

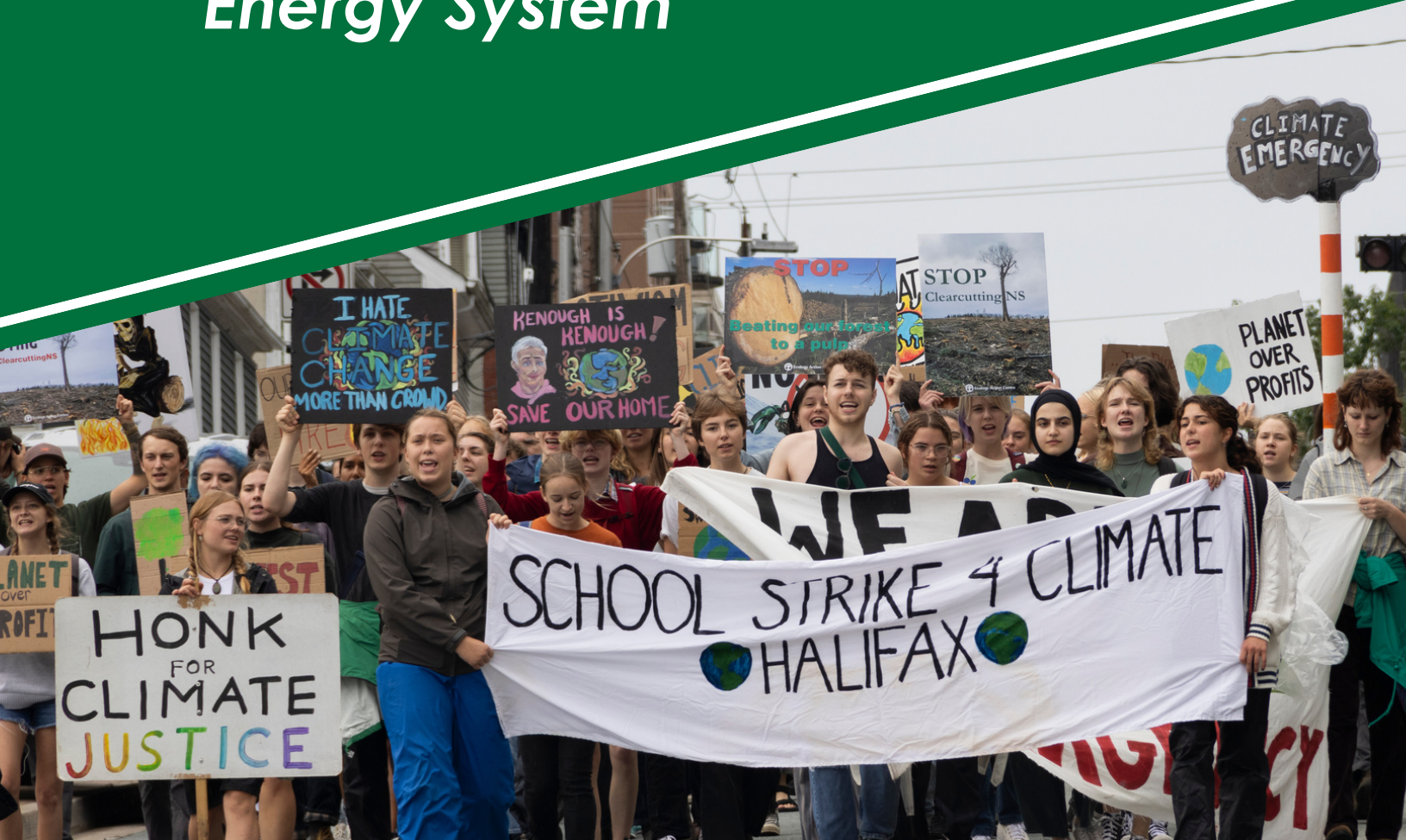
June 2026



Ecology Action Centre

IN OUR POWER:

Recharging Nova Scotia's
Energy System



Energy Democracy



In Our Power: *Recharging Nova Scotia's Energy System*

Our energy system must meet the needs of all Nova Scotians. This is not wishful thinking. Energy is a human right, essential for health, safety, comfort and access to information. A system that is reliable, affordable and sustainable is essential.

We need that system now.



What is energy democracy?

Energy systems have traditionally been owned and operated by a few large companies. Energy democracy is working to change this imbalance of power. It stresses the need to move away from fossil fuel-based, corporate-controlled monopolies to community-led, renewable energy sources. It promotes a power shift, literally. In an energy democracy, decisions around energy production, distribution and decision-making would be made by the citizens who use the energy. This, in turn, ensures universal access, fair pricing and economic justice.

There are four key principles and goals that underlie energy democracy:

- **Community ownership:** Fostering citizen- or worker-owned cooperatives, such as local solar farms, municipal electric utilities or energy co-operatives, to manage energy generation.
- **Renewable transition:** Moving from fossil fuels to clean, sustainable energy sources including wind and solar.
- **Social justice:** Making universal access to affordable energy a priority and ensuring marginalized communities and green jobs are central components of the transition.



- **Participatory decision-making:** Enabling consumers to have a voice in energy policies, planning and governance rather than leaving decisions to centralized, private corporations.

For example:

Nova Scotia has five municipal electric utilities that own their own distribution power lines and manage their own systems, serving as the only alternative to Nova Scotia Power.

They are:

- [Antigonish Electric Utility](#) (Town of Antigonish)
- [Berwick Electric Light Commission](#) (Town of Berwick)
- [Lunenburg Electric Utility](#) (Town of Lunenburg)
- [Mahone Bay Electric Utility](#) (Town of Mahone Bay)
- [Riverport Electric Light Commission](#) (Village of Riverport)

These municipal utilities are community-owned and this allows for greater choice. While many individuals are not able to decide where to purchase their power, these communities can. They have options, including renewable options.



Why does energy democracy matter?

Energy democracy expands choice for individuals and communities. It makes affordability a requirement. It also aims to combat climate change while reducing economic inequality by allowing local communities to generate their own power and keep the economic benefits within the community. Perhaps most importantly, energy democracy wants to ensure energy is treated as a human right, not a commodity.

Is energy democracy wishful thinking?

Energy democracy is becoming a reality. In Nova Scotia, there are a number of programs that reflect the principles and the importance of energy democracy. We've highlighted some of those below. The province also enacted legislation to create IESO Nova Scotia, an independent, not-for-profit that is now responsible for key electricity grid management instead of Nova Scotia Power.



For example:

- The **Nova Scotia Net Metering Program** allows residential and commercial customers to generate their own renewable energy and connect to the Nova Scotia Power grid. Customers receive retail-rate credits for excess energy, which can be carried over for 12 months, effectively lowering electricity bills and supporting renewable energy adoption.
- The provincial government's **Green Choice Program** allows large-volume electricity customers, such as governments, universities, and large businesses, to purchase up to 100 per cent of their electricity from new, local renewable energy projects. This enables participants to secure green energy, reduce their carbon footprint and stabilize long-term electricity costs through a competitive, independent procurement process.
- The **Nova Scotia Renewable to Retail initiative** allows licensed, independent power producers to sell renewable energy directly to residential and business customers. Renewable generators, such as wind or solar projects, deliver power via Nova Scotia Power's existing lines, often locking in long-term, stable rates for consumers.



Resources

Climate Justice Alliance. [Energy Democracy](#)

Ecology Action Centre. [Empowering Communities: The Role of Energy Co-ops](#)

Energydemocracy.net. [Energy Democracy](#)

Government of Nova Scotia. [Green Choice Program](#)

Nova Scotia Energy Board. [Renewable to Retail.](#)

Nova Scotia Power. [Commercial Net Metering Program.](#)

Sierra Club Canada Foundation Atlantic. [What is Energy Democracy?](#)

