



“Paying the Price”

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Energy Projects in Pursuit of Regional Development: Leaders or Laggards?

The main theme of the discussion notes will be that the (2014) Quebec election results have opened a ‘window-of-opportunity’ for Atlantic Canada. A radical review and co-operative redesign of energy policies and programs for the Atlantic Provinces, Quebec, and North-Eastern United States could generate substantial benefits for all concerned. The process must be constructively participated in by the Canadian Federal Government and set inside a framework of a dynamic regional development vision. It should not be boxed-in by existing energy sector mindsets.

Apparent insights and potential ‘lessons learned’ (both from past achievements and vulnerabilities) are suggested in this discussion paper. Main projects reflected upon include:

- Those led by the Tennessee Valley Authority (launched under Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ of 1933);
- New Brunswick’s Mactaquac hydro-energy dam and Ghana’s Volta River projects (both inspired by TVA);
- Newfoundland’s experiences - including Churchill Falls, Bay D’Espoir and the once rate-flawed rural electrification program.

Passing references to several additional, local project experiences, including Point Lepreau (nuclear), DEVCO (coal), and Fundy (tidal power), are briefly made.

Were but one energy initiative to be singled out (for apparent successes, vulnerabilities and ‘lessons-still-to-be-digested’ for the Atlantic Canada of today), it would be that of the Tennessee Valley Authority. Three key points are among many to be highlighted for this region. They are:

- The importance of federal/provincial political leadership and cooperation across territorial boundaries;
- The importance of not viewing energy project planning solely from within narrow ‘energy sector’ boxes;
- The essential connections between responsible (scientifically based) environmental management and pragmatic socio-economic aspirations.