



Consensus uncovered for change at NB Power

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Energy: Experts, industry agree status quo not an option for NB Power, says Tory panel member

A1 Adam Huras
Telegraph-Journal

Energy consultants and industry leaders agree that the status quo for NB Power "is not an option," according to the heads of an Opposition energy panel.

Pierre-Marcel Desjardins, an economics professor with the Université de Moncton, and Darrell Stephenson, a partner with the Stewart McKelvey law firm in Saint John, were appointed two months ago to help shape the Progressive Conservative energy policy for the province.

They provided an update on Friday of consultations held with energy sector experts, industry and governments aimed at aiding the formulation of a long-term energy policy for the Tories.

"There is a divergence of opinions on options and solutions, but in terms of big issues that need to be confronted there seems to be a consensus," Stephenson said.

"The status quo for NB Power is not an option."

Large industrial electricity users have also voiced concerns over rate hikes in the wake of the loss of some of the province's largest energy users and the mounting cost of the Point Lepreau refurbishment.

"A big issue is the loss of industrial load," Stephenson said. "We have lost roughly 300 megawatts with the loss of industry, which is roughly a third of what our traditional industrial load is.

"If you think of that in terms of if you are managing a business and you lose a third of your customers but you still have to pay rent, you still have the bank loan and you still have all the same employees, that's a challenge."

The two-person energy panel has been given a mandate to isolate the province's energy challenges and to develop a document to use in establishing a long-term energy policy.

The fact-finding mission has already included a two-day summit in Moncton with industry leaders. Opposition Leader David Alward also met with Newfoundland Premier Danny Williams earlier this month.

He has also requested meetings with Quebec Premier Jean Charest, Nova Scotia Premier Darrell Dexter and Prince Edward Island Premier Robert Ghiz, as well as Maine Governor John Baldacci to explore opportunities for regional collaboration.

"There is a need for regional transmission and co-operation if we want to do a large gas-fired power plant, if we want to look at Lepreau 2," Stephenson said. "Well, if somehow that became viable tomorrow, we need some way to get it to market.

"Everyone we have talked to has talked about the benefits to taking advantage of our geography."

He added: "We don't have any oil, we don't have hydro, but we are geographically central to any movement of power and that's something that we have to look at."

Premier Shawn Graham attempted to take advantage of the province's location while also addressing concerns over long-term energy prices in the announced billion-dollar proposal to sell NB Power's assets to Hydro-Québec last October.

While the deal fell through, the Liberal government released this week an options paper detailing possible reforms to strengthen the New Brunswick Energy and Utilities Board.

"We have recommendation from NB Power on structural changes that it is going to make it more cost effective," said Energy Minister Jack Keir on Friday.

"I'm focused on making the right decisions as quickly as we can."

Keir also announced he will bring together various groups next month, including government, business, researchers and social organizations to discuss possibilities, including a second nuclear reactor in New Brunswick and opportunities around the Canaport LNG terminal in Saint John.

In April, Alward unveiled plans to establish a long-term energy policy for the province within six months of forming the government, should his party be successful in the provincial election scheduled for

September.

The Tories intend to begin public consultations in July.

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I'm not sure where this is headed for either the incompetent Liberals or the Tories, as both parties seems to concern themselves with what is good for the large industrial users while ignoring the very people who are expected to pay the bills. Businesses cry foul whenever they are asked to pay their fair share, while at the same time not giving two thoughts as to how their downloading of their financial responsibilities has affected the lives of the working poor, a segment of NB society that continues to grow. Governments are supposed to be looking out for the vulnerable, yet these two tired parties seem to be more interested in what it is people like the Irving's, McCain's and Ganong's of the world want. Sure these people create jobs, but they also profit greatly from their investments, and I have yet to see any corporation not pass along their expenses to consumers, the imposition of the HST is but one example of corporations downloading onto consumers.

16  THUMBS UP 12  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

J. Wayne McQueen, Burnaby on 19/06/10 10:55:12 AM ADT



Is this phase 1 of the Conservative sell out of NB Power? What Shawn started David will finish. After all both answer to the same elite, and neither think they need to bother answering to the people of this Province. I think we should all be very wary of what's happening right under our noses.

10  THUMBS UP 17  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

StraightShooter2010 Western NB, Woodstock on 19/06/10 05:21:03 PM ADT



This just the reason there must be a full Public Inquiry into all of NB Power's operations. The only fair and just way is to give the Auditor full authority to recommend a criminal investigation if he makes that determination. The watchdog needs teeth to protect the people's money and assets!

20  THUMBS UP 5  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Janet Matheson, St. George, NB on 19/06/10 06:44:52 PM ADT

There were only two representatives of business at the meeting: Irvings and Emera. If that is consultation, it falls far short.

10  THUMBS UP 7  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

J. R, Moncton, NB on 20/06/10 11:11:45 AM ADT



"Concenses uncovered ,for change at NB Power!"

WE THE PEOPLE have been saying that for OVER 20 years now!

The PC,s go out and get an economics professor from UDEM... a group of lawyers to straighen out NB Power..

We NEED Business men not..a professor and a group of Lawyers.. with one thing in mind..How Much do we get?

All surveys even published in this nerwspaper over the years show that the overwhelming majority of Canadians dont TRUST Lawyers..Get it Mr. Alward...

5  THUMBS UP 3  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE


John Gallant, Moncton on 20/06/10 08:09:51 PM ADT

Janet Matheson, St. George, NB.

Here is an example based on fact....NB Power has written off millions in electrical payments .

One business I personally knew, got over 150 thousand dollars written off to keep the business open....the minister at the time was minister of power and also president of that business....

WE do indeed need an investigation once and for all! we should demand that the next election ,and, written under oath to do so by the leader!,if elected He will do that! Call for a public inquiry...so we can attend with our evidence and fact..

2  THUMBS UP 2  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE



John Gallant, Moncton on 20/06/10 08:18:25 PM ADT

NB Power does not make a profit. Read the Auditor General's report. The only way they show a profit is by deferring current expenses to the future by using the deferral account. They have been unable to even pay the interest on their debt for at least 10 years and their debt has gone up 24% in the last 5 years.

They still owe 800 million on Lepreau which was built 27 years ago.

Is that a picture of a company making a profit.

I support the request for a full public inquiry into their accounting practices, their management and their uncontrolled overtime.

2  THUMBS UP 2  THUMBS DOWN

 FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

J. R., Moncton, NB on 21/06/10 09:55:25 AM ADT

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