

All input gathered through the review process will be considered as the Department of Energy develops the province's future electricity strategy in 2015.

PROJECT OVERVIEW: ELECTRICITY REFORM (2013) ACT

In fall 2013, the Government of Nova Scotia passed the Electricity Reform (2013) Act. The act has two key components related to our electricity system.

Renewable to Retail Market Opening

The first is the creation of a Renewable to Retail program, which would allow independent power producers (IPP) to sell renewable electricity directly to willing customers. This would allow for more competition in who supplies electricity within the province.

Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) is leading a stakeholder process to develop a Renewable to Retail Market Opening application for submission to the Utility and Review Board (UARB) by September 1, 2015. More information can be found online.¹ Through the program, individual homes and businesses will be able to contract with eligible renewable electricity producers in Nova Scotia directly to purchase low-impact renewable electricity.

Electricity System Review

The second part of the act committed government to conducting a comprehensive review of the province's electricity system, including a public consultation process. The review was to take no more than one year. For the first time in over a decade, all aspects of the system were to be studied. The legislated review was to focus on three areas:

- emerging technologies
- market trends in supply and demand
- trends in the oversight and delivery (governance and structure) of Nova Scotia's electricity marketplace

¹ <http://www.nspower.ca/en/home/about-us/electricity-rates-and-regulations/regulatory-initiatives/renewable-to-retail.aspx>

Process Overview

The Department of Energy released a scope of work for the Electricity System Review in January 2014. This detailed the work to be completed under the three key areas of study. It explained how the work would be accomplished, and was open to comment from the public and stakeholder groups before being finalized. The scope of work was used to confirm and validate the direction of the activities to be completed.

The review took place in two phases that included: (1) sharing expert findings and (2) consulting with Nova Scotians. Consultation efforts in both phases focused on hearing from experts, stakeholders, and the public. This report includes a summary of what we have heard from each group.

The consultation process was developed based on the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) planning process. The process selected covered both informational and consultation phases, with the goal that Nova Scotians would provide input that would be considered in planning for our future electricity system.

The first phase included gathering and sharing information related to our electricity system, mainly through technical studies and other materials posted on our webpage, novascotia.ca/electricityfuture.

Number of people who have visited the website:
More than 4,000 people have visited the electricity review page

In spring 2014, the department issued requests for proposals for three technical studies. ICF International was the successful bidder for two studies, emerging technologies and market trends in supply and demand, while London Economics Inc. was selected to complete work relating to the oversight and governance of our electricity system.

In June 2014, the department began releasing the results of these studies for discussion. High-level summaries were prepared outlining key findings. Stakeholders and the public were invited to provide feedback on these documents. Two videos were also released encouraging Nova Scotians to get involved in the review process.

The second phase focused on speaking with Nova Scotians (public and stakeholder groups) about their views on key elements of our future electricity system. The main focus in this phase was to determine the values and priorities that should guide the development of our future electricity policy.

Public input

The department sought the opinions of Nova Scotians through a variety of avenues. Face-to-face public sessions allowed hundreds of people to learn more about the system's future opportunities and challenges, answer a number of opinion-based questions, and become engaged in workshops where they provided focused feedback on key topics.

Throughout the review process, Nova Scotians were invited to submit their comments and feedback to the Electricity System Review process through e-mail, traditional mail, and Twitter. The department requested that these comments be submitted by December 5, 2014. A number of submissions were made both to the electricityreview@gov.ns.ca e-mail address and to the Minister of Energy directly.

In November 2014, a representative public opinion survey asked for views from one thousand Nova Scotians on a variety of issues related to the province's electricity system.

A summary of what we heard from the public can be found in Section 5.0 of this report.

Stakeholder input

In November and December 2014, the department also met with stakeholders representing views relating to the environment, business, energy affordability, and First Nations considerations. They were invited to provide additional feedback through written submissions. These are summarized in Section 6.0 of this report.

Timelines and Deliverables

The department will be accepting feedback on this draft report until March 18, 2015. Comments will be integrated and a final report will be tabled in the Spring 2015 session of the legislature.