

# Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development in Nova Scotia

## 2023/2024 Engagement Program - What We Heard Summary

**The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the comments, views and opinions expressed by all participants during the 2023/2024 Engagement Program for the Regional Assessment of Offshore Wind Development in Nova Scotia (the Regional Assessment).**

The goal of the Regional Assessment is to provide information, knowledge, and analysis for future offshore wind development in the Study Area. The Regional Assessment will inform and improve future planning, licensing, and impact assessment processes for future offshore wind development to protect the environmental, health, social, and economic conditions while creating opportunities for sustainable economic development.

Continued input can be provided to the Committee via the Regional Assessment email ([OffshoreWindNS-EolienneExtracotiereNE@iaac-aeic.gc.ca](mailto:OffshoreWindNS-EolienneExtracotiereNE@iaac-aeic.gc.ca)) and/or the [public commenting tool on the Regional Assessment Registry page](#).

Please note that the Committee's working language is English; however this document is available in French upon request.

### 2023/2024 Engagement Program

The 2023/2024 engagement program was conducted by the Committee and took place in September/ October/ November 2023 and in January 2024 as part of the Committee's ongoing engagement program for the Regional Assessment. The engagement program included the following activities:

- Engagement with Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) and with the Assembly of First Nation Chiefs, Indigenous communities, and Indigenous organizations; and
- Public open house events in Nova Scotia, PEI (Charlottetown) and New Brunswick (Moncton).

The objectives of the engagement were to introduce Committee members, provide information about offshore wind and the Regional Assessment process, and to gather input from participants on potential future locations of offshore wind development in the Study Area.

### Indigenous Engagement

The Committee met first with the Assembly of First Nation Chiefs to provide an overview of the Regional Assessment and to answer questions. Community meetings were then held in-person with interested Chiefs and Councils and included an offer of a future community engagement session to gather input and answer questions from community members. Community sessions are planned for spring 2024.

## Engagement Summary

- Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn Incorporated (NB) (virtual) (Sept.);
- Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs and Grand Council (Sept.);
- Glooscap First Nation; Sipekne'katik First Nation; Pictou Landing First Nation; Eskasoni First Nation; Annapolis Valley First Nation; Potlotek First Nation; Membertou First Nation; Millbrook First Nation, Abegweit First Nation; Wagmatcook First Nation (Sept./Oct./Nov./Jan.); and
- General meeting with Indigenous Organizations (Nov.).

The Committee has also met with Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) to discuss the Regional Assessment and to attend meetings on key topics:

- KMKNO – Indigenous Fisheries (Jan.); and
- KMKNO – Archeology (Jan.).

## Summary of Feedback from Indigenous Peoples

The following sections provide a summary of the overall questions and concerns raised during engagement with Indigenous participants. Similar comments were aggregated to avoid duplication.

### Concerns and Comments Related to Offshore Wind Development

- Future offshore wind development activities have the potential to impact Aboriginal or Treaty rights protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, including the Mi'kmaq's inherent section 35 rights. Section 35 rights allow the Mi'kmaq to hunt and fish throughout Mi'kma'ki (unceded land of the Mi'kmaq).
- Impacts will only be proven over the years with studies and data.
- The Committee needs to consider the lifespan and decommissioning of a project as well as the need for ongoing research.
- Unknown impacts on the offshore could impact the traditional activities of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. Mechanisms to address the assessment of these impacts and remedial measures when impacts are realized needs to be co-developed with the Mi'kmaq.
- The Regional Assessment needs to explain the need for offshore wind power. There is already enough power on land with wind, solar and hydroelectric.
- There is an understanding of the need to reduce coal, and oil and gas to fight climate change, but offshore wind needs to be done carefully and with independent scientific studies. The data collected for these studies should be openly available for review by rights holders and all parties involved.
- There are currently no protocols for archaeology in the offshore area. Should involve Parks Canada and the NS Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage.
- There needs to be an increase in bathymetric site data.
- Access is important for the Mi'kmaq.
- The only priority above treaty rights is conservation.

### Concerns and Comments Related to Fishing

- Need to address adverse effects on rights and resources of Indigenous peoples and ensure Mi'kmaw involvement.

- Offshore fisheries (outside of commercial fisheries) is expanding, and as Indigenous capacity continues to build. There is potential to expand into areas that are not currently being fished.
- Important to engage with the fishing community - more information is better, including maps.
- Need to consider Indigenous moderate livelihood fisheries: there are many commercial/communal licenses in the Study Area.
- Specific Mi'kmaq fisheries compensation plans need to be developed by each impacted community and will need to consider the uniqueness of all Mi'kmaq fishing activities.
- Food Social and Ceremonial fisheries occur in Lobster Fishing Areas.
- Concern for lobster, crab, tuna, and shrimp commercial fisheries that are the mainstay for several communities and also for communal fisheries such as mackerel.
- Moderate livelihood fisheries need to be considered.
- Indigenous fishing companies are economic drivers for communities, providing employment and profits shared with the whole community. It is important to maintain this employment.
- There are already several pressures on fisheries including Marine Protected Areas, other fishing such as lobster, and Indigenous companies and closures (e.g., closures for whale protection).
- Wind turbines and structures will obstruct and limit fishing and could impact fishing traps.
- Hard fought rights after the Marshall decision – Mi'kmaq will strongly oppose impacts to fishing.
- The northern part of the Regional Assessment Study Area is not acceptable for offshore wind, including Northumberland Strait up to Pleasant Bay (past Chéticamp).
- The Western/South-Western area of the Study Area is a better area for offshore wind.
- Need to ensure that fishing for food, social and ceremonial reasons is considered.

### **Concerns and Comments Related to the Regional Assessment Process**

- Current meetings are not to be considered as consultation, but information-sharing only.
- The Mi'kmaq need to be involved in future consultations of Mi'kmaq rightsholders for any proposed projects. It is important not to silo communities in this process and ensure all communities, including those that are not part of KMKNO, are included.
- It is important to engage with other Mi'kmaw organizations that have scientific capacity such as the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, Mi'kmaq Conservation Group, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, and Wskijnu'k Mtmo'taqtuow Agency.
- The Mi'kmaq would like to review a draft of the Committee recommendations.
- Need to ensure that any information collected from Indigenous knowledge holders needs to be protected and that the Mi'kmaw maintain this knowledge.

### **Concerns and Comments Related to Economics**

- Fair and equitable agreements are very important – royalties (preferred) and Impact Benefits Agreements (IBA) are important to address adverse impacts on rights and resources and ensure Mi'kmaq involvement.
- Economic reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Committee recommendation #92) needs to be considered, including royalties for use of social resource.
- Royalties need to be involved up front, not at the end as the value is significantly less.
- Future proponents need to understand and respect the process for rightsholders and IBAs. There needs to be consideration of what the Mi'kmaq will gain, including long term sustainability.

## Concerns and Comments Related to Environment

- Generally supportive of renewable energy but need to consider detrimental impacts which are dependent on the region.
- Need to consider the potential adverse effects of cables.
- Important to discuss all proposed works, including those on land and not to separate the assessment.
- Vibration from wind turbines could affect marine life.
- There are similar concerns as those for oil exploration drilling projects.
- Need to consider impacts to whales, groundfish and birds.
- Areas of spiritual and cultural connection need to be considered.
- Need to consider cumulative effects.
- There is concern that the turbine anchoring systems could impact ancestral lands and Mi'kmaw lived landscapes that are now submerged.

## Concerns and Comments Related to Fauna

- Need to look at impacts to whales, groundfish and birds.
- Consider that there are more sharks in the area now - likely following seals and striped bass.

## Concerns and Comments Related to Lack of Data

- Impacts will only be proven over the years with studies and data.
- The lifespan and decommissioning of wind projects, and research programs needs to be considered.

## Other Concerns and Comments

- It is important to include youth who will be involved 10+ years from now.
- Is there a need for offshore wind power? There is already enough power with wind, solar and hydroelectric. Best to avoid if it is not needed, before looking at mitigation or compensation.
- Understand the need to reduce coal and oil and gas to fight climate change, but offshore wind needs to be done carefully and with independent scientific studies and use of Two-Eyed Seeing to understand effects on fish, crab, and shrimp etc.
- No provincial consultations - don't recognize provincial jurisdiction to the 100- and 200-mile mark.

## Public Open House Events

Afternoon and evening open house sessions were held in communities throughout the province in October and November 2023 and January 2024. The sessions included information boards, a video on offshore wind, and a mapping display. Feedback forms and input boards were also set up to gather feedback.

## Open House Locations

- October 4/5, 2023 – Guysborough and Sheet Harbour, NS;
- October 16/18/19, 2023 – Sydney, Port Hawkesbury, and Inverness, NS;
- October 23/25/26, 2023 – Digby, Yarmouth, and Shelburne, NS;

- November 1/2, 2023 – Dartmouth, and Wolfville, NS;
- November 6/7, 2023 – Charlottetown, PEI and Moncton, NB; and
- January 23/24/25, 2024 – St. Peter's, Cheticamp, and New Glasgow, NS.

### Summary of Feedback from Open Houses

The following sections provide a summary of comments and concerns raised at open houses. Similar comments were aggregated to avoid duplication.

#### Concerns and Comments Related to Offshore Wind Development

- The Regional Assessment needs to consider:
  - all proposed works of an offshore wind project, including components on land;
  - safety requirements of working with and around turbines and wind farms; and
  - availability of/requirement for port infrastructure to support offshore wind.
- Concerned with the capacity of Nova Scotia's grid to use and store the energy generated.
- More wind should be developed on land first.
- Would like to understand:
  - what requirements will proponents have to fulfill before developing (e.g., environmental assessment, monitoring, consultation/engagement);
  - what amount of concrete is needed for each turbine base and what are the potential impacts to the marine environment;
  - number, size and output of wind farms, and the size of the area needed;
  - decommissioning and recycling of turbines;
  - durability of turbine design for operating under harsh weather conditions;
  - material sourcing for turbines and opportunities for Nova Scotia to be involved;
  - types, amounts and use of oil and other fluids in turbine operation;
  - timeline and process for offshore wind leases/licenses;
  - potential grid capacity improvements where power from wind projects comes ashore;
  - frequency of turbine maintenance and monitoring during operations;
  - productivity of OSW energy generation versus onshore wind farms; and
  - amount of energy lost during transmission from offshore turbines to transmission stations onshore.

#### Concerns and Comments Related to the Regional Assessment Process

- Need information on how the Regional Assessment timeline fits into the advancement of the regulatory framework and future offshore wind projects.
- Need to extend the length of the public review period for reports to 60 days to accommodate fishing seasons.
- Would like to see the identification of data gaps and criticism of the use of outdated spatial data for various components in the Regional Assessment.
- Need to gather information from other jurisdictions already doing offshore wind, including lessons learned on developing the industry and potential environmental and economic impacts.
- Confusion regarding the regulation of offshore wind related to the new mandate of the Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

## Concerns and Comments Related to Fisheries

Most of the feedback received during the open house sessions came from fishers and/or was related to fisheries and related industries.

- Need to consider the socio-economic and cultural values of Nova Scotia's fishery for current and future generations - the fishery is the cultural and economic provider of many communities in the Maritimes and potential impacts could result in larger overall impacts to these communities now and in the future.
- Concerned with how fishers will be impacted by offshore wind development, both directly (e.g., loss of fishing areas) and indirectly (e.g., displacement and costs related to additional time and fuel requirements to travel around wind farms).
- Fishers and fisheries are active throughout the Study Area – there will be impacts to one or more fishers no matter where a project is located.
- Consider the varying economic value of different fisheries within the Study Area and potential associated cost of displacement.
- Concerned with impacts to the lobster fishery from offshore wind in nearshore waters.
- Concerns related to effects of temperature increases around turbines on fish species.
- Concerns related to vibrations from operating turbines on crab movements.
- Would like to understand:
  - feasibility and liability of fishing within wind farms;
  - how fisheries compensation will be handled if fishers are displaced;
  - impacts on aquaculture and potential for aquaculture development in wind farms; and
  - potential for co-existence of offshore wind and marine protected areas or refuges.
- Concerned that changes to fish stocks from climate change could be worsened by offshore wind.
- Need to consider data on all life stages of commercial and non-commercial fish species, including migrations.
- Growing concerns over continual displacement and loss of fishing areas (e.g., from marine protected areas, marine refuges, critical habitats for species at risk, aquaculture), and the additional likely displacement from offshore wind developments.

## Concerns and Comments Related to Environmental Impacts

- Concerned raised on:
  - cumulative effects on the environment and communities from offshore wind;
  - underwater sound from turbines and potential effects on fish and marine mammals;
  - effects on whales and the different impacts of fixed versus floating wind turbines;
  - effects of military activities on offshore wind operations;
  - effects to migratory birds and migratory pathways and the potential for mortalities;
  - effects of turbine lighting on avifauna (birds and bats);
  - ability of avifauna (birds and bats) to maneuver around turbines, especially during times of poor visibility;
  - impacts on species at risk (e.g., North Atlantic Right Whale);
  - potential effects of electromagnetic fields on fish and marine mammals;
  - potential effects from accidental events;

- potential introduction of invasive species from increased vessel traffic or habitat creation;
- seafloor disturbance during installation and burying of transmission cables;
- potential effects of upwelling around turbines and effects on plankton and fish larvae movements;
- potential interactions between turbine pilings and subsurface shallow gas pockets;
- potential impacts of seismic testing on marine mammals and fish; and
- potential for development to occur in areas set aside for other conservation measures (e.g., marine refuges).
- Need to consider climate change and adaptive management approaches when selecting development areas.

### **Concerns and Comments Related to Economics**

- Concerns raised regarding:
  - long and short-term benefits to the Nova Scotia economy;
  - long and short-term employment opportunities for Nova Scotians;
  - potential changes in job availability and how this may impact the fishing industry; and
  - impacts on electricity rates for Nova Scotians.
- Need to consider potential subsidies for the offshore wind industry.
- Need to understand how decommissioning activities will be financed.
- Need to consider the development of regulations to ensure that local communities are provided opportunities for training and employment in the offshore wind industry.
- Need to understand the potential economic benefits.
- Need to provide information on the feasibility and cost of building an offshore wind farm.

### **Next Steps**

As a follow-up to the open house sessions a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be prepared and posted to the Registry. This document will answer some of the frequent questions asked about offshore wind and the Regional Assessment process. Additional questions and answers on various topics related to offshore wind will be added to the document regularly.

**The Committee greatly appreciates all input received during the engagement sessions and throughout the Regional Assessment process. All comments and observations received will be considered by the Committee in their analyses and deliberations as they work to address the requirements of their Terms of Reference.**