

Opening Statement of Consumer Advocate DSM Plan 2013-2015 (M04819)

Residential ratepayers are experiencing continued upward pressure on electricity rates.

Reducing energy use is the only controllable means a residential ratepayer has to lower their electricity bill. The programs made available through Efficiency Nova Scotia have, and will continue to offer bill savings opportunities.

The evidence filed on behalf of the Consumer Advocate sought to improve the application in several aspects:

1. A planning period that provided ENSC with the best opportunity to maximize program impact while preserving the appropriate oversight role of this Board;
2. Enhancing the proposed DSM Advisory Group, by having that group develop its terms of reference and elect a chair person;
3. A mandated examination of customer participation;
4. A commitment that all Enabling Strategies need to demonstrate effectiveness;
5. Enhancement of the bill impact analysis work undertaken by ENSC;
6. Enhance transparency with respect to Avoided Cost estimations; and
7. Fairness with respect to cost allocation among various rate classes.

The Consumer Advocate also acknowledges the helpful evidence provided by Board Counsel consultants Whalen and Wolf.

The recommended terms of settlement address all of the issues raised in the evidence filed by ENSC and the intervening parties. The settlement seeks the approval of a two year DSM Plan with reasonable protections for ratepayers including various reporting mechanisms.

In the view of the Consumer Advocate, the recommended settlement represents the best outcome for ratepayers – allowing ENSC to continue the important work of making energy savings opportunities available to as many ratepayers as possible over the next two years, while enhancing opportunities for stakeholder input and oversight by this Board.