

# **HANSARD**

**NOVA SCOTIA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**Wednesday, May 4, 2022**

**LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER**

**Nova Scotia Power's Proposed Rate Hikes**

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## **Public Accounts Committee**

Hon. Kelly Regan (Chair)  
Nolan Young (Vice-Chair)  
Dave Ritcey  
John A. MacDonald  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Claudia Chender  
Susan Leblanc

[Dave Ritcey was replaced by Tom Taggart.]  
[Melissa Sheehy-Richard was replaced by Larry Harrison.]

### In Attendance:

Kim Leadley  
Acting Legislative Committee Clerk

Gordon Hebb  
Chief Legislative Counsel

Mike MacPhee,  
Deputy Auditor General

**WITNESSES**

**Department of Environment and Climate Change**

Lora MacEachern,  
Deputy Minister

Nancy Rondeaux,  
Executive Director - Climate Change Division

**Department of Natural Resources and Renewables**

Karen Gatien,  
Deputy Minister

David Miller,  
Director, Clean Electricity

**Efficiency Nova Scotia**

Stephen MacDonald,  
President & CEO

Sarah Chaisson,  
Director, Service Delivery

**Nova Scotia Power Inc.**

Judith Ferguson,  
Executive Vice President - Regulatory, Legal & Business Planning  
(attending as Counsel for NS Power)

Mark Sidebottom,  
Chief Operating Officer

David Landrigan,  
Vice President, Commercial

**Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board**

Paul Allen,  
Executive Director



**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

**9:00 A.M.**

**CHAIR**

Hon. Kelly Regan

**VICE CHAIR**

Nolan Young

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning. I now call the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to order. Today's meeting is on Wednesday, May the 4<sup>th</sup>, so may the fourth be with you this morning. (Laughter)

My name is Kelly Regan. I'm the MLA for Bedford Basin and the Chair of this committee. Just a couple of housekeeping notes. A reminder to everyone to place your phones on silent or vibrate and to keep your mask on except for when you're speaking.

I'm going to begin by asking committee members closest to me to introduce themselves, beginning with Ms. Chender.

[The committee members introduced themselves.]

**THE CHAIR:** I will note that we have officials here with us today who are from the Auditor General's Office and from the Legislative Committees Office. We also have Gordon Hebb here from the Office of the Legislative Counsel as well.



In terms of our agenda today, we have officials with us from the Department of Environment and Climate Change, Department of Natural Resources and Renewables, Efficiency Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Power, and the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board regarding Nova Scotia Power's proposed rate hikes.

I will ask the witnesses to introduce themselves, beginning to my right with the Deputy Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Ms. MacEachern.

[The witnesses introduced themselves.]

THE CHAIR: We're going to invite witnesses to make their remarks, and we'll begin with Deputy Minister MacEachern.

LORA MACEACHERN: Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to join you today. Assisting me is Nancy Rondeaux, the Executive Director of Climate Change at the department.

The role of the Department of Environment and Climate Change is as environmental regulator and as the department leading Nova Scotia's response to climate change. Our mandate is to protect the environment, land, water, and air we share, and ensure that companies operating in Nova Scotia are minimizing their impact on the environment and on human health. We set water and air quality standards. We also regulate GHG emissions as part of our mandate to address climate change.

The Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act is the foundation. We have five goals which are particularly relevant to today's topic:

- Phasing out coal by 2030;
- Transitioning to 80 per cent of electricity being generated renewables by 2030;
- Preparing a climate risk assessment for Nova Scotia;
- Updating air emission targets and ambient air standards by 2025; and
- Managing the Province's air zones in line with the Canadian Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Nova Scotians can be proud that this province is a national leader in reducing GHG emissions. Nova Scotia's emissions were 14.6 megatons in 2020, which means we are now 36.4 per cent below 2005 levels. We are on course to meet our 2030 target and achieve net zero by 2050. Our targets are a floor, not a ceiling, and we will take every opportunity to exceed them.

To be clear, while Nova Scotia Power must meet our emission targets, we do not have a role with how the utility sets its rates for electricity. Later this Spring, we will share

our climate action plan with Nova Scotians. It will include detailed actions on how Nova Scotians can work together to address the impacts of climate change.

Madam Chair, at the Department of Environment and Climate Change, we are focused every day on the critical work of addressing climate change, protecting our environment, and leading Nova Scotians forward to a healthy, sustainable, and green future.

Thank you for your interest and we look forward to the discussion.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Minister MacEachern. Deputy Minister Gatien.

KAREN GATIEN: Good morning. We are happy to be here today to answer as many questions as we can about electricity service to Nova Scotians.

As you know, Nova Scotia has the most aggressive greenhouse gas reduction target in the country, and ambitious climate change goals enshrined in legislation for transitioning to a clean economy. Given that we've been dependent on coal for so long, achieving those goals means truly transforming how electricity is delivered in this province. We are looking at all the options and working with all our partners to make this transformation happen.

It also means supporting Nova Scotians to be part of the solution, removing barriers so they can safely invest in technology to generate their own electricity, and helping them make informed choices and upgrades to improve their energy efficiency, thereby reducing their energy needs and costs. As we work toward our climate change goals, we need to ensure that our green electricity is both reliable and affordable. Nova Scotia Power plays a critical role in this transformation and has an obligation, of course, to its customers.

Through legislation and our ongoing relationship, government sets standards and expectations for the utility. For example, government amended the Public Utilities Act this Spring to set stronger performance standards for the utility. We'll be engaging Nova Scotians through a partnership table to help set those standards and the consequences if they are not met. We also amended the Electricity Act to protect and support Nova Scotians who invest in renewable energy technologies like solar panels. The amendments also ensure that ratepayers will have access to their own energy use data, as well as suggestions for improving efficiency and lowering costs, through the Green Button program.

We will continue to look at all options that protect ratepayers. The NSUARB will consider Nova Scotia Power's general rate application. As Premier Houston and Minister Rushton have said, we were not aware of the full details of NSP's submission, including their plans for solar, before the application was submitted. A high-level overview was provided, and we were made aware of Nova Scotia Power's intention to apply for a significant rate increase. We did express our concern.

It is not uncommon, though, for the utility to state that a rate increase may be necessary and then not act on that assertion. In this case, they did submit the general rate application despite our concerns. That's why we have decided to be an active intervenor in the NSUARB process for this application. We trust that the NSUARB will hear evidence from all interested parties and make a decision that is fair for ratepayers.

As this is an open issue before the NSUARB, there is little more that we can say at this time. However, we will do our best to answer your questions within these limitations.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacDonald.

STEPHEN MACDONALD: We are pleased to be here today and to be given the opportunity to speak to the committee about the role that energy efficiency plays in reducing energy use; lowering electricity bills; growing Nova Scotia's economy; improving our energy security; making our homes and buildings more comfortable, affordable, and resilient; and helping this province meet its climate goals.

Prices are rising almost everywhere, including electricity. Energy efficiency has a critical role to play to help Nova Scotians better control and reduce their electricity costs without sacrificing comfort.

EfficiencyOne, as the operator of Efficiency Nova Scotia, has a proven track record of success in designing and delivering resource efficiency programs and services for homes, businesses and large industrial customers.

Over the last 10 years, investments in energy efficiency programs have contributed to over \$1.3 billion in customer bill savings and cut greenhouse gas emissions by over 25 per cent. This includes helping low-income homeowners and tenants save \$208 million on their energy bills.

We recently filed a new energy efficiency plan, or Demand Side Management Plan, with the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board for approval. Our plan will lower costs in the electricity system by over \$540 million, costs that will not have to be recovered from Nova Scotians and will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by nearly two million tonnes and support more than 5,000 jobs across the province.

As the electricity system is transformed to achieve environmental goals, energy efficiency lowers costs and mitigates risks associated with integrating grid scale renewables.

We work with hundreds of partners across the province, from Trinity Energy Group in Pictou County to Watts Up Solar in Kingston or Garian Construction in Tusket, small businesses that are ready and eager to help Nova Scotians make energy efficiency improvements and reduce costs at a time when it is very much needed.



THE CHAIR: Mr. Sidebottom.

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Good morning. On behalf of the team at Nova Scotia Power, thank you for the invitation to attend today's committee meeting. Our team of over 2,000 Nova Scotians proudly live and work in communities right across the province. We take pride in our role as a regulated utility with a mandate to serve Nova Scotians. I can tell you that customers are at the centre of everything we do.

As the committee is aware, we filed a general rate application - or GRA - with the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board in January and a hearing is scheduled to begin in early September. This GRA is the first one filed by Nova Scotia Power in more than a decade. The decision to request an increase in rates is not one we take lightly. The energy transformation required in Nova Scotia to achieve the government's ambitious 2030 climate goals is immense, complex and coming very quickly. It will take significant investment and it will take real collaboration.

The GRA is a complex and comprehensive document that includes almost 4,000 pages that detail our plan to build a cleaner, more reliable grid in the province. The GRA is just that: an application that has yet to go through the rigorous regulatory process containing 1,908 responses to individual questions in discovery, and a hearing that involves 20 intervenors who'll provide important perspective before the NSUARB rules on the application.

We'll try to be as responsive as we can today, in order to facilitate a productive discussion. We are also trying to respect the full regulatory process yet to come. By design, the regulatory process includes a rigorous review of the content of the GRA and provides the opportunity for many stakeholder voices, including those represented here today, to be part of this important discussion.

The government's climate goals, including phasing out the use of coal and achieving 80 per cent renewable energy by 2030 are both ambitious and transformative for this province. Achieving them will not be easy and there is not much time left to get there. No one participant in our energy system can do this alone. It will take all of us working together, including key stakeholders represented here today. We look forward to our discussion.

THE CHAIR: We'll now begin the first round of questioning. Each caucus will have 20 minutes to pose questions to the witnesses.

We will start first with the Liberal caucus, then the NDP caucus, and then the PC caucus. I will interrupt when the 20 minutes elapses - not trying to be rude, just trying to be fair.

[9:15 a.m.]

We will begin the Liberal questioning with MLA Maguire. You have until 9:35 a.m.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you to the witnesses for being here today. I just ask that we keep our answers short. We have a very limited amount of time so I'll just warn you in advance if the answers go very long, I'll be asking the Chair to intervene.

This is a very important topic. The cost of living is absolutely crushing Nova Scotians, and at that time, Nova Scotia Power had the audacity to put forward a 10 per cent rate increase on the backs of Nova Scotians. We know that power poverty is driving people out of their homes. They're causing people not to be able to feed their children. People are defaulting on their rent and their mortgage payments. I know this because I've been an MLA for eight years and I've heard it.

Over the last six months, we've seen doubling and tripling of power bills, and some people think that's part of the smart meter installation. They've seen their power bills increase. I'm just blown away that Nova Scotia Power would have the gumption to first of all try to destroy the solar industry, their competition, then make an agreement with the current government that any extra energy produced they get for free, and at the same time increase power rates on Nova Scotians.

It personally feels to me like you're trying to put one over on the government, and you're trying to put one over on Nova Scotians. The Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables just finished saying in her opening speech that there was a high-level discussion about power rates with the Premier, when we heard in the Legislature the Premier himself say - first of all, he didn't remember meeting with Nova Scotia Power. Then he didn't remember what the discussions were about. Then he said that he was made aware of these power increases and the changes to the solar industry when it was released in the media. He found out when Nova Scotians found out.

The story keeps changing on why and how this all came about. We know that Emera and Nova Scotia Power met with the Premier several times. In the past, speaking to past Premiers and past ministers of Energy and Natural Resources, the practice has always been - there have been conversations with Nova Scotia Power. They're made aware. Somebody here is not telling the truth. Either the Premier was made aware, or he wasn't made aware.

I've never seen anything like this in my eight years on this committee - that the department and the witnesses send letters to us in advance saying they're not going to answer certain questions. The questions we're asking are not on behalf of the Liberal, the PC, or the NDP Parties. They're on behalf of Nova Scotians.

If you want to take a moment to see how Nova Scotians feel, I posted today asking people on my social media what questions they would have for Emera and Nova Scotia Power. I think it's worth taking a look at, because it's all about not being able to pay bills, it's all about power increases, and it's all about people being driven out of their homes.

This right here, Madam Chair, to me is offensive - that even before you sit in this committee, you send these letters to us saying that you don't want to answer, nor will you answer questions. I'm going to attempt to ask some questions and hopefully get some answers on behalf of Nova Scotians. I hope that we don't continue to get this contradiction and I wasn't worked up until, quite frankly, I heard the deputy minister talk about this high-level discussion and what the Premier did know or didn't know - which is in direct contradiction to what the Premier said in the Legislature.

My question, and I ask these be kept short because we have limited time, is to Mr. Sidebottom. What is your rationale for a 10 per cent increase for Nova Scotians while people are struggling to pay every single bill, including, I would argue, the largest bill that most people have - their Nova Scotia Power bill? What is your rationale when people are struggling for a 10 per cent increase?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: We understand there's never a good time to ask for an increase in electricity rates. Obviously, and you've stated it well, there are many challenges with affordability and the cost of living - everything from housing to the price of gas and diesel and food. We really look to manage our costs inside the business.

If you take a look at it, this is the first general rate application that Nova Scotia Power has made in 10 years. We've been focused on cost management through those 10-year periods to find ways to avoid, in fact, coming in for a general rate application.

We are in front of one of the largest transformations the electricity sector is going to go through. Climate change is an imperative. It's something that needs to be acted on and, in fact, I think that's something we can all agree on. In Nova Scotia, the transformation of the electrical grid means that what was built over 50 years is going to be changed in over eight years. We need to make sure that we are ready for that, that we respond to resiliency, and are ready to make sure we make the investments associated with the policy direction associated with that.

As I said before, there's never a good time. We understand the strain, but we want to be responsive to both resiliency requirements for our customers and the need to act appropriately towards climate.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It sounds good, that there's never a good time to have these increases, yet every time we turn around it seems like it's a good time to have all-time high executive payouts. We're seeing all-time high bonuses. We're seeing executives

at Nova Scotia Power and Emera become millionaires on the backs of Nova Scotians. We are seeing this company expand internationally on the backs of Nova Scotians.

My suggestion to Nova Scotia Power and Emera would be that instead of spending your money outside of Nova Scotia, spend it inside Nova Scotia instead of forking over millions and millions of dollars to executives when they're not meeting standards, not meeting performances.

There are more and more power outages than I've ever seen before. We go online and we see the reasons and it's that it rained too hard and the power is out. The amount of brush and trees that are sitting on your lines - surely you must be embarrassed when you drive by and see these things.

Instead of investing that money in Nova Scotians, a lot of that money is being funnelled out of this province to grow your corporate empire and to turn executives into millionaires. That is one of the reasons why people in Nova Scotia are upset. Nova Scotia Power went from a small, local company to power all across the United States and down and through Bermuda. Yes, I know that Emera makes money in those jurisdictions, but I would also ask that it would be nice to have somebody here, via Zoom, from Bermuda, to hear their feelings on Emera and Nova Scotia Power.

You have a rate application in front of the NSUARB. What is the minimum rate increase that you would be happy with? Right now, you have 10 per cent. I'm asking for a specific number, I'm not asking for a story - so 3 per cent, 5 per cent, 7 per cent - what is the specific number that you are walking out of the NSUARB and saying we're okay with that?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire, I'm assuming you want to direct that to . . .

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Mr. Sidebottom.

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: That application is before the NSUARB. As I stated in my opening statements, that is a transparent and inclusive process that allows many stakeholders to engage fully and formally in that process. While that is before the regulator - the associated information and the discovery process, which is active - that is the form and the place in which the revenue requirement, or rate increase, is best decided.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'll take that as a non-answer. Emera executives are receiving millions of dollars in bonuses. Nova Scotia Power executives are receiving millions of dollars in bonuses. You are asking for a 10 per cent hike when you are behind on deliverables, your projects are over the amount budgeted, so we're seeing this more and more. We're seeing power outages at an increasingly alarming rate in specific areas.

Can you not see why Nova Scotians are upset that you're asking for a 10 per cent increase when a government has to come in and give you performance standards to hold you to a higher account, because things are getting worse and worse and executives are making more and more money? Can you not see why that would upset Nova Scotians, Mr. Sidebottom?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Maybe I can take that as a bit of a multi-part question. I think it's important to understand on executive compensation that none of the executive compensation associated with the Emera executives is in Nova Scotia Power rates. Zero. In fact, inside Nova Scotia Power the executive bonus mechanism and a portion of the base salary is in fact not in rates. The amount of compensation that is associated with that in rates is actually legislated to that of a senior executive or a senior officer in the government. The rest is all paid for by Emera.

Moving over to outages, we completely understand that a power outage is inconvenient - and more than that, troublesome for customers - and we very much understand that that is something that we need to continue to be focused on. What I can say is that in the last five years, the average number of outages in Nova Scotia has in fact dropped by 30 per cent. What we do is, we are very transparent through mechanisms like the outage management map to make sure we communicate those outages, and we also have a team of dedicated people to ensure that they are very responsive to that.

Each year, we invest about \$100 million in the resiliency and reliability of the transmission and distribution grid, which is again part of improving customer service and reducing outages. One of the elements in the general rate application that will be fully vetted and fully discussed and ultimately adjudicated by the board, is on investing incrementally more in that resiliency so we have further responsiveness to climate change and the changing weather patterns we're seeing here in Nova Scotia.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I will correct you that the bonuses are not paid by Emera and they are not paid by Nova Scotia Power - they're paid by the taxpayers and the residents of Nova Scotia. That's where the money's made. To sit here and say that the bonuses are paid for by the company - the company makes the money off the backs of Nova Scotians.

Also, I know you said that it's down 30 per cent. Maybe you should try coming down to my community and some of the other communities. Maybe where you live it's down 30 per cent, but I can tell you, any time there's a strong wind or there's rain, the power goes out.

One of the questions that I have is, Nova Scotia Power met with the Premier of Nova Scotia several times before the rate increases were applied for and made public. Did you discuss specifically the rate increases and the power increases and the amount that you were looking for with the Premier of Nova Scotia and the minister as you have done with previous ministers and Premiers?

[9:30 a.m.]

THE CHAIR: Ms. Ferguson.

JUDITH FERGUSON: I'll respond to that question. As the member has commented on, we meet regularly with government. We are an essential service provider and a key participant in the clean energy transition, and as such we meet with all three levels of government on a regular basis to discuss a broad range of issues. As Mr. Sidebottom said, we understand that no government ever wants a rate increase and there's never a good time for that rate increase.

We met with the Premier, senior staff, ministers, and their staff to make them aware of our intention to file a general rate increase and to provide them with the context and an overview of the rate increase.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: It was a yes or not question. Did you specifically tell the Premier how much you were looking for on a rate increase, as has been done in the past with other Premiers and ministers?

The Premier and the minister, but the Premier in particular, had stated many different stories on this one - one that they were aware of it, one that they weren't aware of it, and one that they found out in the media. We just heard the deputy minister say that there was a high-level discussion. He refused to acknowledge that he had a meeting at first, and then he refused to tell us what the meeting was about.

What I'm asking you specifically was, did you tell the Premier how much you were looking for, rate-increase wise? Yes or no?

JUDITH FERGUSON: When we met with the Premier in the Fall, the general rate application at that time was not fully finalized. We provided an order of magnitude in that discussion with the Premier. The Premier expressed his concerns to us about the impact of any rate increase for customers, and we indicated to the Premier that we could commit to do whatever we could to minimize the rate impact for customers.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So that's a yes. You did tell him, in maybe a roundabout way. There was more than one meeting with the Premier. It wasn't just a meeting in the Fall. There was more than one meeting with the Premier and the minister. At any point in those meetings, before the rate increase was announced publicly, did you tell the Premier specifically, or the minister, the amount that you were applying for? Yes or no?

JUDITH FERGUSON: When we met with the minister and the minister's staff prior to filing the rate application, we did talk about the rate increase in that meeting. Again, the minister expressed his concern about the impact of the rate increase, and we expressed

that we shared those concerns and would do whatever we could to minimize that rate increase for customers.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The reason I ask this question is because there is obviously some discrepancy between what is being said here today and what was said in the Nova Scotia Legislature. We're hearing here today that, yes, the Premier and the minister were made aware of the rate increases that were coming - maybe not in the first meeting, but specifically before it was announced publicly, they were told how much these rate increases were going to be. They absolutely denied that in the Legislature.

My question would be to the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. If, as we heard here today, the Premier and the minister were aware of how much these rate increases are and we know the damage it's going to do to Nova Scotians, the bills that were put forward in this House in the last session had nothing to do with the rate increases. Performance reviews in solar, yes, but it had nothing in those bills to specifically stop this rate increase.

The Premier said, before these bills were announced, that he'd be dealing with this issue. What in these bills that were announced from your department do you see that will stop this specific rate increase? Not performance reviews. Not solar. What is it that stops Nova Scotia Power from getting these rate increases?

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister Gatien.

KAREN GATIEN: First of all, I just want to make clear that the comment I made referenced any meeting I was at. I was not privy to any meetings with the Premier - I was absolutely at the meeting with the minister.

In terms of this legislation - first of all, as has been referenced, the NSUARB process is still under way. We have great confidence that the NSUARB will look thoroughly through all the information and make a decision in the best interest of ratepayers. We are going to be active intervenors throughout that process. We are currently going through the application and developing possible options.

There's nothing specific, to answer your question, clearly - nothing specific in these pieces of legislation, but we're continuing our analysis and our work. It's not done. The decision has not been made. It's an application that's open before the NSUARB at this time.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What we heard in the Legislature over and over and beforehand was that this legislation - and the Premier was going to do something, and we had legislation coming forward that was going to prevent this.

We hear today what the truth is. Nothing in those two pieces of legislation - something that the Opposition has stood up and talked about - does anything to prevent these rate increases, which runs contradictory to what the Premier said.

I will say this, with the last two seconds: the NSUARB has always . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. We'll now move on to the NDP and Ms. Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Good morning. We were given a little training about letting our colleagues finish, but I think we'll leave one on a cliffhanger and see if we come back to it.

I appreciate you all being here. I think I'll start in the same place that my colleague did. Obviously, the news of the rate increase has caused a lot of consternation right across the province. Just to step back a little bit, a bunch of legislation did come forward that would help, but it just didn't come from the government - from our perspective. We hope that everyone is looking at all the different options that are available because I think there are a lot of creative options to ensure we meet our climate targets and can keep costs affordable. Mr. MacDonald is at the forefront of a lot of that work. We really appreciate it.

I think what we're really talking about is energy poverty, if we want to put a fine point on it. People are upset because they can't pay their bills already. We know that 37 per cent of Nova Scotia households experience what is defined as energy poverty, so more than 6 per cent of your after-tax income is spent on home energy services.

If we really think about that, that's a massive number of people who struggle every month to pay their power bill. As my colleague said, we are intimately acquainted with that because that's a huge part of the work we do in our offices - helping people. As everyone knows - and we'll get to the question of arrears in a little while, hopefully - there's not much that can be done. We know there are a few government programs. We know that some of those programs have been topped up, but it's not sustainable. There's not a sustainable way that we can help people through that.

I guess, Mr. Sidebottom, just picking up on some of the responses that you gave to my colleague, I guess I would first say, the need to transition and that target, with respect, isn't new. That need to transition away from coal has been on the agenda for quite some time. I think we got some early winds because of how dirty our energy supply is - I think we can all agree on that. Our numbers looked pretty good at the front end, because if you close a coal plant, your emissions go way down, but we're getting to the point where it's more complex and more difficult to meet our climate targets, and more expensive, no question.

Given this need to transition is not new, given that there's been a long time to plan for this, I wonder if you can just understand the pushback that's happening right now. You



said that the outages have reduced by 30 per cent, but based on a CBC report in 2020, I think, Nova Scotia Power was fined \$250,000 for failing to meet performance standards three years in a row. There's a maximum fine of \$1 million. With respect, that doesn't represent a huge chunk of cash in your ecosystem.

I guess I'm just wondering how you would address Nova Scotians who see their bills rising, already can't afford to pay their groceries, to pay for the fundamentals of life, see the gas bills going up, who experience power outages very regularly, who care about the climate. We'll hear from you at the rate hearing in September, but right now, what would you say in terms of how those people should understand that their power bill is going up by 10 per cent in a short period of time?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: I go back to, it really is never a good time to ask for an increase in electricity rates. I absolutely understand that and so does the team that works hard to try to contain the costs. This is the first time in 10 years the underlying rates, the general rates, are adjusting in Nova Scotia and we've lived within the means of that through that period of time.

While doing that, and just speaking to your second point on the transition and the change, we have been working on this change for the last 15 years. Our carbon footprint is down by more than 35 per cent. The utilization of coal units for energy is down by 34 per cent. But you make a good point that we're into the tough stuff now. This is a moment in time, and I think we can all agree that we need to respond to the next phase of the climate crisis.

For our low-income families in Nova Scotia, it is a struggle. The price of everything is going up. Our electricity ask of 10 per cent in total over three years, or approximately three per cent a year, is one of those pressures. We completely understand the challenge, augmented by the fact that gasoline and diesel have gone up by, it almost feels like multiples, and food by more than 30 per cent. I don't know the exact figure.

We do work very closely with our low-income advocates. We meet regularly with them and have been working closely with the Salvation Army with the heat fund over many years - I think more than 20. We also support the HomeWarming program, which is focused directly at low-income families and the ability to retrofit their homes where they can be comfortable and save \$400-600 on average per year.

These are some of the things we look to do and look forward to having more conversations on what can be done for low-income and customers with energy poverty.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm going to come back to that, but I appreciate the answer. With respect it's not just low-income Nova Scotians - it's 37 per cent of Nova Scotians, which is many more than those who would meet that definition.

I want to move quickly to efficiency. We were once ranked first, we're now at third, still not bad, not great. This is the Efficiency Canada Provincial Energy Efficiency Scorecard that I'm referring to, which everyone is familiar with. We know that some of our programming is the best in the country, and we're very proud of that, but we also know that we have some of the highest energy bills. When we look at what Nova Scotia Power could be purchasing in terms of energy efficiency programming, it feels like we're not actually capturing the full benefits of that resource.

EfficiencyOne compared efficiency savings as a percentage of total electricity with other comparable leading jurisdictions and found that at 1.1 per cent, Nova Scotia Power's investment in energy efficiency since 2015 was actually lower than it should be. I don't want to embarrass Mr. MacDonald here or EfficiencyOne, but I think - and we've raised this on the floor of the Legislature - that spending has been referred to as stagnant, and we would echo that.

Can you comment, Mr. Sidebottom, on why Nova Scotia Power hasn't been maximizing, from our perspective, the cost-effective energy efficiency opportunities that are available? That seems like the lowest-hanging fruit, given the complexity of the moment we're in.

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: I'm going to hand this to my colleague, Mr. Landrigan.

DAVID LANDRIGAN: I think off the bat, we know that there's an application in front of the NSUARB for the 2023-2025 EfficiencyOne program. We were very pleased to support that program. It showed an increase from \$110 million in the last three-year program to \$171 million, so a 64 per cent increase in the funding. Nova Scotia Power is fully supportive. A large part of us being fully supportive is the majority of those increases are targeted at low-income and at First Nations.

We understand the importance of EfficiencyOne in particular. We're supportive of efficiency programs for Nova Scotians, and they're a key component to us getting to 2030 and beyond.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I appreciate that, but one of the pieces of the multi-thousand-page general rate application - I confess I have not read every single one of those thousands of pages, but I've relied on the distillations of people smarter than me and probably with more time.

One of the pieces that stood out to us about that was - I can't remember what it was called, but the Demand Side Management or the efficiency rider that would then be attached to the bill. From a political perspective, you have to understand that this has echoes of 2013. As soon as something is an added piece of a bill, it becomes political, and there becomes a question of, do we need that added piece of our bill or not?

[9:45 a.m.]

This was a huge issue in the 2013 election, which was when the efficiency rate got folded right into the rates and stopped being the efficiency tax that had become so politicized. I wonder what was the impulse to pull that efficiency piece out and make it a separate item?

DAVID LANDRIGAN: Thank you for that question. The primary rationale for the rider is because the changes in the rider funding change at different times than Nova Scotia Power rates do. To separate out those differences - it's much more complex than that, but the fundamental is to have something that recognizes that there needs to be flexibility for the EfficiencyOne budget.

The rider portion of putting it on the bill was mainly - that's secondary to the ask, to be honest with you. The main driver for that is we are asked at every single regulatory hearing and challenge non-transparency. Transparency - by all three customer advocates - is a priority, so we put it forward for purposes of transparency. It's in front of the NSUARB. Again, the stronger rationale for the rider is about the differences in this timing, in terms of when EfficiencyOne's budget can change and ours. The other is about transparency.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I appreciate that, and I am all for transparency. But I would suggest that if that is the primary - I mean, power rates themselves are complicated and there's a formula, presumably. It's like the bill that you get isn't just X times Y equals your bill - there are different kilowatt hours and different changes. I have to imagine that notwithstanding the different timing, there would be a way to capture that charge that didn't stand out on a bill.

I know there are NSUARB ears in the room and that this will be a subject for the application, but just to say: I think that's problematic. I think we saw the same thing happen just now at City Hall, where we had to debate a climate tax. We're very happy that the Halifax budget ask at City Hall was granted because we think it's vital to meeting the challenge of the climate crisis, but we also think it was unnecessarily politicized. When one thing is a tax and another thing just gets folded in because it's necessary, it makes it seem like the extra thing is an optional and we don't see that as an optional. Just to say, that was the spirit of the question.

To go back to our conversation about energy poverty and arrears, we know that there was a pause on disconnections during COVID. We know that there are no disconnections when the temperature falls below freezing, but many MLAs understand this season as the season of arrears. When these things come back into play, because the weather gets warmer, people who may have had some temporary relief now need to start dealing with the financial consequences.

I'm not sure who is best to answer this, but can the Nova Scotia Power team tell me how many customers in Nova Scotia are in arrears right now?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: I don't have that offhand. What I can say is, we work with every individual customer. Obviously, if they reach out to constituent offices, we work with those offices as well to find a way for that customer. This is where we work out either payment plans or if there's a qualifying supporting fund for the customer, such as the heat fund I mentioned earlier. So it's done with each individual customer, but we can get you that percentage.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: That's information we'd really like to have. Similarly - and I'm assuming it'll be the same answer - how many people currently have those payment agreements? If you can't provide that, if you could provide it at a later date, that would be great.

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Yes, we can provide that.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Can you sort of explain for the committee your current policy around disconnections and how many households are currently at risk of disconnection?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Broadly, obviously disconnection is fundamentally a last resort. We work very closely with customers, in many cases, over an extended period of time. The specifics of the policy are actually quite complex, because there are many different individual situations that require different approaches for each customer to understand their personal situation. Life presents all kinds of different challenges associated with that and we need to make sure we're responsive and understanding to that.

It is ultimately only a last resort after looking at all options that that becomes what we have to do.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Well, I would love if Nova Scotia Power is able to provide those statistics for those previous questions, and also if there's any trend we're seeing around arrears and disconnections.

I understand the policy may be complex, but we also live in a climate where, as I think maybe Ms. Ferguson said earlier, this is an essential service. No question, right? I mean, power is an essential service everywhere, I would imagine, but particularly here, in our context. It would be helpful to understand those numbers and if there are any trend lines.

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: We can certainly have a series of meetings where we can actually get together and talk about how we approach these types of situations, making sure we're sensitive to customers. Obviously, we can't get into a specific on a customer, but we

can talk about the approach and how we try to help guide through to a solution with our customers.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I will say that as a constituency MLA, we have a good relationship with Nova Scotia Power. We have those conversations all the time. But I think the purpose of this committee is to sort of take a step back from the level of the Province and ask, what are the numbers? What are the trend lines? What are the statistics?

We, anecdotally, are experiencing a real rise in people experiencing energy poverty, being in arrears that they can't possibly get out of. All of that is to our contention that there needs to be a way that is addressed. If that's not in the general rate application, then that might be in massive increases in efficiency, or it could be in regulatory change around how energy poverty can be dealt with on the rate side. This is what I'm trying to tease out.

You mentioned the low-income advisory committee. Can you tell me who's on the committee, how often it meets, and what data is looked at in those conversations?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Yes, I can get that information for you. It's not on the top of my head right now.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Could you share with us any recommendations that have come from that committee around lowering bills, managing arrears, any of the things we've been discussing?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: I can certainly bring that forward.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Thank you. I guess in the last couple minutes of this round, I'll just ask: Our understanding is that legislation actually does not permit the NSUARB to create a program for low-income ratepayers. That's been litigated. Does Nova Scotia Power agree that should remain the norm, or is there some appetite for being able to create a genuine, sustainable low-income energy program?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: You're right. The Act does specify that for a similar service for a certain rate class, there is a certain rate. It doesn't lend itself well to low-income solutions. But Nova Scotia Power would be receptive and, in fact, supportive of understanding what could be a solution around this, and be willing to work on what that looks like.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm not going to speed read through my last 32 seconds, so thank you for your answers. We'll return in the next round of questioning.

THE CHAIR: We'll now go over to the PC caucus and Mr. Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: My questions are to Nova Scotia Power. In addition to cost, reliable electricity supply is important to businesses to be able to operate, and for individuals and families to enjoy a high quality of life. What steps are you taking to address the frequency and duration of outages?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Each year Nova Scotia Power is investing approximately \$100 million in the reliability and resiliency of the transmission and distribution grid. We also know that outages are an inconvenience at a minimum, but can cause a lot more challenges for our customers so we take a lot of focus on trying to minimize that. The teams in the field are absolutely committed to doing that.

Although the number of outages has gone down, the frequency, it still doesn't mean there aren't challenges, as the member pointed out. We need to make sure we continue to invest in areas of the province are not resilient enough.

One of the component pieces, which is yet to be fully heard through the general rate application, is a proposal, in fact, to invest more in the T and D business, bring on over 60 people on the front line to actually enhance reliability further for our customers, also acknowledging that climate change and the frequency of storms and weather events is increasing.

NOLAN YOUNG: Power outages are a common occurrence throughout the province. They can last for several hours or several days. I know that Shelburne is no different. I can think of multiple times that it has been out for days, or it seems unexpected.

I'm curious, how does Nova Scotia Power compare to other provinces when it comes to the frequency and duration of power outages?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Right now, we would be similar to other Atlantic Provinces.

NOLAN YOUNG: I think everyone understands that Nova Scotia gets its share of storms and bad weather that can interrupt power services. However, what is harder to understand is that almost every day there are unplanned power outages in the province. How do you explain so many unplanned power outages? What's being done to improve the service?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Again, I understand the inconvenience associated with outages and we try to avoid them throughout the province. There are over 530,000 interconnections with customers in this province and any number of items could, in fact, cause an event somewhere in the province each and every day.

What we're trying to do and what we've done over the last number of years - the last five years specifically - is actually reduce the frequency by 30 per cent on that, while

at the same time understanding that weather is getting worse and in fact more days it is blowing over 80 kilometers than it ever has before.

We also understand that the climate is changing, and we need to have a more resilient system. Each year, for instance, we would drive 50 per cent of all the lines in this province, examining each of those lines, to get ahead of issues. Every two years, as a cycle, we would actually see every kilometre of every line in the province. That is worked into a very deliberate and focused asset investment to reduce the number of outages. It's not going to prevent every one, but overall they are improving.

We also acknowledge there are some communities still susceptible to levels of outages which we don't like to have them experience and that's where we're committed to investing more in those areas.

NOLAN YOUNG: I just want to add before I pass it over to my colleague, I find it a little surprising if you are driving - every two years you are inspecting all the lines throughout the province and the service doesn't seem to be improving a lot. Having lived in Alberta, I haven't experienced a whole bunch of power outages like we have now. Even growing up as a child here, I don't remember as many outages as we've seen recently.

With those few words I'll pass it off to my colleague, MLA MacDonald.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I guess I'll start a little ramble that I just remember it different than my Liberal colleague because the Premier said that when he was made aware that he made it very clear he wasn't in favour of the rate increase and he was pretty surprised when Nova Scotia Power actually submitted it, which caused the changes to the Public Utilities Act and the Electricity Act - which are the questions that I'll be having at this point to the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables. How will the recent amendments to the Public Utilities Act improve accountability measures for Nova Scotia Power?

KAREN GATIEN: As you would undoubtedly know, we added a number of other performance standards, so we strengthened that around affordability and reliability measures to be able to hold Nova Scotia Power accountable. We also introduced the concept of a partnership table, where we could have participation in the table to give advice and guidance to the NSUARB on standards and measures in terms of penalties. At this point, we're still working through who will be on that table and making recommendations, but that hasn't been finalized at this time.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Regarding solar, with the major changes that were made to protect those residents, how will the amendments that happened to the Electricity Act help solar customers and the solar industry?

[10:00 a.m.]

KAREN GATIEN: The amendments that were made to the Electricity Act with respect to solar and net metering will enable individuals who choose to put solar on their homes to help reduce their own personal energy costs without getting a charge back or an additional fee for doing so. It will basically zero out the energy portion of their bill. They will still have administrative costs, as anyone would for accessing the system.

What that does is it allows people to take a little bit more control into their homes in terms of their energy consumption and energy production. What we did do - and I know it was mentioned earlier - is there was an unintended loophole that allowed people to be reimbursed for additional energy. That was never the intent of the program. Producing energy is a commercial enterprise, so that was fixed as well in this change.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I'll defer the rest of my time to MLA Taggart.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Taggart.

TOM TAGGART: My question is for Deputy Gatien. Aside from rate discussions, what else could the provincial government do to ensure that energy costs are affordable for Nova Scotians?

KAREN GATIEN: There are a number of things. In addition to the changes that were just made to the Electricity Act with respect to solar, the addition of some amendments with respect to the Green Button program, which actually puts some knowledge in the hands of ratepayers so they can see what their energy consumption is, make some changes, provide some recommendations on how they can reduce it.

There are also a number, and I know they've been mentioned, of efficiency programs. The government has invested a considerable amount of money, \$30 million in some of the HomeWarming and other ideas. What I would suggest actually, if it's okay, perhaps David Miller could walk through some additional energy efficiency programming that we've supported.

DAVID MILLER: The department has been a long supporter of energy efficiency as a principle and has worked to create some of the most progressive energy efficiency regimes in Canada with EfficiencyOne's work. Some of the programs that we've been working on for quite a while include HomeWarming, which provides zero-cost retrofits to low-income homes across Nova Scotia. This program has been operating I think since 2007 and has provided free retrofits to more than 21,000 low-income homes.

We've also recently worked with Efficiency Nova Scotia to develop a similar program for apartments so that renters can also benefit from these efficiencies and to ensure



that the landlords who own those buildings don't gain the benefit but that it's the tenants who do.

We've also invested a lot of money in the Home Energy Assessment, providing free home energy assessments for individuals to help them identify the best investments they can make to reduce their energy costs and provide them with access to a recent federal fund for greening their home as well. There's also work that we've done to help people transition to more renewable forms of heat or lower-cost forms of heat such as heat pumps, and then similar work with small businesses.

One of the programs that we're really excited about that has been ongoing for a couple of years is the Mi'kmaw Home Energy Efficiency Project which provides retrofits similar to that of HomeWarming, but for all Mi'kmaw homes in Nova Scotia. To date, there have been about 2,500 homes that have been touched by that program. A lot of that work is being done by community members from the Mi'kmaw communities that they live in.

There's a lot more we could talk about, but I think I'll leave it there.

TOM TAGGART: Thank you very much for that. Next, I'm wondering how recent changes to the solar program will increase the supply of renewable energy in the province and help Nova Scotians lower their electricity costs. That is for Deputy Minister Karen Gatién, please.

KAREN GATIÉN: I mentioned the benefits to individuals, but the amendments also included enabling commercial and community solar. For example, if a company wanted to add solar to their roof - we always use the example of Ikea. They put solar panels on their roof so it allows them to also reduce their energy production.

With community solar, we can begin to allow people who don't necessarily - maybe they live in apartments so they don't really have the opportunity or the roof shape isn't such that it can support solar. They are able to perhaps be a participant in a community solar project where they can benefit from the production of solar energy to reduce their own energy costs. It's also a renewable source for the province at the same time.

TOM TAGGART: Thanks very much for that. I just want to say that in my previous life as a municipal councillor, I was very involved in the initial project, Solar Colchester in Colchester County and part of the Carbon-Free Colchester committee. I know they've done great things there.

I'm very pleased to see the provincial government provide the Municipality of the County of Colchester \$50,000 for design, to study to convert municipal facilities in Colchester to net zero, high-performance buildings. Can you discuss how these

investments, as well as recent amendments to the Electricity Act, strengthen the community solar program and help our rural municipalities?

KAREN GATIEN: I would actually suggest that David Miller would be in the best position to answer that.

DAVID MILLER: Over the last couple of years, we've invested quite a bit with communities across Nova Scotia, through the Low Carbon Communities program. A lot of the work that has been done has been led by municipalities to help identify the best opportunities and best buildings to either conduct efficiency work on or add solar or other renewables to - and in many cases both, of course.

What we see changing as a result of these recent amendments is enabling potentially larger solar projects for municipal buildings, such as water treatment plants, which have very significant electricity consumption load, or arenas, which have very large roofs and are able to support significant solar installations.

In addition to that increased access for commercial solar, similar to Ikea, there's an opportunity for municipalities to be partners or developers or subscribers even, to community solar projects, which would see a larger solar installation on the scale of a couple of megawatts. Then individual could subscribe to that a portion to their own energy needs, or as much as they want to invest.

As Deputy Minister Gatien indicated, that would work for people who are renters, condo owners or homeowners who have too much shade around their house or don't have the right roof to participate. It should open up more access. We expect municipalities to be partners in many of those projects going forward.

TOM TAGGART: Thank you very much. I am going to hand it over to my colleague Trevor Boudreau. I just want to say that the work that has been done by the Department of Natural Resources and Renewables and those folks on solar is good work, and I'm very pleased with it. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I will be directing some of my questions to the Deputy Minister of Environment and Climate Change. Before I do that, I want to have a bit of a conversation with Nova Scotia Power. You can see some of the emotion and some of the concern that you are hearing from some of my colleagues here. That's because we're hearing that emotion and we're hearing that concern from residents.

I'll give you a couple of examples of things that are going on in my area that concern me. I live in a rural riding, about 20 or 30 kilometres from the Bras d'Or Lakes. I

live right on the Strait of Canso, probably one of the windiest parts of the whole province - constant winds, always windy. I lost power twice this year, once for 20 minutes or half an hour. The other time was for four or five hours, but my constituents in Dundee have lost power nine times from December to March.

I'm wondering, what do I tell those constituents who have lost power nine times, and most of those times, their power does not go out for 20 minutes. Their power goes out four hours, six hours, days. This is an area that doesn't have cell coverage, and their land lines go down when their power goes out. This isn't an inconvenience - I've heard that word a couple of times. This is not an inconvenience in Dundee. This is a safety issue.

My question is: What do I say to my residents in Dundee and in other areas in rural parts of my riding, about this rate that's being proposed by Nova Scotia Power, and what do I say to them about what's happening here?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: First off, absolutely understand it's more than an inconvenience. It is a challenge for people and their businesses, and it can be a safety concern, absolutely. There are areas which need more investment. I don't know the specific circumstances of those outages, but I can tell you that the teams will be looking at investment programs associated with that area, and I'd be very happy to have the team spend some time with you and actually review what they have as a plan to help you speak with customers about this.

On the ask for an increase in rates, again I say, there's never a good time for a rate increase, especially with rising costs that we see globally, beyond Nova Scotia. Part of this ask is around making a more resilient and more reliable grid as climate changes.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I will make one more comment and ask one more question. Maybe you can answer it with respect to not necessarily power outages, but one of the other concerns that I'm hearing in my area is about, and you might have seen the article in the newspaper about a family who waited a year for power poles for electricity to be hooked up to their home.

We have some great staff at Nova Scotia Power. I will give you full credit. We have some wonderful people on the ground in Richmond. I've got to know a number of them. They really are hard workers and they're doing a fantastic job, but I will say it does concern me how long it takes for some of these newer homes or change of service or anything to happen.

Again, I'm coming back to that same question: we're getting asked for a rate increase, and what is the service that we're getting provided now. Any comment on the people in my riding and other ridings who are sitting waiting for either power poles to be installed or electricity to be connected?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: First off, we absolutely work closely with our customers, especially with transfers and power connections. Each circumstance can be different. In particular cases, there may or may not be land and easements that have to be acquired, trees trimmed to certain standards, before we can actually do the work ourselves.

An example of a standard for us is if there's a ten-pole connection or less and everything is ready to go, in other words, ground is ready, the easements are in place, it's approximately a 10-day service. We meet that in the vast majority of cases. There are some circumstances in which there are unique differences and challenges that could be with a particular connection, and we work closely with our customers on those items.

THE CHAIR: You have 45 seconds left, Mr. Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I will say that I've been able to work with some in your department, but the idea of a 10-day service from once all the easements are in place isn't necessarily always happening, I can tell you just from my perspective with my riding. But I can appreciate that that is the goal. Hopefully we can work together to make sure that happens. I didn't get to ask my questions to the Department of Environment and Climate Change yet, but I'll be back.

THE CHAIR: We will now move on to the next round of questioning, which will give each caucus eight minutes. To begin, the Liberal caucus. Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: To the member for Hants East, the funny thing about Hansard is it's there forever, so I'm just going to read a quote from Hansard from the 24<sup>th</sup>: "When Nova Scotia Power filed their rate increase with the Utility and Review Board, there's no law that states they have to come to the Premier or the Minister of Natural Resources and Renewables. They did this on their own. We didn't know until the official public actually knew what was in that document." Again, there are some contradictions.

[10:15 a.m.]

The elephant in the room here around rates is that the fuel adjustment increase is going to happen this year no matter what. That's dollar-for-dollar money in Nova Scotia Power's pocket. If the cost of fuel goes up, it's automatic that the rate increases are going to go up. What we've heard here today is inflation, the cost of fuel, things like that, which are impacting Nova Scotia Power - which, in fact, is not true. The cost of fuel does not impact Nova Scotia Power when you're getting dollar for dollar back.

My question to Mr. Sidebottom is a very direct question. How much are rate increases going to go up this year with fuel adjustment increases?

THE CHAIR: Mr. Landrigan.

DAVID LANDRIGAN: Thank you for the question. It's a very important question. In the GRA that was filed, 0.8 per cent per annum related to fuel. But we all know of the fuel pressures that are going on around the globe. We all know about the Ukraine crisis, and we all know that Nova Scotians are not insulated from that. I guess if you look last week, the price of diesel went from around \$2 to \$2.53 in one week.

We are managing. We're doing everything we can to mitigate. I have a team of 30 people in our fuels group - 30 Nova Scotians who are working hard to manage the costs. We are doing that aggressively for Nova Scotians.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So it's safe to say that those fuel adjustment increases are potentially going to go up even higher as the cost of fuel goes up. Again, what's a little troubling to me is that we've heard here from witnesses that one of the reasons for the rate increase is the skyrocketing cost of fuel. Again, it has not been discussed here today, but that fuel adjustment there is to protect Nova Scotia Power from that. I would say to Mr. Allen, when you're looking at that, take that under consideration.

The other thing that Nova Scotia Power in their application has the audacity - and I mean, this to me is one of the real slaps in the face to Nova Scotians - for the rate of return to go up. You've asked it to go from 9.25 per cent to a maximum of 9.5 per cent. We already have a rate of return. That rate of return is coming out of the pockets of Nova Scotians.

My question is: Why now? What makes Nova Scotia Power think that in the middle of an inflation crisis, in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, they should earn more off the back of Nova Scotians?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Nova Scotia Power is a regulated utility that has a fully transparent cost of service. The rate of return is adjudicated by the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board. The understanding around the fair and even rate of return is to allow for the balance for affordability for customers, and also to make sure that the capital can be attracted for the investments that allow us to serve our customers in the way that they need.

Especially for what we have in front of us - the transition away from coal, which we've been on as a journey for 15 years, and going into the next 10, requires those investments. We need to be responsive to that.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: So again, this is where I'm confused and where Nova Scotians are confused. We know that a large percentage of the cost of Muskrat Falls was downloaded onto the back of Nova Scotians. We know that any time there is infrastructure upgrade, Nova Scotia Power applies for that money back from the NSUARB or rate increases.

Again, this is what confuses - and quite frankly - I'm going to use my . . .

THE CHAIR: Don't.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What makes Nova Scotians mad is that on one hand we're saying one thing and on the other hand you are doing the other. You are saying that this is for the infrastructure cause, yet we know that again and again when infrastructure costs go through the roof, Nova Scotia Power will apply for that money to be returned. We heard today that inflation and the cost of fuel - we know that you are getting dollar for dollar back.

Are you telling Nova Scotians that in order for Nova Scotia Power to be profitable, equitable, and be able to keep the current standards, which I would argue is a lot lower than 30 per cent - and if you'd like, if you could give me an email address I'll send you all the letters I get from my constituents about power outages and the power being cut off. Are you are saying that this company cannot function and do the upgrades needed without a 9.5 per cent guaranteed return rate?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: This is an application before the regulator. Inside of that application are the elements that would put forward the requirements to have a healthy utility that is required to invest in the future.

The benefit of the regulatory process is that it's transparent. It has the opportunity for stakeholders to engage thoroughly and fully examine that information. I think that is the forum in which that particular ask is best examined.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: The word "transparent" keeps coming up and what I will say is that this is not a transparent process. Nova Scotia Power and Emera have not been transparent. The department has not been transparent, and the Premier has not been transparent.

We have heard one story after another, contradicting each other, on when the Premier knew, when the minister knew, why power increases are needed when we know that fuel costs do not impact Nova Scotia Power because you are getting it back. We have a refusal to even speak on the guaranteed rate of return, which is offensive because that money is not your money - it's the money of Nova Scotians.

We've heard Nova Scotia Power here today talk about Emera and Nova Scotia Power and salaries and saying it's their money. Again, it's not your money, it's your money because it was transferred out of Nova Scotians bank accounts into your own bank accounts.

To me, this whole day today almost feels like a sham because we knew coming into this that we weren't going to get the answers. We had lawyers, executives, and departments send us letters saying they are refusing to answer questions . . .

THE CHAIR: Order. The time for the Liberal questions has elapsed. The NDP has until 10:31 a.m. Ms. Leblanc.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you for being here, everyone. I just want to tie up a few things with my eight minutes. I heard from Mr. Sidebottom about the way that the organization will work with folks who are in arrears. Like Mr. Maguire, my riding has a lot of residents who use those services. First of all, I want to shout out to the folks at Nova Scotia Power who work on the ground with our office because we have many of those conversations a week, frankly.

We didn't get an answer to my colleague's question about how many people are in that situation and we look forward to that information. I would say that even when people are being worked with and there are individual plans and all of that stuff, still the stress of all that is extreme. Also, people who it may help at one point - but the issue is chronic.

The fact is that people don't make enough money to pay all their bills and the bills are going up. We have a chronic income problem in Nova Scotia and an affordability problem. I dare say that while those options are good in a moment for somebody, it is not a solution to the overall issue.

I wanted to ask one more specific question about disconnections. My understanding is that a family or a customer can avoid disconnection if it will negatively impact their health. I am wondering about that rule because there are a lot of ways that stress negatively impacts your health. I would say that when a family has their power cut off and it means their children must be removed from their home - and think about that for a moment. Because you can't pay your power bill, you lose your children?

That is very negative for someone's health, for everyone's health in the family. I'm wondering, how does that work? Do folks need to show a doctor's note? If so, how do they do that if they don't have access to a family physician?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: I will have to consult my colleagues more specifically on how exactly that works. Absolutely, we've got some great people in the field who have a lot of compassion and work closely with people. There are many unfortunate family situations that will create stress, I completely understand that. For the specifics on that, I'll have to provide you with that after the session.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Thank you for that. I also look forward to that information coming to us. Then I would say that what we're talking about right now are rates and the high cost of power bills because the rates go up. I would like to turn our attention to bills again and remind folks that if we were able to lower consumption then our bills would go down, even if our rates go up.

Mr. MacDonald, I have so much respect for you and your organization. I'm sorry no one is asking you questions today, and I probably won't but I will say, a shout out to you. I shout out your programs all the time but the problem with them is that there's not enough money for them and they should be expanded. They should be tripled, in my opinion. I really do think that we need to focus on that in Nova Scotia because: a) it will help us meet our climate goals; and b) it will help with this affordability issue. I won't spend my time talking about that right now even though I feel very strongly about it.

In the EGCCRA legislation, lots of great things in that, we all know that, but we do see and we have heard, and Efficiency Canada has evaluated it - the efficiency targets are kind of vague, disappointingly vague. There is encouraging language but there is a missed opportunity, in our opinion, for setting clear goals to address energy poverty by ramping up efforts around efficiency.

In the Act right now, there are no targets connected to reducing power bills and GHG emissions through investments in efficiency. I'm wondering, for both the deputy ministers, what internal milestones do you have in your departments to this end, to reduce GHG emissions, as well as lower energy bills?

THE CHAIR: Deputy Minister MacEachern.

LORA MACEACHERN: I very much appreciate the question. As you know, the legislation is quite new so we're in the early stages of implementation. What's coming next is our climate risk assessment, which will more fully articulate the issues that are being faced by Nova Scotians around climate change. Then the climate plan is anticipated for later in the Spring. That will be a key and important document and since 2009 there's been an action plan in place. That's going to build on the targets that are set out in the legislation. I think we'll see more detail there around the items that you've identified.

The other thing I wanted to point out when you talk about energy efficiency and the focus on that is that, as you know, through our cap and trade program there are regular auctions and funds that are generated that go into the Green Fund. Those Green Fund revenues are invested, the lion's share of them, in energy efficiency programs. Quite a few of the funds go over into Efficiency Nova Scotia and the Clean Foundation. They do great work, as you've just talked about, around energy efficiency. We don't know every year how much money will be in there, but it was over \$44 million just this year alone.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Well that's great, but I reiterate - I think \$40 million is a lot of money, but wouldn't \$120 million make more sense when we're talking what we're talking about here? I know it's budgets and there's a limited amount of money, but budgets are about choices, and I really do think that this is where we need to make our choices.

I don't have very much time. I have one minute. I want to ask really quickly: How does the department define "energy poverty"?



[10:30 a.m.]

LORA MACEACHERN: That's an excellent question. I'm not sure that we have a specific definition, but there's no question that we feel there are significant issues with energy poverty in Nova Scotia. We've passed the legislation with its targets. You'll notice throughout that there are references to the importance of equity. We've committed to establishing a panel this year under the legislation to address issues of environmental racism.

There are a number of steps that are identified in the legislation, and we'll see further likely in the climate plan.

THE CHAIR: Order. The time for the NDP questioning has elapsed. We will now go to the PC caucus. Mr. Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: As the member said, Hansard does last forever, so let's pull something from Hansard. Here's a clip of the Premier in the House in the Spring on April 1<sup>st</sup>, being asked about the Nova Scotia Power rate increases: "When I first learned about the rate increase, I voiced my displeasure." That's a quote from the Premier.

My question is to Nova Scotia Power. Is it a normal practice for the Premier to meet with Nova Scotia Power? If so, were the meetings with Premier Houston similar to the ones you would have had with past Premiers?

THE CHAIR: Ms. Ferguson.

JUDITH FERGUSON: Thank you very much for the question. As I indicated earlier, as a key participant in the energy transition, governments are key stakeholders for us. We meet regularly with all levels of government and would meet with Premiers and ministers, as we did with the former government, and we do with the current government.

NOLAN YOUNG: Thank you. I'll pass it off to my colleague, the member for Richmond.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: Thank you. I promised I would come back to Environment and Climate Change, so here I am. I appreciate the answers that everybody has been able to give us.

Maybe, deputy minister, can you tell us about some of the programs and services that your department offers to make energy costs more affordable for low-income and vulnerable Nova Scotians?

LORA MACEACHERN: Thanks very much for the question - I started to answer it just a few moments ago, in terms of my comments. As we've discussed, the department administers the cap-and-trade program. It generates significant revenue as a result of the requirements for participating companies to remit funds from GHG emissions into a Green Fund.

The Green Fund has some specific purposes set out in legislation. One of them is around investments in energy efficiency programming. Over the two years where there have been funds in the Green Fund, it's generated about \$77 million - \$44 million in this past year. We've invested in a variety of ways, most significantly in programming that is administered by Efficiency Nova Scotia and the Clean Foundation.

We've got a new program that is just up and running - or not quite up and running, but just announced. It's \$15 million to the Sustainable Communities Challenge Fund, which will be administered by the Nova Scotia Federation of Municipalities. It is targeted at incenting climate action within Nova Scotia communities across the province.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I had two other questions, and I think you kind of answered both of them. You talked about the Green Fund, and basically in 2022, some of the programs that were funded through it. Is there any more detail you want to give to that? Are there any specifics that maybe you want to share?

LORA MACEACHERN: Absolutely. There are some great details to share. I actually wondered if we might want to pass that over to Steve MacDonald to give some of the details, because they administer four key programs on energy efficiency that are funded via the Green Fund.

THE CHAIR: Mr. MacDonald.

STEPHEN MACDONALD: Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. There is a broad suite of energy efficiency programs that are offered in the province, many of which are targeted towards low-income Nova Scotians.

A number of the programs were mentioned earlier today. The HomeWarming Program, for example, which is funded in part by the Province of Nova Scotia and in part by Nova Scotia Power, does full home building envelope upgrades for low-income homeowners. They save on average \$750 to \$1,000 a year, depending on things like the price of oil. As you can imagine, the price of oil is increasing so the amount they save annually is even greater.

There is also a program called Affordable Multifamily Housing Program, which is targeted towards low-income renters. So think of multi-unit residential buildings to do insulation upgrades, perhaps windows, other things to make the buildings energy efficient. That program also works with non-profit organizations - shelters, for example - to help

them do upgrades. Often these are organizations and buildings and communities that don't have a lot of funding. As you can imagine, reducing their energy costs by a significant amount gives them more money for programming and whatnot.

We also have programs where we do free insulation of energy efficient products. So think smart thermostats, LED lighting at no cost to participants. All these programs, as much of the discussion today has focused on, have a huge impact on reducing customer bills. Anytime you can reduce bills it certainly can mitigate the impact of any rate increases. Our name is EfficiencyOne and that is very intentional because it denotes the focus on efficiency first, before making other energy choices.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Boudreau, you have two minutes.

TREVOR BOUDREAU: I'm going to offer my time to Mr. Harrison to ask some questions, but thank you.

THE CHAIR: MLA Harrison.

LARRY HARRISON: This is for the NSUARB. Can you describe the role of the intervenor in the NSUARB process of considering an application?

PAUL ALLEN: Thank you, Mr. Harrison. The intervenors are people who come or organizations that come with a specific interest, and they can be varied interests. They come with a specific interest in one or more of the issues that are being discussed at the case. The intervenors themselves are able to lead evidence, they are able to cross-examine witnesses, challenge through the interrogatory or the information request process, get more information and they may either support or have some objection to whatever is being proposed in the application.

LARRY HARRISON: This could be a personal one. Who is responsible for cleaning the lines in rural areas - the branches and trees and so on, that interfere with power outages?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Broadly, obviously Nova Scotia Power is responsible for clearing those lines. There is a specific department actually inside the organization that invests approximately \$20 million a year on the line clearing. It's in response to an overall plan called Vegetation Management and is also driven by insights from customer requests as well.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Harrison, you have four seconds.

LARRY HARRISON: Who is responsible for the clean-up? (Laughter)

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Now this is the point where we - Mr. Maguire.

**BRENDAN MAGUIRE:** Before we move on to the next part, which is the closing statements, I would imagine that people on this side have a lot of questions. I know that I still have a lot more questions to ask - not just Nova Scotia Power but the department. I'd like to put a motion on the floor to extend the questioning period part of the Public Accounts Committee meeting for another hour.

**THE CHAIR:** There is a motion on the floor to extend the questioning for a further hour. Any discussion?

A recorded vote has been called, so the clerk is going to have to read the names of the committee.

[The clerk calls the roll.]

[10:40 a.m.]

**YEAS**

Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Claudia Chender  
Hon. Kelly Regan

**NAYS**

Trevor Boudreau  
Larry Harrison  
John A. MacDonald  
Tom Taggart  
Nolan Young

**THE CLERK:** For, 3. Against, 5.

**THE CHAIR:** The motion is defeated.

Mr. Maguire.

**BRENDAN MAGUIRE:** I have another motion. First of all, I'd like to say that in regard to the past motion, it's troubling that the current government, who has been very secretive around meetings and what was said and what wasn't said, is now voting down an opportunity for us to get answers. They would prefer to go home and do whatever they want to do, but our job is to be here, and especially in the time of a housing and inflation - everything is going through the roof, and they vote to send one of the main offenders home. Shame.

My second motion is that it was very clear today coming into this meeting that we weren't going to get the answers that we were seeking. Before we came in here today, letters were sent to the committee essentially handcuffing what we can ask. There were a lot of noes and a lot of "I can't answer that" here today. I'd like to put a motion on the floor that these same witnesses return the moment the presentations are given to the NSUARB. Not when the decision is made, but when the presentations are made. The evidence will

then be public, and that they return for the next actual meeting of Public Accounts Committee.

The reason for that is again, we heard today that the fuel cost is going to go up. We heard today that the rates are going to go up, and we've heard some inconsistencies in why. Also, we heard a lot of non-answers today. It is important that Nova Scotians hear why. The motion is that when these witnesses present at the NSUARB, they return the very next Public Accounts meeting so that they can finally answer the questions that we asked here today.

THE CHAIR: Is there any discussion? There's a motion on the floor. Mr. Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: I'd just like to add in regard to that, Mr. Maguire's been on this committee since 2013. He understands the process for bringing topics and selections, it goes through the subcommittee, and I'd recommend he bring his suggestions back during the next agenda setting.

THE CHAIR: Ms. Chender, then Mr. Maguire.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Mr. Maguire's pioneered a new way of members getting closing statements via motions, so maybe I'll try to emulate that in the future.

To the issue on the floor right now, with respect, the committee can call any topic it wants at any time. That's been done many times, so I don't think there's any procedural barrier to Mr. Maguire's motion and we would support it.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Respectfully to my Progressive Conservative colleague, what I do understand is that Nova Scotians' power rates are going up. What I do understand is that people are increasingly unable to afford food on their table because of power rates. What I do understand is that power bills are now higher than mortgage payments and rent payments.

What I do understand here today is some of the simplest questions put forward by me and the member for Dartmouth South were not answered. Questions like, how many people have their power shut off? How many people are in arrears? These are very simple questions that have nothing to do with the NSUARB application, and they could not answer.

It's very clear to me that they did not come here prepared today to answer questions, and quite frankly, the questions that were put forward by the Progressive Conservatives were pretty softball, so if they don't want to participate, that's fine. If they want to vote

against Nova Scotians in having these witnesses come back to answer the questions that they deserve, they can vote against this.

[10:45 a.m.]

I would ask that as soon as the information is made public, which was the reasoning they didn't want to answer questions, that we bring them back to the next Public Accounts meeting to answer the questions that all Nova Scotians want answered.

THE CHAIR: There is a motion on the floor, and for a recorded vote. I will ask the Clerk to read the names.

[The Clerk calls the roll.]

[10:45 a.m.]

**YEAS**

Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Claudia Chender  
Hon. Kelly Regan

**NAYS**

Trevor Boudreau  
Larry Harrison  
John A. MacDonald  
Tom Taggart  
Nolan Young

THE CLERK: For, 3. Against, 5.

The motion is defeated.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I guess what I am trying to figure out is why the Progressive Conservative Party just voted against two motions that were in favour of Nova Scotians. They voted with the side of Nova Scotia Power and higher power bills. I will finish by saying just honestly, shame.

THE CHAIR: We'll now move on to closing remarks by anyone who wishes to make closing remarks. Do either of the departments have them? Mr. MacDonald? Mr. Sidebottom?

MARK SIDEBOTTOM: Yes, I just want to thank you for having us here before the committee and I appreciate the inquiries on this very important topic.

THE CHAIR: I want to thank everyone for coming out today and for answering the questions that you were able to answer. We look forward to getting the answers back on

the ones that you didn't have with you today. You can just send them to the committee, and we will distribute those.

I wanted to thank everyone for coming out today. We are now going to move into committee business, which hopefully is boring, so you are free to leave, you don't need to remain here.

Because we have such a big crowd here. I'm going to call a two-minute break, if you don't mind, to let folks leave.

[10:47 a.m. The committee recessed.]

[10:50 a.m. The committee reconvened.]

THE CHAIR: I now call the meeting back to order. We do have some correspondence to deal with. We received correspondence from the Department of Public Works from our March 30<sup>th</sup> meeting. Is there any discussion on that particular piece of correspondence? Hearing none, we'll move on to the Nova Scotia Health Authority. We received information requested from our March 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting. Is there any discussion about that?

Hearing none, we'll move on to the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting and witnesses regarding the Report of the Auditor General on Housing. The Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the approved witness. The deputy minister is flying back to Nova Scotia from a meeting late the day before, and should any issue occur with his flights, this could affect his ability to attend the June 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. He has indicated that if this were to happen, the ADM, Mark Peck, would appear in his place. Is the committee agreed to having the ADM attend should Mr. LaFleche be unable to attend? I'm seeing nods, so we will say yes.

Then we have decisions from the April 27<sup>th</sup> in camera briefing with the Auditor General. The committee agreed to make decisions made at the April 27<sup>th</sup> in camera meeting public. They can just be read into the record, so I'm just going to read them into the record now.

“That we aim for the June 15<sup>th</sup> meeting to be scheduled to invite the Nova Scotia Health Authority, the Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, and the Department of Public Works to talk about the 2017 Report on Mental Health Services; the 2017 Report on Managing Home Care Support; the 2017 Report on Managing Home Care Support Contracts; and the 2019 Report on the QEII New Generation Project and the Community Outpatient Centre.”

The motion was moved by Susan Leblanc, MLA, and the motion was carried.

“That we accept the Auditor General’s suggestions for the ALC Follow-up Report: Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation CEO and the Deputy Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, as well as the ALC CEO.”

That was moved by John A. MacDonald, MLA, and that motion was carried.

The selection of additional witnesses for follow-up reports: members have been provided with suggested witnesses as per the Auditor General. I would open the floor for discussion.

The key witnesses for the ALC follow-up report that the Auditor General suggested were the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation CEO, Bob MacKinnon; the Department of Finance and Treasury Board Deputy Minister, Kelliann Dean; and the ALC CEO, Patrick Daigle. Is there any discussion on this particular motion?

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Sorry, could you restate it?

THE CHAIR: That we call the selection of additional witnesses for follow-up reports, this one was. The Auditor General suggested that for the ALC Follow-up Report, we ask the Nova Scotia Gaming Corporation CEO, the Deputy Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, and the ALC CEO to appear as witnesses. Ms. Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Doesn’t that just reflect what we read into the record that was moved and carried by Mr. MacDonald? I think that’s already been dealt with.

THE CHAIR: Sorry - you know what? I think it’s on here twice. Mr. MacDonald.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: Madam Chair, I think the intent was the rest of the reports. We got those ones dealt with. I think that was, did we want to add - just my opinion.

THE CHAIR: No, I think you’re right. Ms. Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: If that is the question, we talked about how to deal with this whole list and do we need to hear from everybody or do we want to group it. I would put forward a motion that we schedule another meeting to discuss the 2017 Climate Change Management Report and call the Department of Environment and Climate Change around the recommendation. That would be the first follow-up I would suggest.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion on that particular motion?

We have a motion from Ms. Chender. Ms. Chender, would you just repeat your motion so that everyone knows what they’re voting on?



CLAUDIA CHENDER: Before I do, I'll say that I'm going to put forward a second motion to suggest that we also schedule a third and final meeting to discuss the grant program piece, and that is the Departments of CCTH, Finance and Treasury Board, Natural Resources and Renewables, and Agriculture.

This is just sort of, how do we group this in a way that we don't have to have 50 meetings, but we can have a couple. These are the groupings we're suggesting, but it does feel like we could have a whole meeting, particularly given some of what came out of today with the Environment and Climate Change.

The motion would be to call the deputy minister of the Department of Environment and Climate Change and whoever she might bring on the 2017 Climate Change Management Report.

THE CHAIR: That's a second motion.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: No, that's the first motion.

THE CHAIR: That's the first motion, so we're going to deal with the first motion, and then we'll deal with the grant. This one is for calling the deputy minister to deal with the 2017 Climate Change Management Report from the Auditor General. Any further discussion? I'm going to ask Ms. Chender to read her motion.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: That we call the deputy minister of the Department of Environment and Climate Change to discuss the 2017 Climate Change Management Report by the Auditor General and the outstanding recommendation.

THE CHAIR: Any discussion? We're going to vote on that.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Ms. Chender has a second motion.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: My second motion would be acknowledging - I don't think it makes sense or is possible for us to get to every single one of these, maybe in a committee meeting - that we schedule a second meeting on the 2018 report on grant programs, and that we call the deputies or designates from the Departments of CCTH, Finance and Treasury Board, Natural Resources and Renewables, and Agriculture. That would be a second meeting, and I believe those are the departments that were engaged in that report.

THE CHAIR: Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: While I agree with calling the witnesses and having another meeting - and those are important topics - what we saw here today and the witnesses that we had here today, I would argue are much more important and top-of-mind for Nova Scotians, which is paying their bills. If there's space open, I would argue that we should be bringing Nova Scotia Power and Emera back in here to answer questions.

We just heard from government that there's a process to follow and there's no space, but the truth is that we need to be able to be flexible on this stuff. If we're looking to open up a space for grants and things like that, which are important, I would argue that should be used for this topic.

THE CHAIR: I will get to you, Ms. Chender. I will just note that we are a minute and a half away from the end of the meeting. Could I ask that we extend four or five minutes? No? (Interruption) Ms. Chender.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd ask that we vote on this motion. I supported your motion in the past, Mr. Maguire. We can put it up later. If we could vote on whether that basket of witnesses is acceptable.

THE CHAIR: We're now voting on bringing in various departments on grant programs, which we listed earlier.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. Mr. Maguire.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I'd like to extend the meeting for another hour. (Interruption) Not another hour, but I vote that we extend the meeting to deal with the business of the committee, and I ask that this is a recorded vote.

THE CHAIR: Any further discussion? Mr. Young.

NOLAN YOUNG: Would you be able to read that motion again that Mr. Maguire said? I didn't quite hear.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: To extend the meeting until all are dealt with, and I ask for a recorded vote.

THE CHAIR: We have now reached the moment of interruption. Just so you know, our next meeting is May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Thanks, folks. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:00 a.m.]