imported into Nova Scotia; the province should not consider regional electricity agreements if nuclear power is involved
- Money should be spent on upgrading the electricity grid only when the upgrades allow for the addition of more renewable energy
- Transparency of electricity generation, transmission and distribution should be enhanced – the Utilities and Review Board must ensure that a “fair-profit” is ensured to renewable energy developers

Renewable

- Targets for renewable energy must be increased – 18.5% by 2013 is not enough
- All carbon emissions and environmental footprint for the construction of renewable energy projects must be documented and studies funded on the economic impact of renewable energy
- Quantifiable scientific evidence must be made available through the government to demonstrate that renewable projects are environmentally friendlier than traditional energy sources
- “Total accounting” needs to be done when estimating the cost of all future renewable development
- Crown lands should be provided at a fee for renewable projects
- More focus needs to be given to “micro-generation” – incentives should be provided for all small scale renewable energy initiatives
- Local developers should have first option on renewable energy added to the provincial energy mix – financing and project security should be enhanced through a standing offer contract

- Diversification – geographic and by source – should be more prominent than lowest cost projects when evaluating renewable energy proposals

Conservation / efficiency

- Conservation and efficiency have to be considered an integral part of the focus on diversification
- Prohibitive pricing mechanisms should be implemented to encourage conservation and efficiency – consumerism is part of the problem so it must be part of the solution
- Education must be the cornerstone of efficiency efforts – consumers must be made aware of the impact of growing energy demand
- Educational programs should be implemented through the school system – like with solid waste management

Government action / intervention

- Climate change document should be merged with the energy strategy to give a better overall context of the situation
- The Energy Strategy Renewal should cover a longer time frame
- A broad-ranging educational program needs to accompany the energy strategy
- More studies need to be undertaken prior to the government implementing climate change policy – environmental policy changes may have adverse consequences for the economy
- Education and information are key to the energy strategy – the government should have more oversight into educating the public on the opportunities available to land owners who make their property available to renewable energy developers
- The concepts and language of the energy strategy must be accessible to all education levels in the province
- Public transportation needs to be more accessible in rural areas – it should be subsidized by the government if it is not economically viable
- Business incentives and subsidies should be increased when companies have “green” initiatives and components
- Local energy opportunities need to be emphasized - regional development authorities and communities need to be integral to establishing a grassroots energy movement
- Nova Scotia needs to act quickly on environmental goals – political will and strong policies are needed immediately
- Municipal zoning laws need to be changed to encourage greater population density
- Carbon tax and cap and trade systems are a good option if coupled with incentives to cut GHGs
- A carbon-neutral, energy self sufficient community should be established as a pilot project

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Energy opportunities

- Extensive energy asset mapping and demand modeling needs to be done to establish where Nova Scotia can capitalize on its comparative advantages

Natural gas

- No further incentives need to be given to the oil and gas industry – market forces allow it to expand enough already
- Royalty monies not committed to debt reduction should be used to subsidize renewable energy projects