

Good afternoon everyone. It's a pleasure to be here and outline our support for Bill 41 – An Act respecting Electricity Efficiency and Conservation.

Before I walk through my comments, I want to first express how much we appreciate the input and feedback we've had from elected officials of all political parties on our work.

As you likely know, members of the Efficiency team – which includes the many businesses that provide energy efficiency services under the Efficiency Nova Scotia banner – work in your communities to make homes, businesses, apartments and institutions as efficient as possible. And to help get the word out about energy efficiency, members of my Efficiency team have met with many of you and staff in your constituency offices.

What I can say with confidence is that energy efficiency – helping Nova Scotians lower their power and oil bills – is something that has received widespread support.

While our visits have had a great reception to date, the one piece of advice we consistently receive is to do more outreach and promotion to ensure all Nova Scotians know how we can help them save.

As the province with some of the highest energy costs in the country, we are extremely proud to play a role in helping Nova Scotians better control these costs. And you have my commitment that we'll do all we can to make more Nova Scotians aware of how they, too, can take control of their energy costs.

Now, onto the business at hand: Bill 41. Let me repeat what I said at the media briefing earlier this week. Bill 41 is a big step in the evolution of energy efficiency.

Many of you would know the long journey energy efficiency has taken in a few short years in Nova Scotia: from part of the Department of Energy to a government agency, to being run temporarily by Nova Scotia Power, to an independent non-profit organization.

The most recent evolution – Bill 41 – is significant in that energy efficiency is now positioned – in legislation – as an energy supply which Nova Scotia Power MUST purchase if it's the most cost-effective source – and purchase it at levels affordable to Nova Scotians.

This is significant. Bill 41 has essentially created Canada's first energy efficiency utility which sells 'saved energy' to Nova Scotia Power – just as a wind farm or supplier of coal would.

Bill 41 entrenches efficiency and conservation in legislation as a vital part of the electricity mix that Nova Scotia Power must use. Coal, wind and natural gas must now compete against energy efficiency. With efficiency being the lowest-cost energy option, this is a big win for ratepayers.

What's more, it's expected this new structure will fix the HST issue. To date, the Canada Revenue Agency has not allowed us to claim Input Tax Credits for our work, meaning Nova Scotians have been taxed twice for energy efficiency efforts. This change in structure will make energy efficiency an even more cost-effective energy option. Again, this is good news for ratepayers.

I fully understand that the notion of selling something you can't see - saved energy - isn't easy to wrap one's head around. What's amazing is how ready Nova Scotians are for this. The fact that we even have a Bill 41 is evidence of this. The legislation - along with the supporting long-term plan - secures a long-term stable, future for energy efficiency in Nova Scotia. As the lowest cost, cleanest source of energy there is, this is good news for all of us.

There is also a significant, long-term commitment to help low-income Nova Scotians with their energy costs. In our visits to communities from one end of the province to the other, and in the tens of thousands of phone calls we receive every year, we know this investment is needed - and wanted - and will give back for years to come.

I want to assure you - that while these are big changes, for our customers it will be business as usual.

The same local and independent businesses which deliver energy efficiency services will have the same opportunity they've had over the past few years. In fact, many of these businesses have taken this opportunity and have grown; some have expanded their services to jurisdictions outside the province.

And we know of many more that want to do the same. In fact, the 60 businesses that recently participated in an economic impact study said they plan to grow eight per cent per year over the next five years.

That's five times the rate of anticipated economic growth in Nova Scotia.

The legislation and the long-term commitment will give them the confidence to make the investments they want to make to grow.

I also want to assure you that the new organization will have the same focus on customers-first.

A focus that has led to a 90-plus per cent satisfaction rate from the 150,000 participants in our first three years.

Our customers, your constituents, will still call the same 1-877- 999-6035 or visit our same website to access ways to reduce their costs. They will work with the same employees and small businesses that they always have.

Let me close by saying that Nova Scotia is leading the way in saving energy. Energy not used is energy not paid for. This year, Nova Scotians will collectively pay \$78 Million less on their power bills... because of energy efficiency. These savings continue year after year - and will keep growing. And this investment in savings will continue to add jobs and grow economic activity across the province.

You have my commitment that we'll continue to collaborate with our many stakeholders to reach energy efficiency's full potential to contribute to a more prosperous, sustainable Nova Scotia. I believe Bill 41 helps us get there.

Thank you.