

A Pioneering Spirit is a Requirement on the Road to Hopenhagen

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As of September, the Chamber identified new strategic priorities; one of them being sustainability. Since then it has become clear that the Chamber's choice of sustainability as a priority couldn't have been timelier or more important for the business community and the province.

The Chamber defines sustainability in terms of both the economy and the environment. The Chamber's definition of sustainability was reinforced at the Power of Green conference in Halifax, which took place in October. During the conference, John Woods, Vice President of Energy for Minas Basin Pulp and Power, stated that it takes three things to be successful in the energy business; strong government, strong policy and strong relationships with the business community. Mr. Woods spoke passionately about the fact that survivability in business today equals sustainability; that the two go hand in hand.

Mr. Woods also stated that he believes that one of the key challenges in Nova Scotia is that our investment community is not as proactive as it is in Europe. Discussion about investment continued as Nicholas Parker, Executive Chairman of Cleantech Group, stated that clean technology is now the number one area for venture capital investment in the United States.

What are the implications of these facts on a local level? Dalhousie University, lead by Dr. David Wheeler, is currently conducting a series of public consultations which will contribute to determining the process of how Nova Scotia will generate 25 per cent of the province's electricity with renewable energy by 2015. Chamber staff along with members of the Chamber's Energy Advisory Group, have been attending these sessions. Four possible "electricity mix scenarios" have been developed as a result of this process.

The four scenarios are:

Wind – 80 to 100% wind, with 20% imports

Big Wind and Big Biomass – 50% wind, 50% biomass

Displacement Plus Technology Push - 10% wind, 10% forest biomass, 2.5-10% ocean energy, 4-8% solar electric, 20% non-forest biomass, 20% displacement

Diversified Portfolio and Smart Grid- 35% wind, 20% imports, 20% forest biomass, 2.5% ocean energy, 2% solar electric, 10% forest biomass, 15% displacement

It is apparent that if adopted, these scenarios, especially scenarios three and four, will require a certain level of pioneering spirit. Our government, the public and investors must be willing to support early technology and just as important, they must be willing to pull the plug on technology that proves unsuccessful.

The Chamber's Energy Advisory Group recently met with Deputy Minister Bruce Cameron to relay the message that we must establish energy security as a crucial component of the province's Energy Strategy. The Chamber defines energy security broadly as an energy supply that is available, reliable, affordable and clean; in other words sustainable. The Energy Advisory Group also suggested to the Minister that the province must build upon national and global best practices in order to improve energy security. Taking on the task of determining the energy mix that will work best for our province will require changing the status quo - and that will require a pioneering spirit.

With a majority government in Nova Scotia, now is the time to take some risks. In December, Premier Darrell Dexter is attending the United Nation's Climate Change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, where there will be an attempt at a global climate deal. Some have criticized the Premier's choice to be there; but if Nova Scotia is to be a global player, we must have a presence on the global stage. Let's just hope that Premier Dexter goes to Copenhagen with an open mind and comes back fired up with the pioneering spirit that is required to get the job done.

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