

August 5, 2026

[REDACTED]

Leslie Axford

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Axford:

M12544 – Nova Scotia Power Incorporated – Appeal by Leslie Axford of a Decision of the Dispute Resolution Officer

I am writing to you in response to your appeal on October 31, 2025, of a decision by the Dispute Resolution Officer (DRO), dated October 25, 2025, of your electricity bill. You questioned the accuracy of the meter read as the house was under renovation for part of the billing period, with no appliances or full baseboard heating system connected, and no lighting until later in 2025. You are requesting an explanation, a resolution of your dispute, and the return of your July withdrawal of \$2,141.86.

I am a Member of the Nova Scotia Energy and Regulatory Boards Tribunal. I have been assigned to the Nova Scotia Energy Board (Board) to review your appeal. The Board is a division of the Tribunal and has legal or court-like powers assigned to it by various statutes. Both the Board and I are completely independent of Nova Scotia Power Incorporated (NS Power). The Board regulates most of the province's energy sector.

I have reviewed your appeal in detail and am able to respond. My review included the following documentation:

- The Dispute Resolution Officer's file and decision (October 25, 2025);
- Your appeal of the Dispute Resolution Officer's decision (October 31, 2025);
- NS Power's response to your appeal (November 18, 2025);
- NS Power's response regarding the streetlight rental (November 19, 2025);
- Your response to NS Power's response (November 21, 2025);
- Your additional evidence (December 16, 2025);
- The meter test results (December 22, 2025);
- NS Power's response to Information Requests (IRs) January 5, 2026);
- NS Power's response to you (January 6, 2026);
- Your response to NS Power's response (January 8, 2026); and
- NS Power's response to additional Information Requests (IRs) April 21 and July 16, 2026).

I have concluded that there are three major questions involved in your appeal:

- Did NS Power calculate your bill correctly and provide you with the correct adjustments for any energy usage that it overestimated?
- Is your meter working properly, or did it incorrectly record the amount of energy you used, possibly due to the cyber incident? and
- Should any outstanding payments you owe to NS Power be spread out over a longer time period than is normally required?

BACKGROUND AND SUBMISSIONS

You have an account with NS Power for your property at [REDACTED], that you purchased in 2024.

Your complaint has several parts to it. You feel your bills are unreasonably high and that you should receive a refund for your July bill of \$2,142. Because of the high bill, you are concerned that your meter may not be working accurately, especially considering the recent cyber incident. You were also incorrectly classified as a seasonal customer even though you wished to be on standard billing.

You provided copies of your bills which are summarized below. The bills include charges for both energy and streetlight rental. The energy charge for two of your bills was based on estimated meter reads, not actual meter reads.

As background, it is important to understand what charges are required for electrical use. For most residential customers, their NS Power bill consists of a flat monthly charge (Base Charge) and a kilowatt per hour (kWh) usage charge (Energy) based on the reading from the meter. The kilowatt per hour is measured by the meter and is typically sent wirelessly to NS Power, rather than being read by NS Power personnel. In your case, you also have a charge for streetlight rental and a one-time connection charge of \$12.65. In addition, other amounts include HST and a Provincial Rebate. You can see these charges on your monthly bills. The table below shows the charges for each of the nine bills that were filed with this appeal. This table matches each of the bills you submitted with your complaint:

NS Power Bills – Leslie Axford, Account [REDACTED]

	Bill Date	Balance Owing	Energy Charges	HST and Other	Amount Due
<u>Seasonal Billing</u>					
1	Oct 25/2024	-	-	12.65	12.65
2	Nov 4/2024 (Oct to Nov)	12.65	75.25	30.35	118.25
3	Dec 12/2024 (Nov to Dec)	-	-	26.78	26.78
4	Feb 13/2025 (Dec to Feb)	-	-	26.91	26.91
5	April 11/2025 (Feb to April)	-	-	27.11	27.11
6	July 9/2025 (Nov to June)	Estimate	2,014.04	127.82	2,141.86
<u>Standard Billing</u>					
7	Aug 14/2025 (June to Aug)	Estimate	458.56	50.06	508.62
8	Sept 23/2025 (June to Aug)	478.62	(279.43)	(22.74)	176.45
9	Oct 15/2025 (Aug to Oct)	176.45	56.44	29.95	262.84



As I understand your appeal, you purchased a home, and in October of 2024 created an account with NS Power. You asked to be placed into a standard payment plan. You paid your connection fee and paid your bills from November 2024 onwards, which ranged from \$12.65 to over \$100. In July 2025, however, you received a bill for \$2,141.86.

I understand that you did not move into your home until December of 2024 and that even then, you were still renovating it. You told the Dispute Resolution Officer in October of 2025:

We just had lights installed in the majority of the home 1 month ago and have been using battery powered lamps/lighting in the main living spaces. We do not have air conditioning, we do not have a dishwasher yet, and our washing machine and dryer are not yet hooked up. In the winter months we had had the heat turned down very low and have not had the baseboard heating connected in multiple rooms yet. The house is only ~1000sq feet. Based on the seasonal bill of \$2142.86 for 7 months (two of which we had everything shut off as we had not moved in until December and were away for work for another month), that would equate to an average of \$306/ month or over \$600 bi-monthly. This bill is well over double what my parents and parent-in-law pay for homes that are much larger than ours and have higher energy use.

[Exhibit A-1, p. 5 of 7]

Because of the high July 2025 bill for \$2,141.86, you had several conversations with customer service staff at NS Power. You discovered that you were on a seasonal bill, not a standard billing plan. Further, due to the cyber incident at NS Power, your July bill was estimated, thus not based upon an actual meter read. You provided NS Power with two photos of the meter read and were told by several NS Power staff that there was an error and you would get a refund. Instead, the full amount was withdrawn from your bank account. When you received a refund, it was \$302.17, not \$2,141.86.

You appealed to the Dispute Resolution Officer on September 22, 2025, explaining that you did not wish to be a seasonal customer and that the disputed amount of \$2,142 was withdrawn from your account in error. You questioned whether there was an error due to the cyber incident. In his decision, the Dispute Resolution Officer concluded that “NS Power has appropriately billed the Customer for service to [REDACTED]”. At this point, NS Power decided that due to the “confusion and inconvenience” caused by you being placed on a seasonal account, NS Power was providing you with a \$100 goodwill credit. You said the \$100 Goodwill credit was unacceptable and did not accurately reflect the money you are owed.

The meter was removed from your home and tested in NS Power’s Measurement Canada accredited meter shop on December 16, 2025. It was determined to be “operating within prescribed accuracy limits”. NS Power explained that you can further request to have the meter tested by Measurement Canada for \$46. If the meter is found faulty, the \$46 fee will be credited to your account.

FINDINGS

To start, let me thank you for your patience in this matter. I understand that the unexpected withdrawal from your account has caused you financial hardship and stress, and waiting for information and decisions only adds to that stress.

I have reviewed the bills that you provided in detail. I think that two things have occurred to make your bills very confusing. First, you were initially classified as a seasonal customer and then, at your request, were switched to standard billing. Secondly, due to the recent cyber incident at NS Power, the electrical usage for two of your bills was estimated. I will explain



what happened to your bills, how NS Power attempted to correct it, and what that meant for the amounts owed.

First, as you know, you were originally designated as a seasonal customer. Seasonal billing is meant for properties that are not lived in all year, such as cottages. Seasonal billing differs from standard billing in two ways. First, unlike customers with standard billing, they are not billed a flat monthly charge of \$19.17 during the November to April period. I would point out, however, that the energy rate per kilowatt hour is the same for seasonal customers as it is for standard residential customers. There is no separate seasonal energy rate.

Secondly, NS Power does not bill seasonal customers monthly for energy between November and April, even though the meter still records usage. Rather, it bills twice a year for the Energy charge. The May bill is meant to include all energy used since November. For most seasonal customers (e.g., those with cottages shut down for the winter), there is very little energy use during this time and the bills would be modest. Your situation was different as your home consumed energy during those six months, but you were not charged for that energy. I understand from your email correspondence that you believe “the money has been coming out of my account bi-monthly”. However, based on the information supplied by you and NS Power, you were not charged for any energy usage between November and April.

NS Power only issued two seasonal bills for your account (November 2024 and July 2025) before switching the account back to standard billing on July 11, 2025.

The records filed with the Board show that you received nine bills from NS Power during the period under appeal. Let me explain what happened in each of those nine bills.

- **October 25, 2024** – You moved in and had a \$12.65 bill (\$11 plus HST) for connection fees.
- **November 4, 2024** – This was the first of your two seasonal bills for energy charges. Your account was only started 10 days previously and only a small amount of energy (389 kilowatt hours) had been used, so you were billed \$75.25 plus your streetlight rental.
- **December 12, 2024, February 13, 2025, and April 11, 2025** – These three bills were almost identical. As a seasonal customer, you were not charged for any energy you had used. You were charged roughly \$27 for streetlight rentals in each bill.
- **July 9, 2025** – You were still a seasonal customer at this point. Hence, this bill is meant to capture all energy charges in the seven months since your November 2024 bill. This bill also occurred after the cyber incident at NS Power when your usage data could not be transmitted wirelessly to NS Power. Because of this, NS Power estimated the kilowatt-hours used as 10,834 kilowatt hours. The bill for energy charges amounted to \$2,014.04. With streetlight rental and other charges, the total bill came to \$2,141.86.

Since this time, in response to IR-4, NS Power provided a breakdown of the \$2,014.04 in estimated energy charges:

November 4 to December 31	\$509.80
January 1 to February 18	432.71
February 19 to June 10	<u>1,071.53</u>
Total Energy Charges	\$2,014.04



- **August 14, 2025** – As of July 11, you ceased to be a seasonal customer and switched to standard billing. This means that you were charged for your energy usage on each bill. Since NS Power still could not transmit an actual meter read wirelessly, this bill was also estimated. NS Power estimated that for the two months since June 10, you used 2,264 kilowatt hours. This meant \$458.56 of energy charges for a total bill of \$508.62.
- **September 23, 2025** – This bill covered the June 10 to August 26 time period, almost the exact same time period as the August 14 bill. However, the August bill was based on estimated energy usage, and your September bill is based on your second photo on August 26 showing the actual kilowatt energy hours as 30,960. That photo shows that for the two months since June 10, you used 700 kilowatt hours, not 2,264 kilowatt hours, of energy. Instead of billing you for the estimated 2,264 kilowatt-hours they should have charged you for the 700 kilowatt-hours, or 1,564 kilowatt hours less ($2,264 - 700 = 1,564$).

Because of that photo, in the September bill, NS Power credited you the full amount of \$458.56 for 2,264 kilowatt hours from the August 2025 estimated bill and added in the \$129.93 charges for the actual 700 kilowatt hours, giving you a rebate for those 1,564 kilowatt hours. You can see these amounts on the relevant bills.

- The September bill shows a meter reading of 30,960, the same as on the photo you sent in;
- The August bill had Energy charges of \$458.56;
- The September bill shows a -\$458.56 credit under energy charges, this is the previous estimated amount being removed; and
- The September bill also shows \$129.93 under Energy charges, which it labels as Energy 700 kWh. This is the correct 700 kWh amount being added in. The net energy charges (\$129.93, the base charge of \$49.20, less \$458.56) are a credit of \$279.43 plus HST of 22.74, for a total refund of \$302.17. This reflects the savings for the 1,564 kilowatt hours that was overestimated.

For your convenience I have included a screenshot of the August and September bills attached to this letter with notes showing how they incorporated the meter reading from your photo of the meter, the refund they processed, and the above calculations.

- **October 15, 2025** – NS Power was able to read the meter and recorded your energy usage of 156 kWh and charged you \$56.44.

I want to explain in a bit more detail about the second photo of the meter that you sent to NS Power. Because of the cyber incident we do not have monthly breakdowns for November to August, but we can review the totals for the nine-month period. This photo was the first actual read of your meter since your November bill nine months previous, which had a read of 19,425.59. This photo showed that your energy usage to date was 30,960 kilowatt hours. This means that since November you had used 11,534.41 of kilowatt hours ($30,960 - 19,425.59 = 11,534.41$). NS Power estimated your meter use as being 30,259.59 in July and 32,523.59 in August. As such, NS Power had estimated your energy usage since November as being 13,098 kilowatt hours ($32,523.59 - 19,425.59 = 13,098$). Hence, NS Power overestimated your energy usage by 1,564 kilowatt hours for those nine months (your photo of 30,960 less their August reading of 32,523.59 equals 1,564 kilowatt hours). In its September bill NS Power rebated back to you \$458.56, which represents the 2,264 kilowatt



hours of energy charges for the August bill and added in the correct 700 kilowatt hours, effectively providing a rebate for the 1,564 kilowatt hours they overestimated. You can see energy usage (i.e., kilowatt hours) summarized in the following table:

NS Power Bills – Leslie Axford, Account [REDACTED]

	Bill Date	Meter Read in Kilowatt Hours	Additional Kilowatt Hours	
<u>Seasonal Billing</u>				
1	Oct 25/2024	-	-	No Energy Charge
2	Nov 4/2024 (Oct to Nov)	19,425.59	389.00	Energy Charge (ten days since you moved in)
3	Dec 12/2024 (Nov to Dec)	-	-	No Energy Charge
4	Feb 13/2025 (Dec to Feb)	-	-	No Energy Charge
5	April 11/2025 (Feb to April)	-	-	No Energy Charge
6	July 9/2025 (Nov to June)	30,259.59	10,834.00	<u>Estimated Energy for 7 months since the November reading</u>
<u>Standard Billing</u>				
7	Aug 14/2025 (June to Aug)	32,523.59	2,264.00	<u>Estimated Energy for 2 months since the July estimate</u>
8	Sept 23/2025 (June to Aug)	30,960.00	(1,564.00)	<u>Actual Energy used since November, refund for excess energy</u>
9	Oct 15/2025 (Aug to Oct)	31,116.00	156.00	Actual energy use for 2 months

I also note that in December 2025, you forwarded your November 2025 bill to the Board. You observed that kilowatt hours were once again being estimated, and that your meter registered 31,821 kilowatt hours whereas the bill (two days later) showed an estimate of 33,329 kilowatt hours. On December 16, 2026, your meter was replaced and you again photographed the meter, which showed 31,984 kilowatt hours. NS Power responded (NSEB IR-8), providing the Board with your recent bills. The February 2026 bill shows a reading for your old meter of 31,984, identical to your photograph. That bill also includes a “Usage Adjustment” of \$249.65 in your favour. This adjustment represents the difference between their estimate of 33,329 kilowatt hours and your photograph of 31,984 (33,329 – 31,984, times the energy rate of 18.561 cents = \$249.65).

I have also reviewed the payments you made against your bills. Based on what you have filed, NS Power has recorded all amounts you have paid against your account. I can find no instances where a payment you made was not recorded against your usage.

DECISION

Pursuant to the *Public Utilities Act*, the Board is responsible for the general supervision of all public electric utilities operating in Nova Scotia, including NS Power. Among other things, the Board’s jurisdiction includes approving *Regulations* that determine how NS Power is allowed to provide electric service to customers, and the rules they (and customers) must follow. In reviewing matters such as your appeal, the Board’s role is to determine whether NS Power has properly applied the Board’s approved *Regulations* in dealing with its customers. The Board is an independent body with legal, or court-like powers assigned to it by various Statutes. The Nova Scotia Energy Board is not a part of NS Power.

As discussed above, it is clear to me that NS Power has billed you correctly for the energy the meter shows you used. NS Power’s bills were confusing, especially when they involved correcting estimates of how much energy you used and netting those amounts against new



charges. However, I am satisfied that the \$262.84 amount due in the October 2025 bill reflects the correct usage that your meter recorded for the time under appeal.

The *Regulations* provide for meter testing. You agreed to a meter test that was done on December 16, 2025. NS Power provided the Board with the test results on December 22, 2025, and it showed the meter was working properly.

I understand your frustration for not being able to understand the cause of the high meter readings for a small property where the heat was “turned down very low” and the baseboard heaters were yet to be connected in “multiple rooms”. I believe that you are sincere in your belief that you did not use that much electricity. However, the meter test provides clear evidence that the meter provided accurate readings. Whatever the cause of the high energy usage, it occurred on your side of the meter. NS Power is responsible for delivering energy to the metering point but has no responsibility for how it is used on the other side of the meter. As such, you remain responsible for your NS Power bills, even though you are unable to identify the cause of the high energy use at this time.

I have concluded that NS Power followed Board-approved *Regulations* and has billed you appropriately for electricity consumption at your property.

I would note, however, that I feel the quality of service provided to you has been below an acceptable level. NS Power clearly failed to recognize that you were not a seasonal customer. This simple mistake made when you first moved in has caused you considerable anxiety and frustration. NS Power does not appear to have discussed the seasonal status of your property with you when you activated your account in October 2024 (NSEB IR-1(f)). Moreover, NS Power’s responses were confusing and, instead of clarifying a worrying situation, made it even more stressful. I urge NS Power to review its standard operating procedures for new customers to ensure that it classifies them properly and provides adequate customer service.

NS Power’s estimates are also a source of concern. NS Power stated (NSEB IR-1(h)) that the July estimate was based on “historical usage patterns for the property”. As your property was under seasonal billing and presumably unoccupied in the winter, it is unclear how they could have estimated a bill as high as they did. For the August estimate NS Power used a method that “reviews all previous summer bills and calculates an average from those bills to determine the estimated usage” (NSEB IR-1(h)). Unfortunately, they did not average actual summer usage from previous years but rather included the July 2025 bill – an estimated bill meant to reflect high winter usage. By doing this they overestimated your usage in the August bill. Clearly the estimation methods used to determine your July and August bill were inadequate. Further, NS Power has invested heavily in Advanced Metering Infrastructure and, the cyber incident aside, it is concerning to see estimated bills based not on when kilowatt hours are used, but on when the bills were issued.

The Board notes that it is conducting a separate investigation into the cybersecurity incident under Matter M12273 (Board Inquiry into Nova Scotia Power’s Cybersecurity Incident) which encompasses a broader review of its impact on customers. I intend to refer my decision to the Panel examining that matter. While I am not asking that panel to make any additional decisions around your case, I feel the poor estimation methods you experienced are useful background for their examination.

You currently owe \$1,764.74 as per the June 2026 bill. In addition, you will continue to have future invoices for any upcoming electricity you use, which would have to be paid on top of



that outstanding amount. In NSEB IR-8(d), NS Power has offered a 24-month payment plan for past and future amounts:

... an Equal Monthly Billing Plan in the amount of \$419 per month for 24 months. This amount would include both her ongoing monthly electricity usage and repayment of the outstanding arrears over the 24-month period.

Based on the financial hardship that you have endured, I can concur with NS Power that 24 months is a reasonable time to repay these outstanding amounts. However, the estimated monthly amount of \$419 they have suggested should be examined to ensure it is accurate. I have also concluded you should have a full understanding of what is included and excluded from that arrangement and what alternative payment arrangements might be available to you.

Therefore, I am directing NS Power to fully explain its offer of the payment arrangements, including the full calculations for the \$419 amount, its assumptions as to electricity usage, the portions that go toward outstanding usage versus future usage, the breakdown of any interest payments, and any alternative payment approaches that might be available. I am directing NS Power to provide its explanation by August 12, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Once that information has been filed, I will provide you until August 24, 2026, to submit your input and comments on the proposed payment plan. During this time, you should feel free to discuss the proposal with NS Power and to accept any alternative arrangements they may offer that you consider adequate.

To summarize this letter and my decision, I have concluded that:

- NS Power incorrectly estimated your power usage during the cyber incident, causing you to be overcharged for electricity. However, NS Power has corrected your accounts to reflect the actual usage recorded by the meter and your accounts are now up to date.
- The power meter has been tested and found to be functioning within accurate parameters, meaning that your energy usage is now correct. Hence, I have concluded that the amount outstanding on your NS Power account is correct and should not be varied.
- NS Power provided poor customer service, including inadequate estimates of your power usage, during the cyber incident. This caused you personal and financial distress. They have offered a 24-month payment option. I have directed NS Power to provide a full explanation of their proposed payment arrangements so that the details can be closely examined before any such payment arrangement is finalized.

Yours truly,


Bruce Fisher, MPA, CPA
Member

c. Kathleen Murray, Regulatory Counsel, NS Power



LESLIE A AXFORD
Service address [REDACTED]

Domestic
Service from Jun 10 to Aug 14, 2025

Meter number	Rate code	No. of days	New meter read	Last meter read	Multiplier	kWh used
2056840	03B	65	32523.59	30259.59	1	2264

Your bill was estimated for this period
Billing date Aug 14 Includes payments received by Aug 14

Amount owing from last bill 2,141.86
Payment received Aug 13 - Thank you -2,141.86
Balance owing after last payment \$0.00

Energy charges:
Base Charge \$19.17/month 38.34
Energy 2264 kWh x \$0.18561 420.22
Total energy charges 458.56

Other charges
1 70W High Pressure Sodium 23.80
Tax: HST (11931 4938 RT) 67.13
Provincial Rebate -41.27
Total other charges 50.06

Total amount due \$508.62
Amount due Sep 15, 2025 \$508.62

Both Bills are for June 10 to August. The first bill goes to August 14 and the second bill to August 26. One was issued August 14 and one September 23

In the August Bill they estimated you used 32,523.59 kWh, an increase of 2,264 kWh over the previous bill of 30,259.59

In the September Bill they used the amount from your photo: 30,960 kWh, thus the increase since the previous bill was 700 kWh (not 2,264 kWh).

LESLIE A AXFORD
Service address [REDACTED]

Domestic
Service from Jun 10 to Aug 26, 2025

Meter number	Rate code	No. of days	New meter read	Last meter read	Multiplier	kWh used
2056840	03B	77	30960.00	30259.59	1	700
2056840	03B	65	32523.59	30259.59	1	2264

Your meter was read on Aug 26, 2025
Billing date Sep 23 Includes payments received by Sep 23

Amount owing from last bill 508.62
Payment received Sep 16 - Thank you -30.00
Balance owing after last payment \$478.62

Energy charges:
Base Charge \$19.17/month 49.20
Energy 700 kWh x \$0.18561 129.93
Energy 2264 kWh -458.56
Total energy charges -279.43

Other charges
1 70W High Pressure Sodium 23.80
Tax: HST (11931 4938 RT) -30.42
Provincial Rebate -16.12
Total other charges -22.74

Total amount due \$176.45
Amount due Oct 23, 2025 \$176.45

In the August Bill the increase of 2,264 kWh meant Energy Charges of \$458.56

The August Bill should have used an increase of 700 kWh, meaning Energy Charges of \$129.93

In the September Bill they refunded the \$458.56 they had estimated and added in the correct amount of \$129.93. (The net change was a refund of \$279.43 plus HST of \$22.74 for a total of \$302.17).

Refund of \$279.43 in Energy Charges and \$22.74 in HST for a total refund of \$302.17.

