

Response to Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Department of Energy
Natural Resources Canada

March 2025

Introduction

Nova Scotia's Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada have reviewed the [Final Report](#) from the Committee for the Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development in Nova Scotia. Below is a summary of the key themes outlined in the report and preliminary reflections on behalf of the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada, who are responsible for the joint-management of the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada will continue to work with the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada and other federal and provincial authorities as we move forward with implementation.

Theme 1: Existing Knowledge Gaps and Necessary Research

The general understanding of the interactions between offshore wind energy and the marine ecosystem is fragmented due to various monitoring and research studies being conducted by separate entities. A collaborative approach to addressing knowledge gaps is essential for informing decision-making regarding future potential offshore wind development.

The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada are committed to identifying and prioritizing collaborative research initiatives to help fill knowledge gaps as the offshore wind sector develops. We will continue to partner with local organizations and institutes to help advance collaboration on research priorities.

We recognize that there are opportunities to leverage existing institutions and programs to contribute to scientific research in an organized and intentional manner. The initiation and management of many of the recommendations will be a joint effort between the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada, in collaboration with other government departments and agencies as well as the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator.

We are supportive of consolidating databases to share and leverage existing information and continued research that focuses on modelling and marine spatial planning. Prioritizing and expanding the collection of environmental, geological, oceanographic, and ocean user data aligns with these collaborative efforts and will benefit the overall growth of the sector. Project-specific or site-specific research initiatives will also be needed.

Implementing many of these recommendations will require significant investment. Collaboration from all levels of government and industry will be required to execute many important initiatives, including funding to support collaboration with Indigenous groups, capacity building, and participant funding.

Other jurisdictions can offer examples of how to develop research priorities successfully. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy, Natural Resources Canada, and other government and regulatory agencies aim to continue discussions with agencies and committees in other jurisdictions to cooperate on research and initiatives related to offshore wind projects. This cooperation will emphasize collaboration between post-secondary research institutions and learning from shared experiences.

Theme 2: Socio-Economic Feasibility and Consequences

Understanding the socio-economic implications of offshore wind projects on local communities and industries is important for ensuring fair opportunities, optimizing benefits, and minimizing potential impacts. The development of approaches and measures to avoid, co-exist, mitigate, and compensate will require continued engagement with Indigenous groups, local communities, and existing ocean users and industries.

The Province of Nova Scotia wants to maximize the potential value of offshore wind projects to Nova Scotia. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy intends to assess the socio-economic implications of future potential offshore wind development on Nova Scotia, with support from the Government of Canada. The assessment will aim to better understand the benefits of different offshore wind development scenarios and the potential implications for local communities, economic growth, and job creation. The study will evolve in scope as needed to analyze opportunities, assess risks, and address concerns.

Key considerations in improving our understanding of the socio-economic implications of offshore wind development include port infrastructure, supply chain, and labour gaps. A successful offshore wind industry will require skilled labour, flexible immigration policy, and an integrated workforce development plan to support renewable energy, regionally. Much of this work is underway, and the Province reiterates its commitment to collaborating with federal partners to advance the offshore wind sector. There is a recognition of the necessity for new markets, industries, and labour to support these initiatives, along with the need for a cohesive planning strategy at both regional and national levels.

Theme 3: Project Development

Transparency and continual engagement with Indigenous groups, local communities, the fishing and seafood industries, and other interested parties will be required throughout the lifecycle of offshore wind projects. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy, Natural Resources Canada, and the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada recognize the importance of early and inclusive engagement related to future offshore wind development. Clear communication to inform interested parties about project timelines, objectives, and potential impacts will assist in effective information sharing. The development and growth of a successful offshore wind sector will require careful consideration and planning so that future project development adheres to regulatory requirements, and community and environmental concerns are identified and addressed.

It is evident that nearshore coastal areas in Nova Scotia play a crucial role in supporting a diverse range of aquatic ecosystems and species, and fishing activities, and are of cultural importance to Indigenous groups. The Regional Assessment Committee recommended a 25-km coastal buffer zone in the final report, as a careful and thoughtful measure to safeguard areas where developing offshore wind projects may be more complex or unfeasible. However, the Regional Assessment Committee also recognized that there may be circumstances where an incursion into the coastal buffer may be necessary or sought. Governments recognize the significance of a buffer zone and will consider its use and application as part of broader planning efforts.

Avoiding and minimizing potential impacts in areas where offshore wind development is technically feasible was fundamental in the selection of the Potential Development Areas identified in the final report. Tiering the Potential Development Areas prioritized certain areas that may be more suitable for potential development in the near-term and indicated that other areas may require more information and consideration before potential development may occur. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada intend to use this approach and focus on the Tier 1 areas to

advance the sector in a stepwise, thoughtful, and pragmatic manner. Tier 2 areas may be revisited post 2030.

Building on the Potential Development Areas recommended by the Regional Assessment Committee, the Governments of Nova Scotia and Canada intend to jointly designate Wind Energy Areas. Wind Energy Areas will be areas deemed potentially suitable for offshore wind development and signal where future Calls for Bids could occur, and submerged land licences could be issued. Wind Energy Areas will aim to provide transparency and clarity on short-term and long-term plans for offshore wind development for all interested parties, create certainty for project planning and investment, and facilitate the establishment of a sustainable offshore wind sector. Wind Energy Areas will be informed by engagement with Indigenous groups, fishers, industry, and other interested parties.

The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada have developed a land tenure process to outline how a submerged land licence would be issued to an applicant through a Call for Bids. The designation of Wind Energy Areas is one of the initial steps in this land tenure process. Efforts are underway to advance subsequent steps in this process, including launching a Call for Bids. The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada are also developing materials to outline the land tenure process and assist in the implementation of next steps.

Safety and environmental protection are also top priorities in establishing an offshore wind sector. As the regulator for offshore renewable energy, the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator is the lead regulator for the safe and environmentally responsible lifecycle of oil and gas, as well as offshore renewable energy project activities. Furthermore, the Accord Acts require prospective developers to have adequate financial resources to cover liability requirements and ensure project decommissioning at end of life, and the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator will have a role in defining these financial requirements.

Theme 4: Coexistence and Compensation

A successful offshore wind industry must coexist with existing ocean users, including fishers and Indigenous groups, by ensuring that potential conflicts are avoided and mitigated to the extent possible. Policies and guidelines related to spatial planning and coexistence, in addition to ongoing engagement with ocean users, can help to avoid potential conflicts with other existing activities.

The Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada are committed to fostering a balanced and sustainable approach to ocean resource management, recognizing the vital role that current ocean users play in Nova Scotia's economy and cultural heritage. Priority will be given to avoidance, mitigation, and coexistence but considering the potential of impacts from offshore wind activities on existing ocean users and activities, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada are working to develop policies and guidelines relating to coexistence and compensation. Understanding that the ocean landscape is constantly evolving, approaches to coexistence and compensation will need to be flexible and adaptable. These policies and any related documents will be informed by input from interested parties, including the fishing and seafood industries, Indigenous groups, and industry.

Theme 5: Cumulative Effects

Assessing the cumulative effects of offshore wind development in the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area is crucial for the protection of marine ecosystems and sustainable development. Comprehensive project reviews and assessments, research, and monitoring that consider the cumulative effects of proposed offshore wind projects will help inform adaptive management practices.

The provincial and federal government are committed to better understanding the potential for cumulative effects from offshore wind development and considering strategies that could effectively avoid and mitigate potential impacts. Together, we can work towards a balanced and sustainable development of the offshore wind that reflects our shared priorities and responsibilities.

Theme 6: Governance

The development of clear and effective multi-level governance frameworks is needed to ensure that offshore wind development is planned and regulated in a coordinated and inclusive manner.

It's important to recognize that the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator is responsible for implementing many of the recommendations outlined in this theme. Their objective and proactive approach will be essential in ensuring that the sector develops in alignment with best practices and the expectations of interested parties.

Additionally, the Nova Scotia Department of Energy and Natural Resources Canada have important roles in developing policies and regulations that foster a conducive environment for offshore wind development. Collaboration between the provincial and federal government and regulatory agencies will be key to achieving our shared objectives.

Offshore wind projects could trigger an Impact Assessment under the *Impact Assessment Act*, given the nature of the activity and presumed magnitude of proposed projects. Any offshore wind projects comprising of ten turbines or more could be subject to an impact assessment, which will ensure a thorough project-specific and site-specific evaluation of potential impacts, mitigation measures, monitoring approaches, and measures to address residual impacts. Together, these processes will help establish a solid foundation for the responsible and sustainable advancement of offshore wind in Nova Scotia. Offshore wind projects that involve less than ten turbines will be subject to environmental review and authorization processes administered by the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator and other federal authorities. The federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change has the authority to designate these projects for an impact assessment.

Theme 7: Education and Training

Developing a skilled workforce is essential to maximizing the economic benefits of the offshore wind industry for Nova Scotians. Education priorities, workshops, and training opportunities in partnership with educational institutions will equip workers with the necessary skills and knowledge for employment in the offshore wind sector.

The Nova Scotia Department of Energy appreciates the importance and attention of fostering a skilled workforce to maximize the economic benefits of the offshore wind industry for Nova Scotians. Collaboration with other provincial departments, local companies, and academic institutions will ensure that our communities and workforce advance alongside this sector's growth.

Conclusion

The efforts of the Committee throughout the Regional Assessment and the Final Report that has been produced are significant undertakings and will be important in informing future planning and decision-making on offshore wind development. The provincial and federal governments will continue to work closely to advance offshore wind as a domestic source of clean and reliable energy.