

FALL/WINTER 2020

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The Magazine for the **Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities**

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From gravel to green:
Park replaces abandoned stone pit

THE INNOVATION ISSUE

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(Cover Photo Credit: Tourism Nova Scotia) Kayakers paddle into Baddeck, one of several business centres in line for streamlined bylaws.



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The NSFM is a not-for-profit organization mandated to represent the interests of municipal governments across Nova Scotia. Total membership is 376 elected officials representing all 49 municipalities.

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Innovation is a beautiful mindset

By President Pam Mood

There is nothing quite as exhilarating as sitting around a table with a group of visionary leaders and thinkers who are so excited about the art of the possible that the ideas flow spontaneously, unconstrained, into that beautiful melting pot of brilliance that will ultimately change our communities for the better.

Innovation is led by those who are not afraid to go down the proverbial rabbit holes, whose curiosity serves as a spark, and who would never utter the deadly words, “but it’s always been done this way.” We live in a Country and a Province that is the envy of so many, and there is so much more potential.

How do we get there? For starters, let’s toss any preconceived notions, old ways of doing things and any other blinders into the landfill where they belong. It’s time to get a bit uncomfortable, hear and embrace the opinionated, encourage persistence and shout out “oh, yes we will!” in the face of those telling us the opposite. And while we’re at it, let’s give failure a great big bear hug because if something doesn’t work out, it simply means we are one step closer to success.

We also need to rethink how we build innovative teams and who should be part of them. Imagine an open-minded senior with deep knowledge and experience sitting at a table with a youth whose grasp of the future is unsurpassed and who has yet to hear “you can’t”. Or what about a single mom, her children, and an open-minded recreation expert? Ooooooh the possibilities! These are the teams dreams are made of. Throw in a Council who is unafraid to listen and work with the community and is willing to put

tax dollars towards those things that matter most and we have a win-win!

Building a community is done one block at a time, one idea at a time, and it’s the innovative ideas, big and small, that get us there. It is Bridgewater’s staff building a “Beat the Heat” playground to help folks escape the heat when COVID dictated that the pool would be shut down. It’s the Town of Yarmouth’s work with the Province to bring about the tax laddering legislation that would encourage more development of older buildings throughout the Province. It’s Port Hawkesbury’s reimagining of their main street and it’s HRM’s work on active transportation to encourage healthy alternatives.

The list is endless. Some are big ideas come to life, some are simple. But regardless, they all make a difference in the quality of life of our citizens, and is that not the ultimate goal?

We have another four-year mandate in front of us. Bluntly put, we can go about business as we always have or we can choose to give innovation the reins and hang on tight for the ride of a lifetime filled with new ideas, brilliant plans and an exciting future we have yet to imagine. Innovation isn’t a quick fix or the latest “thing”. We have to be in it for the long haul, ensuring it’s embedded in our organizational culture.

And as I type this, I’m strapping my seatbelt on because I’m ready for the wild and wonderful ride ahead. Innovation... bring it on!

We also need to rethink how we build innovative teams and who should be part of them.



Need for change drives municipal innovation

By CEO Juanita Spencer

Awards for municipal innovation have been handed out in Canada for more than a quarter century.

They're awarded annually for everything from programs, projects and services to government organizations, government members, public sector employees and even municipal-postsecondary collaboration projects.

Renowned institutions like Harvard host projects on Municipal Innovation that support local government and policy leaders who improve the lives of people all over the world through transformative change.

Last year, I was lucky to accompany FCM to Vietnam to help showcase how municipal innovation in Canada can help foster change and success in South East Asia.

But it's the quiet success stories, right here in our own backyard, that deserve the most celebration.

Like many innovative startups, the projects undertaken in Nova Scotia aim to improve efficiency, effectiveness or create a competitive advantage.

But they all got started because of an underlying need to do things better. Innovation really drives the creation and development of new methods *because the old ways are no longer viable or even sustainable.*

There's no better example of that than the work going on in Cape Breton right now, where a red tape project will streamline the work required by small business owners on the island.

The five municipalities on the island and the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness worked together to make it easier for businesses to open, operate and expand.

And it all got started because things weren't working: Local governments were hearing for years how businesses had to navigate a long and complex process just to open their doors.

So, the five municipalities on the island and the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness worked together to make it easier for businesses to open, operate and expand.

No one paved the way for their plan. They just went in knowing that they wanted to improve the situation by changing it.

The same is true of a trio of municipalities who decided to do a better job of providing electricity to their residents.

Even though the Energy Authority created by Antigonish, Mahone Bay and Bridgewater had no template to follow, they didn't turn back or scrap the idea when confronted with the challenge.

As Berwick Mayor Don Clarke remembers, "We weren't surrounded by other options to buy power." So, they created their own opportunity.

Ten wind turbines and an energy authority later, and the

three municipalities now provide electricity to their combined 8,000 residents at a lower rate than Nova Scotia Power!

And now, their original wind turbine project has created a new spinoff into solar energy. You can read about it on page 10 – and you can fully appreciate when Mahone Bay Mayor David Devenne says: “I think people should understand that this sort of thing can be done.”

Innovation has been our motto at NSFM this year.

COVID-19 has required us to work on the fly, and adjust to rapidly changing conditions for our office, our municipalities and ourselves.

Hearing about the challenges faced by our members, NSFM took a page from the Harvard project book and decided to help improve the lives of Nova Scotians through transformative change.

We were instrumental in creating the \$380M Provincial Loan Program for Nova Scotia municipalities and our COVID-19 Lost Revenues Report was

so transformative it’s cited in the Provincial and Federal Government’s Safe Restart Agreement.

In the spring, we didn’t back down because there was no template, no pathway to follow. We forged ahead and trusted that the trail we were blazing was the right one for our municipalities.



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Has COVID-19 forced or enabled municipalities to think out of the box?

By Michael Dolter CD, MBA, CPA, CMA, President, AMANS

For many municipalities, the last seven months have been an exercise similar to that of trying to stay afloat in a dory taking on water. It is not easy to look at this desperate situation and see opportunity, but municipal staff and councils have adapted to the new reality of COVID-19 and achieved an incredible amount in their responses to the pandemic. One could say that municipalities have leaned into the challenges of the pandemic.

It could be argued that the COVID-19 global pandemic has accelerated the shift towards new operating models faster than previous efforts and helped achieve things that seemed impossible prior to March 16, 2020. The opportunity municipalities now face, is to entrench the positive changes brought about by the crisis, and to use other key trends to set a foundation for a different future for municipal government in Nova Scotia.

Virtual meetings provide a case in point. Prior to the pandemic, virtual meetings were something that a few councils had dabbled in (with mixed results). This all changed following Minister Porter's March 22 directive to discontinue all in-person meetings. Virtual meetings—what was once unconscionable for many municipalities—were now the status quo.

Councils and committees adapted quickly; meeting virtually is now a new tool that municipalities have in their toolbox. Going forward, this new virtual world presents a myriad of possibilities for council, committees, and citizens. The immediate need to become proficient in the technology has enabled council and staff recognize this power.

Senior staff have faced many operational challenges throughout the pandemic, but municipalities were able to react rapidly to the challenges the pandemic presented. At the pandemic's outset, municipal leaders recognized that a prolonged lockdown would have a significant impact on the finances of citizens and businesses. However, there was little municipalities could do to offer relief, given that municipalities do not possess the legislative authority to offer property tax deferrals.

Where antiquated legislation prevented them from doing so, they found new ways to work around these old barriers.

Where antiquated legislation prevented them from doing so, they found new ways to work around these old barriers. Municipalities quickly came together and worked with the Province to secure a \$380 million low interest line of credit which was used to backstop a one-time municipal property tax financing program. This innovative new program provided those owners of residential and commercial properties negatively affected by the pandemic with a lifeline in their hour of need.

With 2020 Municipal Elections now behind us, it is the responsibility of new councils to embrace the innovative practices that have been successfully utilized throughout the pandemic. Leaders at both the provincial and municipal levels of government should review the successes and failures of their collective COVID-19 response to identify what worked and why. COVID-19 may have forced municipal officials to think outside of the box, but they are now enabled to carry these new ways forward—the power is with us.

Step Up for local to support the local economy

By Revolve Branding & Marketing

In March, 2020 Revolve launched Step Up Not Out – a campaign encouraging the public to stay home to help flatten the curve during the first wave of COVID-19. When public health officials allowed businesses to re-open with protocols requiring people to physically distance, wear masks, and follow proper hygiene, Revolve changed the narrative to shine a spotlight on the importance of supporting local, independent businesses. The campaign has evolved into a rallying cry to Step Up for Local. As we look for new ways to bolster our economy during the pandemic and as we head into a recession, spending money locally goes a long way in benefiting our community.

“In this increasingly homogenized world, indie businesses give communities texture, colour, shape, taste and social capital. The very fabric of our country is woven together by the personalities, innovation and entrepreneurship of small business – which comprises 99.8 per cent of all businesses and represents the largest employee base in Canada.” – Phil Otto, Revolve CEO

There are a number of reasons why supporting local is an essential part of supporting our economy in Nova Scotia and across Canada.

Less money leaves the community: 45 cents of every dollar spent at a locally owned business stays in the local economy versus 14 cents spent at large chains.

The money that stays cycles: This creates tax revenue to fund healthcare, education, safer communities, streets and sidewalks.

Local businesses pay it forward: Not only are local businesses more likely to support other local businesses, they also contribute 2.5 times more to local initiatives and non-profits than non-local owners.

Better service: Local businesses, including B2B, professional services and retail, are more in tune with the local landscape and the needs of community members.

Enrich your community: Small businesses add character, texture and personality to communities which in turn boosts property values for local homeowners.

Donating small makes a big impact: Local, small non-profits generally have lower overhead than large national or global organizations – and when you give locally, you can see the impact of your gift right in your community.

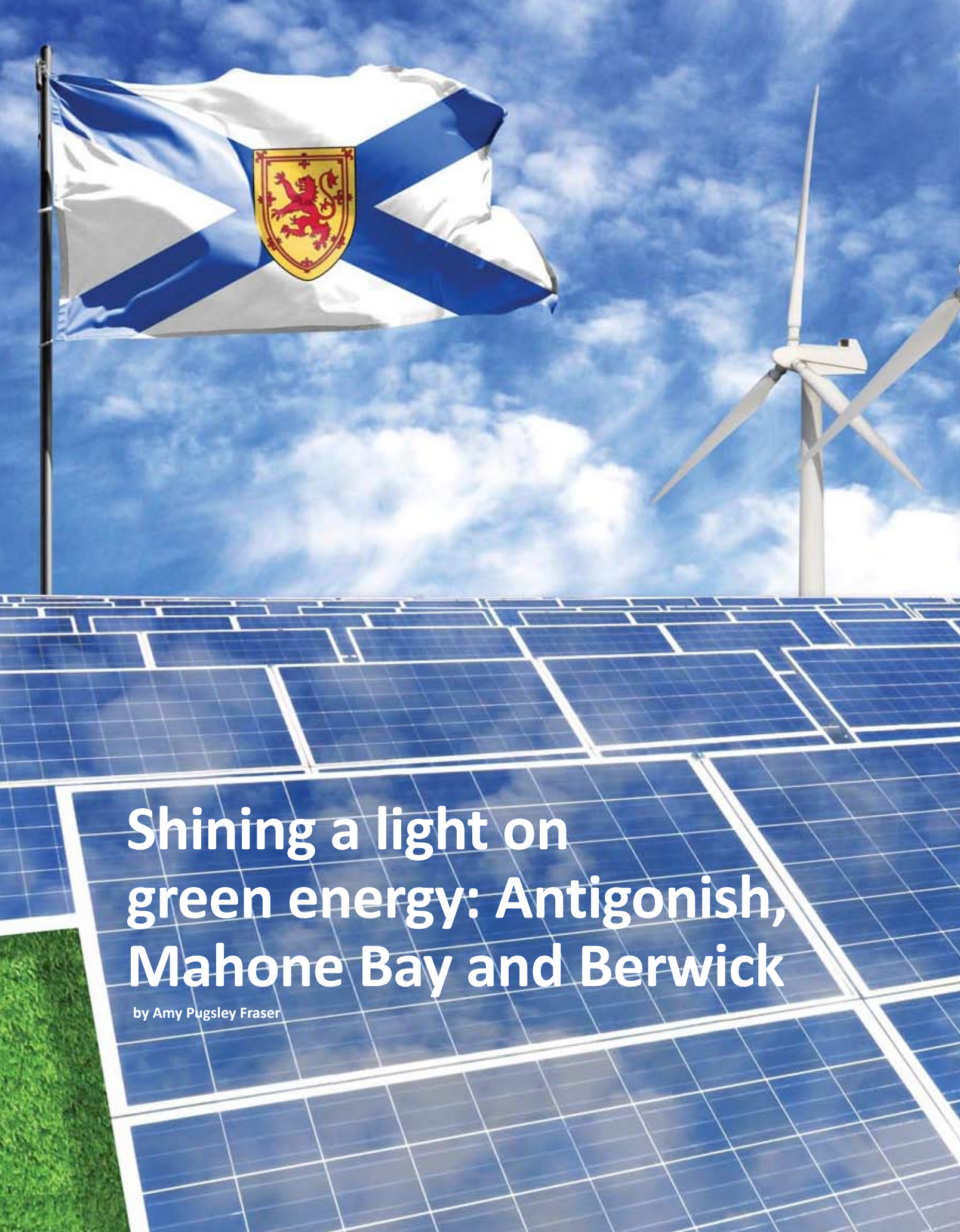
Create jobs: Small business employs the largest workforce base in the country, employing 70 per cent of Canadians.

Local businesses care more: Local businesses are more eager to reflect their communities' values, needs and feedback than big chains.

In response to the pandemic, many small businesses have pivoted to offer online shopping or takeout and delivery, and new local apps like Kangaroo and Hali-gone make instant home delivery available from local restaurants and small retailers. While local businesses are adapting to better serve their communities, we can do our part by showing our support.

Beyond shopping, eating, donating and celebrating local, you can share the Step Up for Local message to encourage others to do the same. Whether you're a proud supporter or you represent a local organization (either B2B or B2C, a restaurant, service, non-profit or otherwise), we invite you to visit stepupforlocal.ca to download and share assets online and offline.

Together, we can strengthen our communities by supporting the local economy. Step Up for Local today.



Shining a light on green energy: Antigonish, Mahone Bay and Berwick

by Amy Pugsley Fraser



A pioneering wind farm collaboration involving three Nova Scotia towns has whipped them into the fast track in renewable power generation and saved money for their municipalities and their residents. ~

Now, Antigonish, Berwick and Mahone Bay want to harness the power of the sun with a trio of solar gardens that will increase their green power.

“It’s a win-win-win scenario, with the environment being one of the winners,” Mahone Bay Mayor David Devenne says.

The idea for the solar garden came from Nelson, BC, where the country’s first community solar garden was launched back in 2017 in the town of 10,000.

Members of the community invest in solar energy production on a per-panel basis. The solar energy that is generated by the system is credited to the subscriber’s electricity bills in proportion to their investment on an annual basis for 25 years.

“I think people should understand that this sort of thing can be done. And we need to find ways to enhance it,” says Devenne.

If the project goes ahead, it will be the second time that Mahone Bay – and its energy partners Berwick and Antigonish – has been on the cutting edge of renewable power.

More than half a dozen years ago, the three towns created AREA – the Alternative Resource Energy Authority – through the utilities run by their towns.

It was a way they could follow the Province’s 2010 Renewable Electricity Regulations to have 25 per cent renewable electricity supply by 2015, and 40 per cent by 2020.

Before that, the majority of their power was purchased from Nova Scotia Power, and there didn’t seem to be many alternatives.

“We weren’t surrounded by other options to buy power,” says Berwick Mayor Don Clarke.

(Photo Credit: Shutterstock) After creating their own energy authority to harness the wind’s power, three Nova Scotia municipalities have big plans to branch out into solar energy.

But over time, and as interest in renewables began to grow, municipalities started getting unsolicited proposals from companies interested in building wind turbines.

“In most cases, they wanted us to pay a little more up front with the promise that over time, this wind would be cheaper. But we didn’t think as a small utility that we were going to be able to convince our customers to pay more for green power,” says Clarke.

Then along came Minas Energy, a locally owned Joudrey family group from Hantsport.

“They came up with the idea that we could build wind turbines ourselves and then sell the power to ourselves,” Clarke remembered in an interview.

Even though “municipalities, could

borrow money as cheaply as anybody,” they worked on the numbers and soon realized they’d need to bring in partners to make it work.

They shopped it around to the municipalities with their own electric utilities in Nova Scotia at that time (Antigonish, Berwick, Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, Riverport and Canso) and got interest from Mahone Bay and Antigonish.

It wasn’t all smooth sailing, says Mayor Clarke: “There were problems in some areas, people don’t always want turbines close to them,” he says, citing concerns with shadow flicker, noise generated by the turbines, and the impact on wildlife.

With significant project development assistance from Minas Energy, AREA developed the Ellershouse Wind Farm in three stages. They started

with four turbines and now have 10 in operation.

“They’re not visible or too impactful on the Ellershouse community,” says Clarke, noting the creation of a community liaison committee helped. They represent the community and bring forward questions and concerns as they arise.

The Ellershouse Wind Farm also sponsors community initiatives to the tune of \$10,000 annually, including Saint Louise Union Church, Ellershouse Community Hall, university bursaries and school breakfast program.

The energy produced in the Ellershouse Wind farm feeds into Nova Scotia Power’s substation in St. Croix.

The communities pay Nova Scotia Power to transport the energy from



(Photo Credit: Shutterstock) Lights come on at dusk in the Town of Antigonish, one of three Nova Scotia municipalities that created an energy authority and built a wind farm to combat rising power costs and to achieve green energy targets proposed by the Province of Nova Scotia.

the turbines to the three towns, and they pay transmission tariffs.

The business case was worked out over about two decades with the towns sharing the wind farm cost based upon the amount of energy they use: Antigonish is about a 60 per cent owner, Berwick about 27 per cent and the other 10-12 per cent is Mahone Bay.

Mayor David Devenne says most of the people in Mahone Bay do buy from the town's electric utility.

"We give them a reliable source of power and we have far fewer outages than the areas around the town that are with Nova Scotia Power. And, it's a very small town so it's easy for staff to be aware of what's going on when problems arise.

And lastly, and most importantly, "from the consumer's perspective, it's a lower-priced electrical product."

At more than an hour away by car, the Ellershouse Wind farm is likely out of sight and out of mind for most Mahone Bay residents. But the proposed solar gardens would really be an in-house project.

"It will allow us to generate the electricity right here in town, and use it right here in town. So, for that portion of our electrical system, we won't have to pay NSF's tariff on the grid, because we won't use the grid."

They're eyeing a piece of a former brownfield near the town's sewage treatment plant to potentially house 5,400 solar panels.

"It's land that would otherwise go empty or unused," says Devenne.

"And we're anticipating 12-18 per cent of our electrical requirements will come from that."

Gurprasad Gurumurthy, an energy coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre, says the three municipalities deserve a lot of credit for moving their municipalities away from

fossil fuels.

"It is a great effort and the (new solar gardens) is a great project. They are initiatives led at the ground level that need more support."

Moving away from fossil fuels not only brings environmental benefits but also community benefits too. People who live around thermal plants are breathing in harmful pollutants.

"For community health it's really

detrimental, so it's really important to move away from fossil fuels."

In the long run, there is a whole industry around implementing green energy like wind farms and solar panels, including the installation and technical support.

"You also generate green jobs and that becomes economically beneficial, but also socio-economically beneficial."

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Rural Internet Expansion

Provided by Evan Nemeth, Economic Development Officer-Research Lead,
Western Regional Enterprise Network

Access to high-speed internet has been a growing challenge facing rural communities in Nova Scotia for some time, amplified further by the restrictions that resulted from COVID-19. The ability to socialize, collaborate, work and learn remotely is more important than ever, and a stable and fast internet connection is required to enable these activities. With recent announcements of fibre-optic connections offered through Bell Canada coming to a combined 7,000 previously underserved civic addresses in Western Nova Scotia, things are looking up.

Work on this project began in 2016 when the Western Regional Enterprise Network (Western REN) began an economic development approach to identify robust solutions for Western Nova Scotia. Working directly with the business community, Western REN staff heard repeatedly that lack of access to high-speed internet at their place of work, and at home was having negative impacts on their operations. Partnering with the Municipalities of the Districts of Argyle, Barrington, Digby and Yarmouth, staff worked to identify the unserved, and underserved communities in the region, and what the top solutions would be.

The infrastructure required to provide fibre-optic connections is costly, and to tackle these challenges, the Western REN and partner municipalities began discussions with the provincial and federal government, as well as Internet Service Providers (ISPs) operating in the province. When the provincial government announced the \$193 million Nova Scotia Internet Trust Fund, and Develop Nova Scotia's role in developing and implementing a strategy for connecting more than 95 per cent of civic addresses in the province, things started to accelerate.

Of the ISPs that met with leaders in the region, Bell Canada showed the strongest interest in reaching the hardest to reach communities with their all-fibre network, offering speeds of up to 1.5 Gigabits per second. They worked closely with Western REN and municipal staff to identify the short and long-term goals to reach unserved and underserved communities. In February 2020, announcements were made for the first round of the internet projects funding through Develop Nova Scotia's Request for Proposals for projects that could provide connections commencing in 2020. In this first round, 1,690 civic addresses were an-

nounced through this partnership with Bell Canada in the Western Region, which spans across seven municipalities between Digby and Barrington. The municipal units were able to provide financial support to these applications so that they would be viewed more favourably. Connections started being made right away, some of which managed to become available before COVID-19 forced people home.

Following the success of the first round, the Western REN and partner municipalities continued to work with Bell to identify communities that might take a longer timeline to reach. On September 1st, a second round of announcements was made by Develop Nova Scotia for the Western Region, announcing access to approximately 5,400 additional underserved civic addresses by Summer 2022. "With this second round of funding from the Nova Scotia Internet Funding Trust and our partner municipalities, we will bring high-speed Internet service to many communities in the region, reaching approximately 5,400 new homes and businesses with direct connections to Bell's all-fibre network," said Angelique LeBlanc, CEO of Western REN. "This project is critical for the businesses and residents in the region during the best of times, but especially so during COVID-19, where many of our region's businesses, employees and students need a reliable Internet connection to continue business operations and implement work from home scenarios. Flexibility will be required where possible as the health crisis continues."

Work continues to be done to reach more of the remaining unserved and underserved communities in the region, and the collective approach of the municipalities in the Western Region has attributed to the success of this work. "Municipalities face many challenges which makes it difficult to maintain and improve municipal services," said Chris Frotten, CAO of the Municipality of the District of Barrington. "That is why working regionally is essential on initiatives as complex and challenging as the improvement of rural internet. It not only allows for greater economies of scale but also creates one central link versus having each individual municipality working separately. The municipal partnership within the WREN and our recent success on this initiative is a fantastic example."

Virtual Adviser Program

Nova Scotia's Regional Enterprise Networks (RENs) are excited to offer the **Virtual Adviser Program**, powered by BoomersPlus, matching seasoned and experienced advisers from across the country with small and medium sized local businesses to provide online mentorship, advice, and guidance.

For more information on the program, contact your nearest REN organization below!



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Cape Breton I.

Pilot Project promises smooth sailing for CB businesses

by Amy Pugsley Fraser

A pilot project to cut red tape in Cape Breton's five municipalities will make it easier to operate – and expand – businesses on the island.



Cape Breton island represents almost one-third of Nova Scotia's land mass and is a significant economic driver within the province.

"Often, business owners own more than one business across multiple jurisdictions. So, for them, having consistency is important because it makes their businesses run more smoothly," says Carla Arsenault, CEO of Cape Breton Partnership.

Historically, there has been no coordination or streamlining of bylaws between municipalities, so there are different rules depending on where you want to set up shop.

That really hit home in Baddeck a few summers ago when mobile food trucks popped up to service the popular lake-side tourist hot spot.

"One of the best examples I can give you is that we have two or three mobile food trucks in Victoria County, but we don't have any regulations," says Bruce Morrison, Warden of Victoria County.

"But there are regulations once they cross into CBRM."

That proved especially challenging when the island hosted

its first Food Truck Rally around the Cabot Trail. The trail spans two municipalities and required navigating more than just the mountainous terrain of Cape Breton Highlands National Park.

Depending on where you were, "there were areas that didn't have bylaws, those that did and developed new ones, and ones that were archaic," says Morrison.

The Red Tape project will streamline the bylaws governing mobile food trucks to make the same rules, fees and permits apply no matter where you are on the island.

The owner of a food truck that operates in Richmond and Inverness counties welcomes a one-size-fits-all approach, but he's worried that change will come at a price.

The cost to operate could "go through the roof" if there's a unified Cape Breton permit, says Tim Lockhart, who operates Stand and Stuff Your Face Food Truck with his wife, Rhonda.

He admits to being skeptical because of all the hoops he's had to jump to get his food truck up and running.

"There's too much politics involved in small business.



island to highlight the “Cape Breton Regulatory Modernization Project” and dozens of business owners turned up.

The project is a partnership between the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, the Cape Breton Regional municipality, the town of Port Hawkesbury, and the counties of Inverness, Richmond and Victoria.

“This is all about businesses and making it easier to set up and operate,” says Arsenault, who helped host the sessions along with local chambers of commerce.

The goal of the project is to work together and provide a more consistent operating environment for local business owners, she says.

With financial support from the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing and with the help of the Cape Breton Partnership, consultants were hired to do a high-level review of all by-laws in each Cape Breton municipality and create customized action plans that municipal councils could implement to modernize their regulatory regime.

The consultant, Portside Law, brought the bylaws up to date and up on the

web for citizens and business owners to readily access them.

“Often people don’t know where to go to ask the questions so by making those bylaws available online, it provides additional transparency and is also incredibly important in today’s time of COVID,” says Arsenault.

Premier Stephen McNeil, minister responsible for the Office of Regulatory Affairs and Service Effectiveness, says he applauds the municipalities for their leadership in making it easier for businesses to start up, operate and expand in Cape Breton.

“The business community identified a need and local governments have developed individual plans to make meaningful adjustments to their regulations.”

Warden Morrison points to the “tremendous opportunity” to have all five municipal units come together and do this work as a region. An unexpected side effect is the unity it’s brought to the island.

“There’s a good sense of cooperation amongst the municipalities,” Morrison said.

There’s a lot of process and a lot of red tape involved,” he says.

To operate their mobile business, the Lockharts have to follow several rules and regulations, including applying and paying for: a food truck permit with safety inspection, a public health plan, a restaurant permit, Food Hygiene certification, motor vehicle license and permit, insurance, and a business license.

“There must be six or seven of them. I could talk all day about this, because there are so many problems with the system and how things are for small businesses on Cape Breton Island.”

The Lockharts aren’t the only ones who would benefit from a unified approach.

Last summer, the Cape Breton Partnership hosted sessions around the



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From gravel to green: Park replaces abandoned stone pit

By Debbie Nielsen

THE FEDERAL GAS TAX FUND AT WORK IN NOVA SCOTIA:
A Project Highlight

MUNICIPALITY: The District of Lunenburg

PROJECT: The River Ridge Common

PROJECT CATEGORY: Recreational infrastructure

NATIONAL OBJECTIVE: Strong cities and communities

The Municipality of the District of Lunenburg created a vision, with input from the community, to transform an abandoned gravel pit and woodlot into a multi-use park that could be enjoyed by people of all ages and abilities. After careful consideration, consultation, planning and three years of construction, this vision has become a reality. In the summer of 2019, a celebration was had for the opening of the first phase of the River Ridge Common, a 115-acre day park located in New Germany at the north end of the Municipality. Since that time, the park's popularity has grown exponentially, and now with the fall upon us, the Municipality is wrapping up the project's third phase, which includes many new features to further enhance the experience of its users.

With support from the federal Gas Tax Fund, the Province and the local community, the District of Lunenburg has created a park with a multitude of offerings and opportunities to be active outdoors and explore nature. River Ridge Common has accessible trails (three km in total) which lead into a beautiful, natural playground. Wood features (such as Hemlock Henge) and an exposed layer of granite (aptly named Chalk Rock) allows the young and young-at-heart to play, be creative, enhance motor skills and tap into their inner explorer in a safe and natural setting. Just this summer, the Municipality expanded the playground to include an accessible basket swing for children and youth of all abilities, and an expression swing, which allows an adult and child to interact and swing together, face-to-face. Also, sunshades have been added to the play area to allow more time to be spent safely outdoors.

Deeper into the park, old woodlot roads have been transformed into walking trails, extending on both sides of the South Shore Annapolis Valley Trail. Currently, the Municipality is building a pull-off and picnic area for all-terrain vehicles and other users of the former railbed.

Not far from where the River Ridge Common meets the former railbed, the Municipality engaged with local students to design and build a trail that hugs Ross Brook and offers scenic access to the ravine and falls at Indian Brook. To make the most of this picturesque setting, the students created a rest area, using local felled trees to create benches along the meandering brook.

This summer, the Municipality built another four kilometres of mountain bike trails, bringing the total up to almost eight. For those new to mountain biking (MTB), the River Ridge Common now has an MTB skills area to teach riders how to stay safely on trails, ride more efficiently and gain better balance on their bikes. Finally, a new pump track – a continuous dirt loop with berms – allows users to ride without pedaling, by making a pumping motion with their upper and lower bodies to move around the track. Providing a fun and safe environment for activity, the pump track is used by those with various skill levels on bikes and scooters, and even occasionally, by individuals pushing a stroller.



For the final phase of River Ridge Common, the Municipality has plans to develop a lookoff connected to the trail system and naturalized gardens. It will also add a gazebo to the pull-off and picnic area near the trail along the former railbed. "The park has something for all ages . . . various trails to walk or ride on, tables and benches to eat a picnic lunch at and playground equipment to use," says Sandra Joudrey, a regular park user. "It's the perfect place to spend a few hours and it doesn't cost you a cent!"

The many features and elements the District of Lunenburg has thoughtfully built into the River Ridge Common offers something for everyone and provides a beautiful setting for people to recreate, explore, relax and appreciate nature. By bringing the vision of this multi-faceted day-park to life, the Municipality has created a perfect place to spend time outdoors and has made a significant contribution to support healthy and active lifestyles. The River Ridge Common is truly a legacy project that will serve both individuals and the community well for many years to come.

Debbie Nielsen is NSFM's Infrastructure & Sustainability Officer.





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- Recreation: 12.5 km of recreational paths built, extended or improved
- Community Energy: 719,981 KWH of energy saved

CONCLUSION

Nova Scotia municipalities benefit greatly from the federal Gas Tax Fund. The GTF has been instrumental in helping to address municipal infrastructure priorities. Its flexible approach is delivered in a manner that promotes long-term planning and meets the federal government’s national objectives.

It is apparent that the GTF has had a positive impact on

both communities and citizens across Canada. Outside of the three national objectives, many supplementary benefits were realized as well. Increased pedestrian safety, better working environments, regional cooperation and an increase in sound asset management practices are just a few of the many additional benefits.

The Government of Canada’s permanent GTF has been well received and will enable municipalities in Nova Scotia to continue to invest in long-term capital infrastructure that supports healthy, vibrant and sustainable communities.

To access a copy of the 2014 – 17 Outcomes Report visit the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s website (<https://beta.novascotia.ca/documents/canada-nova-scotia-agreement-federal-gas-tax-fund-outcomes-report-2014-2017>) or NSFM’s website (www.nsfm.ca/federal-gas-tax-fund.html). If you have any questions about the GTF or the Outcomes Report, contact Rene Frigault, Planning & Development Officer, DMAH (Rene.Frigault@novascotia.ca or 902-424-2088).

Debbie Nielsen is NSFM’s Infrastructure and Sustainability Officer.



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Supporting Nova Scotia farms

Provided by Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

In recent months, we've been encouraged to support local more than ever. We were encouraged to do this by taking staycations, shopping at locally-owned business and getting takeout from nearby restaurants. Many farms throughout Nova Scotia felt this particular demand increase and worked tirelessly to keep up with the demand.

While having product available to sell is necessary in order to supply the demand, there are many resources farms rely on to be successful. Farms are typically located in rural regions of Nova Scotia, as arable land is more abundant. Unfortunately, trying to run a farm in rural Nova Scotia does come with its challenges

– many gaps and barriers impacting farms can be supported by municipal governments. These included access and affordability of agricultural land, internet service and general provincial infrastructure. Whether support on these matters influenced by the municipal and provincial governments relationships or improved through



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strategic planning, there is a lot that municipal governments can do to support existing farms and promote the establishment of new farms.

Planning for agriculture is more than ensuring agricultural land is protected and available for growth. Protection of and access to agricultural land is critical, along with the growth of strategic, commercial and residential locations. A good agriculture site has many components. Many of these are basic agronomic factors like cleared land and soil quality, while others can be influenced by good planning. Traffic and road safety with respect to road equipment and limiting agriculture complaints from neighbours are important factors that come with good municipal planning that is informed by local farmers and farm organizations.

As consultations open up for the new, mandatory requirements for municipal planning throughout Nova Scotia, NSFA encourages municipal governments to reach out to County/Regional Federations of Agriculture for input. NSFA will be supporting County and Regional Federations through this endeavour.

An MPS isn't the only strategy municipalities can take to support farms. A procurement strategy that prioritizes buying local will help farms and other businesses. The challenges that COVID-19 brought to the local economy were really just exacerbated issues that have long been talked about, notably the importance of supporting the local economy.

When a company or municipality prioritizes sourcing and procuring local, they are securing farms' future in that community. This means that the farm remains viable and thus contributes to the economy. Farms source services and supplies from local companies, farms have employees who spend money at local businesses and shops, and a vibrant agricultural industry can also be linked to rural and agri-tourism throughout the province.

NSFA strongly encourages all levels of government to consider the support to farms they are providing when

sourcing local. Recognizing that some municipalities are in better positions than others based on services provided by that municipality to implement local procurement, all municipalities can work to influence provincial and federal governments to source local. Some examples of this support can be to require organizations operating in government owned buildings to procure a certain percentage of products locally. Other examples include encouraging provincial services like hospitals, schools and prisons to source local food. Implementing a local procurement policy can be phased in simply by starting with a policy to buy local followed by adding and increasing targets over time.

Since 1895, the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture has represented the interests of over 2,000 farm families across the province and over 90 per cent of agriculture production in Nova Scotia.



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Risk Management Considerations for Volunteers

A member of a volunteer service organization was involved in a motor vehicle accident while performing their volunteer duties for Christ King Parish. An 82-year old man was rendered quadriplegic as a result of the accident. The volunteer group didn't have insurance and the driver's automobile liability insurance had a limit of \$500,000. The Parish was required to pay the remainder of the \$17 million settlement.

Volunteers can be an important part of an organization. They can provide services that may not otherwise be possible due to personnel and financial limitations and they can also be used to augment existing services. But, if your organization is not careful, a volunteer can become a liability.

People volunteer for a variety of reasons, including:

- Sharing and donating their skills.
- Helping others and keeping their skills sharp.
- Meeting new people, being a part of a team and having fun.
- Exploring a career or earning academic credits.

Your Volunteer Program

Once the decision to implement a volunteer program has been made, your organization needs to have a plan. When hiring employees, your organization likely starts with a job description, a list of necessary qualifications, the amount of compensation the employee will receive and a disciplinary policy. You should organize your volunteer program in the same way.

There are 13 steps in a volunteer plan:

1. Develop a volunteer policy and procedure.
2. Create a volunteer job description.
3. Communicate the plan to your staff.
4. Prepare screening criteria.
5. Create an advertisement and distribute it.
6. Conduct interviews.
7. Screen potential volunteers.
8. Develop a rejection procedure.

9. Perform orientation and training with new volunteers.
10. Ensure the volunteer has proper resources.
11. Evaluate the volunteer and give feedback.
12. Perform regular recognition.
13. Keep records of volunteers and projects.

Volunteer Policies

In order for a volunteer program to be successful, the organization needs to develop a clear policy concerning direction and control of volunteers. Volunteer policies are used to clarify the duties of the volunteer and for reference when determining if the person is a volunteer under the organization's insurance policy. Volunteer policies and procedures also provide your volunteers with clear direction and expectations. This increases their satisfaction with the role and their productivity. When your volunteers are satisfied in their roles, your organization experiences a higher volunteer retention rate.

A volunteer policy should include:

- How and why volunteers are being used.
- Who is defined as a volunteer.
- Level of access volunteers will have to information.
- Volunteer confidentiality.
- Recruitment practices.
- Training.
- Working conditions for volunteers.
- Support and supervision.
- Expenses.
- Insurance.

To learn more about risk management considerations for volunteers, visit www.frankcowan.com.



SENDING A HEARTFELT

THANK YOU

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and applaud all municipal front-line essential workers.

Your hard work, perseverance and dedication over the past several months is commendable. We appreciate your contribution to our community and thank you for all that you do.

Gas Tax funds more than 420 Nova Scotia projects

By Debbie Nielsen

THE PURPOSE OF THE 2014 – 2017 OUTCOMES REPORT

The Canada – Nova Scotia Gas Tax Fund (GTF) Project Outcomes Report is a public document reporting on the outcomes achieved through federal GTF investments in sustainable municipal infrastructure in Nova Scotia. The report provides information on how cumulative GTF investments in projects covering the period of 2014 to 2017 have contributed to the shared national objectives of: a cleaner environment, strong cities and communities, and productivity and economic development. The GTF agreements require all provincial and territorial governments and municipalities to report on achieved project outcomes by March 31, 2018.

BACKGROUND


On July 3, 2014, the new Administrative Agreement on the federal GTF was announced between Canada and Nova Scotia. As part of the New Building Canada Plan, the renewed federal GTF provides predictable, long-term, stable funding for Canadian municipalities. This funding helps build and revitalize local public infrastructure, while supporting the federal government’s national objectives.

The 2014 - 2024 GTF Agreement increased program flexibility for all municipalities by adding 11 new eligible project categories, which includes funding to projects that support investments in new infrastructure and the development of sustainable asset management practices in Nova Scotia.

OUTCOME HIGHLIGHTS

Since 2014, the GTF program has provided funding to 421 completed projects in Nova Scotia. The highest percentage of GTF expenditures during 2014-2017 went to Local Roads and Bridges at 48 per cent of cumulative gas tax funds spent. This translates to 126 km of local road improvements and 119 km of new or upgraded pathways (trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks). Other project category highlights include:

- Wastewater: 9,328 new households connected to a municipal wastewater treatment and collection system, which treats wastewater to a higher quality



Federal Gas Tax Fund

In Nova Scotia

2019 - 2020: A Year in Review

A new agreement for the federal Gas Tax Fund (GTF) between Canada and Nova Scotia became effective April 1, 2014. This agreement represents a 10-year investment of an estimated \$590 million in predictable and stable funding for local municipalities. The GTF helps build and revitalize public infrastructure in Nova Scotia, while supporting the national objectives of cleaner environment, stronger cities & communities, and productivity & economic growth.

Nova Scotia receives

\$55,047,487

for its 2019–20 total GTF allocation.


Total Municipal Funding from 2014 to 2020:

\$441 million

Cumulative Municipal Funding (est.)


\$992 million

From 2005 to 2025 (19 years)



Since 2015, NSFM has been collaborating with the Province of Nova Scotia to support the administration of the GTF. NSFM focuses its efforts on helping municipalities meet the requirements for communications, signage and asset management.

Outcomes Report Completed




One-Time Doubling of the GTF Transfer

\$57.7 million

to support local infrastructure priorities.

Percentage of GTF Spent for 2019 – 20*



The highest project category investments:

Local Roads & Bridges	49%
Public Transit	27%

*Please Note: Less than 1% of the total GTF was spent in the following categories: broadband, disaster mitigation, highways, sport and tourism.

Continued on page 23

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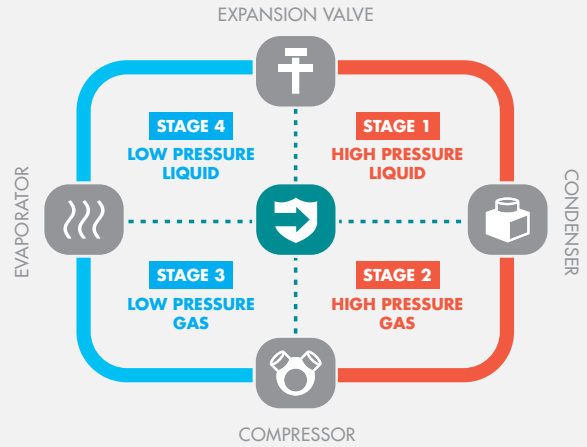
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PROTECTION ON DEMAND

SMART Transfer allows you to isolate the four (4) system stages so that maintenance can be performed on any of the components while the refrigerant is safely contained. This greatly reduces potential exposure risks to your staff.



SMART Transfer Maintenance Protection Process



1. ACTIVATE

Manual button activation is used to start the transfer of the refrigerant from the system to the SMART Transfer.



2. HOLD

Refrigerant is contained within the SMART Transfer while maintenance is performed.



3. RETURN

Once the maintenance is complete, the refrigerant can be transferred from the SMART Transfer back into the system.



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Refrigerant Transfer System
PATENT PENDING

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AUTOMATIC LEAK RESPONSE

Instead of relying on human decision-making to detect and/or diagnose the true severity of a potential refrigerant leak, SMART Transfer sensors use your pre-defined safety parameters to detect leaks. Then, the system can automatically transfer, hold and return the complete refrigerant charge as required, so there is no need for operators to enter potentially contaminated areas or risk exposure.

SMART Transfer Leak Response Process



1. DETECT

SMART sensors installed in the compressor room continually monitor the environment to detect leaks that exceed the predefined PPM threshold.



2. TRANSFER

If the leak reaches a predetermined severity level, or if the operator chooses to activate the transfer manually, refrigerant isolation is initiated.



3. RETURN

Once the leak has been resolved, the refrigerant can be transferred from the SMART Transfer back into the system.

Investing in our future: Working together on green solutions

Article courtesy of Nova Scotia Power

Our customers are looking to the future. They are thinking about how electricity is generated and how we can cut our carbon footprint creating green solutions for energy. They are looking for options and we are finding ways to meet those demands. There is a lot to consider.

- Imagine a future where a battery in a home stores energy and keeps the lights on when a winter storm hits.
- Imagine that battery is connected to a grid that uses solar or wind to keep that battery fully charged.
- Imagine installing an electric vehicle charger that efficiently charges your car and can use the vehicle's battery to back up your home in an outage.
- Imagine where we have the data at our fingertips, in real-time, to help customers make the best choices, and that new technologies are available to them because we have a smarter grid infrastructure.

The reality is we do not have to look far. These initiatives are being tested and rolled out in Nova Scotia right now. Last October we launched our smart meter upgrade program. We are modernizing our electricity grid by installing these devices across the province. It is technology that will provide customers with more convenience, reliability and control. A customer will be able to track and manage their energy use by viewing their daily consumption; smart meters will eliminate the need for onsite appointments for connections and disconnections and will improve response times in the event of an outage.

Another project being launched that is setting the stage for our energy future, is Smart Grid Nova Scotia. It is providing the opportunity to test and learn how to safely and

effectively add new technologies to the electricity grid. More wind and solar generation, battery storage and electric vehicles. The inconsistency of wind and solar can make managing the grid a challenge. A more efficient way to have access is by storing that energy and using it to manage peak or to smooth the grid when demand is high and production is lower than anticipated. Smart Grid Nova Scotia is a test bed for what the future will look like in every town and community across Nova Scotia.

Battery storage is also being used in the province today. A pilot project in the community of Elmsdale dubbed the "Intelligent Feeder Project," is allowing us to better understand how batteries can help us use renewable energy more efficiently, while providing back-up power to customers during power outages.

Then there are electric vehicles (EV). With transportation responsible for 32 per cent of emissions in Nova Scotia, it is imperative we all consider the option of driving an EV in the future. We are taking steps to pave the way, by installing more electric charging stations around the province so customers know there is a reliable charging network for them.

We have made these changes by working together – all three levels of government, energy advocates and energy entrepreneurs in the private sector. If we continue that work, Nova Scotia has the potential to be one of the cleanest, lowest-carbon, most resilient and future-ready regions.

Consider this - a smarter grid, better technology on that grid, cleaner energy through a reduction of fossil fuels and the addition of wind and solar, batteries in homes and electric vehicles. We no longer have to imagine...we are on our way to creating a cleaner future with more reliable, affordable energy for customers. Someday is today!



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE. EVERY DAY.

Imagine a future with a smarter electricity grid, greener options like battery storage, electric vehicles, more wind and solar. Together we are making it happen. Someday is today!

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