



Keeping the “Know” in Nova Scotia:

The facts about fracking
& the renewable energy
transition in Nova Scotia

March 2025

Maintaining the moratorium on fracking and investing in renewable energy transition in Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia's decade-long moratorium on hydraulic fracturing (fracking) is facing renewed pressure as Bill 6, An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources (2025), seeks to lift the ban. This proposal is driven by the belief that fracking could provide economic benefits and reduce the threat of American tariffs (Bousquet, 2025). However, the risks posed by lifting the moratorium — particularly to community health, sustainability and local industries — outweigh these perceived benefits. Instead, focus should shift to investing in renewable energy initiatives, which promise significant economic and job growth without compromising public health and existing industries. The Ecology Action Centre (EAC) recommends that the moratorium on fracking be upheld, and that Nova Scotia prioritize its transition to a green economy.

Fracking in Nova Scotia

Fracking is the process of injecting a high-pressure mixture of water, sand and toxic chemicals into the ground to fracture rock formations, giving access to gas deposits.

In 2014, the government of Nova Scotia imposed a moratorium on fracking following extensive consultations with the public and Indigenous communities. Bill 6 seeks to lift the ban in the name of economic growth. However, the risks associated with fracking — including water contamination, public health concerns and adverse impacts on local industries — present significant challenges.

Instead of expanding fracking operations, Nova Scotia has an opportunity to invest in renewable energy technologies that offer sustainable economic benefits while protecting both human health and the environment.

Why Nova Scotia has a fracking moratorium

Human health and water contamination risks

The toxic fluids used in fracking can remain trapped underground, with a high chance of contaminating ground water supplies with carcinogens, radioactive materials and heavy metals. This presents significant risks to ground water wells (Ecology Action Centre, 2014; Woodford, 2019). Over 440,000 Nova Scotians (40 per cent), rely on these wells for their drinking water, increasing their risk of fracking-induced health risks, such as burns, rashes, cancer and congenital defects (Ecology Action Centre, 2014; Environmental Defense, 2014).

Community opposition

The 2014 report by Wheeler et al. on fracking in Nova Scotia incorporated extensive public consultation, including 1,200 attendees at public meetings and over 745 written submissions. A staggering 91 per cent of respondents supported maintaining the moratorium on fracking. Polling conducted by the Council of Canadians in 2013 showed that 69 per cent of Nova Scotian across political parties were in favour of the ban – including 72 per cent of Progressive Conservative voters (2013).

Why Nova Scotia has a fracking moratorium (continued)

Lifting the moratorium would dismiss over a decade of public input, including voices from local communities, environmental organizations and Indigenous groups (Nova Scotia News, 2014). The lifted moratorium would also increase the environmental risks for marginalized and rural communities who are disproportionately exposed to fracking and who rely on industries like agriculture, tourism and fishing (Government of Nova Scotia, 2016).

Economic risks

Fracking is a volatile industry, subject to fluctuations in oil and gas prices. The environmental risks associated with fracking threaten key industries in Nova Scotia, such as agriculture, tourism and fishing (Cormier, 2025). These industries rely on clean water, healthy ecosystems and public trust. Additionally, with the global shift away from fossil fuels, and the rise of American tariff threats, the Nova Scotian fracking industry would have a highly volatile, limited market that has no clear domestic trade opportunities to provide economic benefits or security (Tuttle, 2025; Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis, 2025).

Why Nova Scotia has a fracking moratorium (continued)

Climate change implications:

Fracked natural gas is primarily composed of methane, a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates climate change. Methane leaks from fracking operations significantly undermine any potential environmental benefits from switching from coal to gas (Sierra Club, 2014). Premier Houston and Energy Minister Tory Rushton noted that Nova Scotia allegedly has 7 trillion cubic feet of recoverable methane. The release of these emissions through fracking expansion would be environmentally detrimental and counter to not only provincial climate targets but federal and international targets as well (Armstrong, 2025; Bousquet, 2025).

Investing in Renewable Energy

Instead of expanding fracking, Nova Scotia has an opportunity to invest in renewable energy, which offers both environmental and economic benefits.

Investing in renewable energy (continued)

Economic growth and job creation

Investing in renewable energy, particularly offshore wind energy, will create jobs and foster economic growth. Studies indicate that a green energy transition could result in 15,000 new jobs annually and contribute over \$810 million to the province's GDP (Ecology Action Centre, 2014). Development of offshore wind energy, a key growth area, would generate 1,500 direct jobs per gigawatt (GW) during construction and 350 jobs per GW annually during operation spanning 25 years (Province of Nova Scotia, 2024). With an estimated 17GW of offshore wind potential in Nova Scotia, total jobs in offshore wind could exceed 26,000 jobs annually (Natural Resources Canada, 2023).

Sustainable energy for the future

Renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, are abundant, sustainable and crucial for a net-zero future (Province of Nova Scotia, 2024). Nova Scotia has some of the best wind resources in the world, which could be harnessed to supply clean, renewable energy to both the province and neighboring regions, generating revenue.

Investing in renewable energy (continued)

A net-zero grid can attract business and investment while meeting provincial, federal and international climate goals. Prioritizing these industries can ensure a stable, long-term energy supply and economic growth, while reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Policy recommendations

- Uphold the fracking moratorium: Protect Nova Scotia's water, environment and public health by maintaining the ban on fracking. The risks to human health, the environment and the economy are too great to justify lifting the ban.
- Accelerate investment in renewable energy and transmission: Prioritize the development of the green economy, particularly offshore wind energy and other clean energy technologies, as well as transmission infrastructure and interconnection to enable export to other Canadian provinces. These industries will create jobs, contribute to a net-zero future and ensure the province's energy security.

Policy recommendations (continued)

- Engage the public and communities: Ensure continued public engagement in decision-making processes. Listening to Nova Scotians, particularly Indigenous communities, is essential to maintaining democratic values and protecting the well-being of the people.
- Commit to climate action: Nova Scotia must align its policies with the global push for climate change mitigation. Expanding high-emission industries like fracking undermines the province's climate commitments and jeopardizes the future of our environment.

The decision to lift the moratorium on fracking is not just a matter of economic development — it is a critical issue that affects the health, safety and future of Nova Scotians. Given the overwhelming public opposition to fracking, the environmental risks and the potential to create sustainable jobs through a green energy transition, the province must prioritize the development of renewable energy over the expansion of fracking. By maintaining the moratorium and committing to clean energy, Nova Scotia can build a prosperous and resilient future for all its residents.

References

- Armstrong, L. (Feb, 2025). Nova Scotia government bill would lift ban on fracking, uranium exploration. North Shore News: nsnews.com/oil-gas-and-mining-news/nova-scotia-government-bill-would-lift-ban-on-fracking-uranium-exploration-10250489
- Bousquet, T. (Feb, 2025). Premier Tim Houston floods the zone with sweeping changes to government. Halifax Examiner: halifaxexaminer.ca/dismantling-democracy/premier-tim-houston-floods-the-zone-with-sweeping-changes-to-government/
- Cormier, G. (Jan. 2025). National Farmers Union Nova Scotia concerned by Premier Houston's suggestion to "take the no out of Nova Scotia" | National Farmers Union. National Farmers Union: nfu.ca/national-farmers-union-nova-scotia-concerned-by-premier-houstons-suggestion-to-take-the-no-out-of-nova-scotia/
- Council of Canadians (2013). Nova Scotians overwhelmingly support continued ban on fracking: canadians.org/media/nova-scotians-overwhelmingly-support-continued-ban-fracking/
- Ecology Action Centre (2019). Nova Scotia Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act: Economic Costs and Benefits for Proposed Goals: ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2022-06/EAC_GP_Climate%20Jobs%20Report_Sept2019_0.pdf
- Ecology Action Centre. (2014). Keep it in the ground: The impacts of fracking in Nova Scotia: ecologyaction.ca/sites/default/files/2022-06/2014SubmissionProvincialFrackingReview.pdf
- Environmental Defense. (2024). Ontario's gas Problems: The issues with fracked gas: environmentaldefence.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Fracking-Backgrounder.pdf



References (continued)

- Government of Nova Scotia. (2016). Onshore Petroleum Wells Map: data.novascotia.ca/Environment-and-Energy/Onshore-Petroleum-Wells-Map/ksat-x3xi
- Insitute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis. (2025, February). European LNG Tracker: ieefa.org/european-lng-tracker/
- Natural Resources Canada. (2023) Preliminary considerations analysis of offshore wind energy in Atlantic Canada: [dostrnrcan-canada.ca/entities/publication/50233490-2d8b-4fd5-aede-6d8218205e0e](https://dostrnrcan.canada.ca/entities/publication/50233490-2d8b-4fd5-aede-6d8218205e0e)
- Province of Nova Scotia. (2024). Nova Scotia offshore wind roadmap: Module 2 supply chain & infrastructure: novascotia.ca/offshore-wind/docs/offshore-wind-roadmap-module-2.pdf
- Sierra Club Canada. (2014, June 9). Nova Scotia review on fracking confirms we still know nothing: sierraclub.ca/nova-scotia-review-on-fracking-confirms-we-still-know-nothing/
- Tuttle, R. (2025). Tariffs seen disrupting oil market, raising US Pump Prices. BNN Bloomberg: bnnbloomberg.ca/investing/2025/02/02/trump-tariffs-threaten-to-roil-oil-market-raise-us-pump-prices/
- Wheeler, D et al (2014). Report of the Nova Scotia independent panel on hydraulic fracturing. Cape Breton University: Verschuren Centre for Sustainability and the Environment: energy.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/Report%20of%20the%20Nova%20Scotia%20Independent%20Panel%20on%20Hydraulic%20Fracturing.pdf
- Woodford, Z. (2019 Nov. 4). More than half of Nova Scotians on wells are at risk of having lead in their water. Toronto Star: thestar.com/news/investigations/more-than-half-of-nova-scotians-on-wells-are-at-risk-of-having-lead-in/article_4b2515d8-f2aa-5522-b5a5-da163efe33cc.html