



Policy and Planning for Wind Energy

How is wind energy planned in Nova Scotia?

Governance of wind energy projects takes place at both provincial and municipal levels. Generally, no direct planning or approval of wind energy projects is required at the federal level; however, federal programs have encouraged wind as well as other forms of renewable electricity generation and may continue to do so.

Nova Scotia has developed resources to support wind energy development, like the Wind Atlas. The Department of Energy also sets policy and programs to legislate and support wind energy development, like the 2010 Renewable Electricity Plan which defined programs for feed-in-tariff and net metering. The Renewable Electricity Regulations amended in 2014 mandated targets for electricity from renewable energy. The Plan and Regulations are introduced and referenced in Fact Sheet 1. The Province requires certain procedures and approvals, like an environmental assessment for wind energy projects 2 MW or larger.

¹ <http://novascotia.ca/dma/publications/mga.asp>

Under the Municipal Government Act, land use planning for wind turbines and associated infrastructure is the responsibility of local governments.¹ Each municipality must develop appropriate land use planning tools for small and large wind turbines. These may include specific setbacks, zoning, development agreements, etc. Some municipalities have no formal land use planning other than a municipal planning strategy (MPS) and land use by-law (LUB) developed specifically for wind turbines.

Policy and planning for wind energy crosses provincial and municipal jurisdictions. The Province creates policies to encourage and regulate various forms of electricity generation and issues specific approvals. Yet each municipality must determine its own approach to land use planning for wind energy, recognizing the community's unique character as well as the public's interest in reducing greenhouse gases through renewable electricity generation. Local governments must make their own decisions on wind energy development.

How should municipal governments develop and revise their planning policies?

Consultation with residents, local experts and wind developers is essential to developing and updating planning policies. It is important to understand the implications of policy tools like setbacks and zoning for wind energy development. In 2010 the Department of Energy funded a pilot

project with the Municipality of the County of Cumberland and Municipality of the District of Shelburne. A Primer on Wind Energy Planning for Nova Scotia Municipalities summarized their efforts in public consultation, mapping and planning policy development⁵.

What is the range of setbacks in municipal by-laws?

Many by-laws identify setbacks from a property boundary and/or separation distances from a habitable building – they specify minimum distances from the proposed turbine location. These often vary according to size of turbine; distances increase for larger turbines. The Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities developed the Model Wind Turbine By-laws and Best Practices Report and a summary of wind by-laws for Nova Scotia municipalities⁶; both are useful resources with a range of planning tools.

Several municipalities have adopted a 1000 m separation distance for large-scale turbines. Many are shorter, or proportional to turbine dimensions or sound thresholds. By contrast, typical setbacks for small-scale turbines are often 1.5 to 2 times the turbine height (for a 30 m turbine, 45-60 m.) Some by-laws contain no specifications as to the number of turbines installed and make no distinction between large and small turbines.

How can benefits to my municipality be maximized?

Communities that host wind energy projects, large or small, stand to receive many benefits, including local employment (especially during construction), land leasing, tourism opportunities, possible education programs, partnerships with community groups and an annual regulated municipal tax base starting at \$5500/MW.⁷

There are many examples of successful wind energy projects in Nova Scotia, some identified in these Fact Sheets. Municipalities in Nova Scotia and elsewhere who currently have nearby wind energy projects are excellent resources for those interested in hosting or developing their own wind energy project.

Most project developers appreciate collaborating with local governments, and will work with them to increase local benefits. Municipalities that are part or full project owners maximize their financial return.

⁵ <http://www.sustainability-unsm.ca/our-work-on-renewable-energy.html>

⁶ <http://www.sustainability-unsm.ca/our-work-on-renewable-energy.html>

⁷ <http://nslegislature.ca/legc/statutes/windturb.htm>



SOURCE: EMILY TIPTON



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■ Sandy Point, Nova Scotia

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Case Study Basic Stats

Location: 

Sandy Point,
Nova Scotia

Output: 

50 kW

No. of Turbines: 

1

Case Study: DISTRICT OF SHELBURNE

In 2011, the Municipality of the District of Shelburne proactively developed their Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS) and accompanying Land Use By-law (LUB) to support development and management of wind energy resources within the municipal boundaries.⁸ This was achieved in consultation with residents and experts in the industry. The goals were to promote wind energy development, with a particular focus on small-scale projects and to address any potential impacts associated with wind turbines. In Spring 2015, their MPS and LUB were being updated for small turbines.

One 50 kW wind turbine was commissioned in late 2013. This municipally owned small-scale wind turbine at Sandy Point is generating electricity at 49.9 cents per kWh, with the expectation of generating \$15,000 per year for the Municipality after operating costs. The project was developed under the Community Feed-in-Tariff (COMFIT) Program and meets the broader sustainability goals of the Municipality and the specific zoning and setbacks in the MPS and LUB.



⁸ <http://www.municipalityofshelburne.ca/municipal-planning-strategy-and-land-use-by-law-l-100.html>