Hon. Iain Rankin Opening Statement

Nova Scotia Power 2026 General Rate Application
Hearing M12451

January 7, 2026

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chair, members of the Board, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to speak about Nova Scotia Power's General Rate Application. I am appearing today on behalf of Nova Scotians who cannot afford to continue paying more, year after year, for electricity that is too often unreliable.

Let me be clear at the outset: The Nova Scotia Liberal Caucus opposes Nova Scotia Power's request for an 8 percent rate increase over the next two years. Nova Scotians are already paying too much for power, and the pattern of repeated, unpredictable increases has become unsustainable for families, small businesses, and our provincial economy.

Electricity is an essential service. When the cost of that service rises faster than incomes and inflation, the consequences are real and immediate. I hear every day from Nova Scotians struggling with the cost of power. Ask any MLA, we all know constituents who have missed rent payments, or families who have had to choose between heat and groceries, or businesses delaying investment and raising prices to try to keep up with their increased costs. For many Nova Scotians, one higher power bill is all it takes to push them over the edge of their financial limits. That reality is why our caucus has intervened in this proceeding.

This General Rate Application does not exist in isolation. It is part of a broader and troubling pattern. Over the last four years, Nova Scotia Power has repeatedly returned to regulators seeking various forms of rate increases and additional charges.

In January 2022, the utility applied for a rate increase, and the Board approved a rate hike of roughly 14 percent, translating into average increases of 6.9 percent in both 2023 and 2024. Thankfully, this hike was ultimately limited by a 500 million dollar federal loan to bail the utility out of a precarious financial situation and prevent this rate shock. In April 2024, the Board approved an additional increase through the fuel adjustment mechanism. Just eight months later, in December 2024, the Board approved a storm cost-recovery rider, raising rates yet again. And now, Nova Scotia Power is before you once again, seeking further increases through this General Rate Application — a proposal that would force families to pay hundreds of dollars more each year for electricity by increasing standard residential rates by 3.9 percent in both 2026 and 2027. For a family, this could mean spending 400 dollars more each year on electricity. That's a troubling figure for families who are trying to make ends meet.

Taken together, these applications demonstrate a troubling pattern: Nova Scotia Power continues to rely on frequent rate increases to manage costs, rather than delivering stability and predictability for customers. This pattern has real consequences. Customers are not given time to absorb one increase before the next one arrives. The result is ongoing uncertainty, repeated rate shock, and an erosion of trust in the electricity system.

Throughout 2025, Nova Scotians have dealt with the fallout of Nova Scotia Power's cybersecurity breach – a breach this Board is also currently investigating. I hear from residents daily who are receiving irrationally high estimated bills and cannot get clear answers about billing accuracy or when refunds will be issued. This unpredictability is more than an inconvenience. For many families, it is a financial shock.

Nova Scotia Power's issues go beyond the cybersecurity breach and repeated rate increases. Nova Scotians continue to experience frequent unplanned outages and lengthy restoration times, despite paying some of the highest electricity rates in the country. This past summer on a clear July day, power went out for 11,000 customers in Inverness for 24 hours, impacting residents and businesses during the busiest part of their tourism season. And this past December 23, while families were gathering for the holidays, nearly 4,000 residents in my riding of Timberlea-Prospect lost power for hours in the dead of winter. These are not isolated incidents. For each of the past eight years, Nova Scotia Power has failed to meet its reliability targets and has been fined as a result. Despite repeated assurances, service has not improved. For businesses, particularly small and rural businesses, power interruptions halt operations, damage equipment, and cut into their bottom line. When electricity is both expensive and unreliable, it becomes a serious drag on economic growth.

Coal remains one of the most expensive and volatile sources of electricity generation, yet Nova Scotia continues to rely on it heavily. While there is a legislated requirement for Nova Scotia Power to phase out coal, delays have prolonged exposure to high fuel costs and increased risk for customers.

These challenges are not solely the result of the utility's failures. They are also the product of misguided decisions by the current provincial government. This government has failed to make the timely, strategic investments to modernize the grid, accelerate the transition away from coal, and deliver a reliable and affordable electricity system. Instead, the costs of delay have been downloaded onto customers through repeated rate increases. And when the government has stepped in with loans or investments, these interventions have been temporary. Temporary relief is not a substitute for long-term planning.

I don't raise these issues simply to attack Nova Scotia Power, but to establish the full context in which this rate application is taking place. In that context, it is impossible to look at the state of electricity in Nova Scotia and conclude that Nova Scotia Power deserves more money from ratepayers to continue providing an unacceptable level of service. The Board has a responsibility to protect ratepayers, while also providing stability for power rates over the coming years.

One of the central arguments our Caucus makes today is this: Nova Scotia must move away from constant, reactive rate increases and toward a stable multi-year rate plan. Other jurisdictions have already recognized this reality. Jurisdictions such as New York, California,, Hawaii, and Australia have adopted multi-year rate plans. While no two models are identical, they share common goals of stability, predictability, and accountability.
Multi-year rate plans set clear limits on what utilities can charge over a defined period. Annual adjustments are tied to inflation and anticipated efficiency improvements, rather than repeated, ad hoc rate increases. This approach creates incentives for utilities to improve efficiency, control operating costs, and make prudent investment decisions.

Nova Scotia Power's mistakes and cost overruns should be paid by the company and its shareholders. A multi-year rate plan would prevent these costs from being passed on directly to customers, while still allowing utilities to recover reasonable costs and plan investments responsibly. Importantly, the Nova Scotia Energy Board already has the legal authority to do this. Section 64A(2B) of the Public Utilities Act explicitly empowers the Board to “order a staged or multi-year general rate increase.”

If we look at the Regulatory and Appeal Board’s recent decision to reject a substantial rate increase proposed by Halifax Water, we see that the Board recognized that ratepayers should not experience rate shock as a result of poor choices made by a utility, and reaffirmed its obligation to ensure rates are just and reasonable. I urge the Board to do the same, and use their authority to move toward a five-year power rate plan for Nova Scotians.

A five-year plan would provide households and businesses with predictable electricity costs, allowing for better budgeting and long-term planning. It would give businesses confidence to invest and expand. And it would impose appropriate discipline on the utility, requiring it to manage costs within a defined framework instead of returning repeatedly to customers for relief. This is a proven regulatory tool, and it is one Nova Scotia should have adopted years ago.

I urge the Board to do everything within its authority to minimize this requested rate increase, to recognize the financial burden already placed on Nova Scotians, the reliability challenges they continue to face, and the urgent need for predictable and stable power rates .And most importantly, I urge you to use the authority granted to you under the Public Utilities Act to move Nova Scotia toward a five-year, multi-year rate plan that delivers stability, transparency, and fairness.

Nova Scotians deserve an electricity system that works for them — not one that asks them, year after year, to pay more for less. Thank you.