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We are inefficient energy users

Province too reliant on non-renewable sources

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DARTMOUTH - A two-year study has come to the conclusion that Nova Scotia's energy practices are unsustainable.

Saying the province is too reliant on non-renewable energy sources, think-tank GPI Atlantic released a report yesterday urging investment in wind, biomass and other more environmentally friendly energy sources.

The report measures 30 economic, social, health, environmental and institutional indicators and finds the province is falling behind in most.

It places P.E.I.'s move toward wind power and Scandinavian countries' energy practices as models from which the province can learn.

"Our biggest problem, I would say, is inefficient use of energy. Until you use energy as efficiently as possible, it's really like pouring water into a leaky bucket," said the report's lead author Judith Lipp.

Seth Cain, the report's co-author, said the group recommends investing in renewable resources such as wind, biomass and solar power and more research into tidal and geothermal energy. Decreasing demand through conservation and efficiency is another recommendation.

Demand has risen, they say, 12 per cent since 1991.

"Our capacity and our ability to produce energy from renewable resources has actually declined," said Cain.

GPI said the province is the fourth-worst air polluter in the country. It also said that of 29 coal-fired plants, the ones at Trenton, Lingan and Point Tupper are three of the country's four dirtiest for acid-gas emissions.

The 400-page report cost \$60,000 over two years and was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the province's Energy Department.

"Our department has been active throughout this whole process and we've certainly supported it from day one," said Hal Dobbelsteyn of the Nova Scotia Energy Department.

"The recommendations we saw today in the summary make a lot of sense, and we certainly support them - for the most part," he said.

He said the timing of the report was excellent.

Fuel for thought

A few figures from the report:

- In the province, almost 70 per cent of demand is for oil products, while electricity is at 21 per cent.
- Nine per cent of electricity comes from renewable energy sources such as hydro, tidal and wind.
- Imported coal makes up 75 per cent of the fuel mix used to generate electricity.

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Illustration(s):

Paul Darrow

Unsustainable energy: Judith Lipp speaks about the study she co-authored at a news conference in Dartmouth yesterday.

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