

Coal will Still be King

Are we really going green ?

Ecology Action Centre's magazine *Between The Issues* - Summer 2010 article "Envisioning Nova Scotia's Energy Futures" said, "We applaud the government's effort to reduce the use of coal in electricity production. Under our projections, coal could provide just under half of our electricity mix in 2015. We believe our electricity can be coal and oil free by 2025."

I read this statement after walking out of the URB Biomass hearing on July 27th in which as an intervener I cross examined officials from Nova Scotia Power under oath, and heard a very different story about what is developing in Nova Scotia.

On that day, I was told that the 60MW biomass plant was not going to be reducing coal burning. NSPI would not directly answer my question about the resulting increases in CO2 from the 60MW biomass plant, so I conclude this will be the case.

NSPI officials also stated in response to my questions that the biomass plant is not needed for capacity – which is the word for load growth, but that is being built because it qualifies as a "green" project to meet the Renewable Energy Standards the Province has set. I believe most Nova Scotians had thought these Standards related to coal and CO2 reductions- now I realize we're wrong.

Nova Scotians are being fooled into thinking that the 40% renewables target by 2025 will equal a very big reduction in coal burning and CO2. The actual plan to date does not involve coal reductions of any major amount. This then raises serious questions about Nova Scotia's commitment and approach to renewable energy.

Shutting down the coal plants is a very serious issue and should be a top priority of our province. Ontario is set to do this, and is already 1/3rd of the way there. Nova Scotia could be asking Quebec or Newfoundland to provide enough hydro power by 2015 to shut all our polluting coal fired electrical generating plants. We could then over time back off this imported green power with our own green power as it gets built.

Add to this NSPI's failure to meet the original Government renewables electricity targets and the new NDP government agreeing to move the dates for this target, as well as the major mercury reductions by NSPI being rescheduled by the Province for at least another 4 years - after the next election.

So what is going on here in Nova Scotia?

I think that there may be a plan, not yet publicly revealed, to export our green power to the USA. This plan is already being supported and encouraged by our NDP government, with the use of our tax dollars, and increases to our power bills.

This summer Premier Dexter proudly announced support for NSPI's new power line into New Brunswick. The Premier promised us jobs, and that a better connection would improve our electrical grid. What Premier Dexter didn't tell us that day is that Emera, the parent company of NSPI, is building and will own a new transmission line from New Brunswick to New England, which will be fully capable of exporting Nova Scotia green power to New England.

Furthermore, Fundy tidal power, without public consultation, has been chosen by our new NDP Government as our own home grown Nova Scotian renewable energy technology of the future. Except Tidal power is not a developed technology- nor may ever be, or even environmentally safe. Hundreds of millions of our tax dollars will be spent on tidal power research and technology development, which will be owned by a few large private Nova Scotian and foreign companies, and one Emera owns a big portion of. So far the tax dollars handed out are in the tens of millions. If Tidal technology is ever fully developed the profits will not flow into the hands of the many but the few.

Premier Dexter this summer also announced public funds towards offshore wind research. This is the Province committing to potential mega-projects whose long term benefits will accrue only to very big business interests.

Contrast tidal and offshore wind with solar energy. Solar is a developed technology and very cost effective, yet there will be no serious government action on solar. Our politicians and their advisors are solar ignorant, even solar phobic. The government is against engaging with solar technologies. Developing solar at a broad scale public level would provide for maximum benefit to Nova Scotians, by nearly everyone having solar installed on their homes and buildings. Many countries in the world with solar regimes similar to ours are engaging in a major way with solar.

Nova Scotia should be installing on nearly all homes by 2015 solar hot water and solar hot air panels, that are regionally manufactured. Then we should install Photovoltaic panels on our roofs between 2015-2020. This would make several thousand jobs, and the energy cost savings would be in the pockets of the many, not the few. Solar offers the greatest and the simplest potential for transitioning to green power. It's doable starting today, and would reduce coal fired pollution, with the green benefits spreading to us all.

The green energy future that Nova Scotians have been promised, which includes a non-polluting electrical system, bears little relationship to the reality of what is actually taking place and being planned for the future in Nova Scotia. I hope you are in shock reading this, as I am in shock to have understood this.

Notes:

-see the NSURB Biomass hearing Final Summary by Neal Livingston co-chair of the Margaree Environmental Association.

-see Neal Livingston's article on making Nova Scotia a solar society.

<http://www.blackriver.ns.ca/solar.html>

For 30 years Neal Livingston has been a leader in implementing energy efficiency and renewable projects, and thinking and promoting a green future that benefits us all. (See: www.blackriver.ns.ca)