

Generation Energy Memorial University Roundtable Report

September 11, 2017

Executive Summary

On September 11, 2017, Minister Carr chaired a Generation Energy roundtable at Memorial University of Newfoundland, in St. John's to hear perspectives from students, academics, and Indigenous participants on Canada's long-term energy future.

ROUNDTABLE OVERVIEW

Minister Carr set the context and invited each participant to share their views on a series of questions:

- What is your vision for Canada's energy future?
- What will our daily lives look like at home, at work and on the road?
- What will be the energy jobs of the future?
- What sources of energy will fuel communities in Newfoundland and Labrador and across the country?

KEY INSIGHTS

- We must still take into account regional diversity and the unique needs of various regions during the energy transition, keeping in mind that what works for one region may not work for another. We need to ensure that the resources and funds being used to advance innovative ideas for the future are able to support outcomes in different areas (e.g. the north, east coast, urban and remote areas).
- Behavioural change in Canadians must be at the center of energy transition. We can develop new technologies and initiatives, but if Canadians do not participate in the change or are unable to access new technologies then we will not see results. Public education and awareness initiatives must be built-into new policies to gain public support for the low-carbon transition, dispel myths, and get Canadians to make their daily lives more energy-efficient.

- Newfoundland finds itself at the epicentre of the discussion on the transition to low-carbon energy use, as currently much of the provincial government's revenue is derived from oil and gas. However, the province is also investing in electricity and electric vehicle projects that will go some way to supporting this energy transition.
- There is a long-term need to move away from burning fossil fuels as energy sources. Oil can serve various purposes as a feedstock for other high-value materials, such as medicines and technology. We must shift to more low-carbon methods for generating energy.
- Looking at models from other jurisdictions, Norway was cited as a positive example of an oil-producing country that also has the highest per capita use of electric vehicles. Furthermore, the Norwegian government uses funds gained from oil exports to invest in renewables. This shows that it is possible to strike a similar balance in Canada.
- Concerning the future of oil and gas exports, some participants made the argument that major markets for oil and gas in the future (e.g. China) will continue to purchase this product regardless of the source. Therefore, Canada should position itself to be a strong supplier to these markets and help ensure that emerging markets import the cleanest oil and gas possible.
- Ultimately, the future of Canada's energy sector will rely on diversity in energy resources. Looking forward, we have to try to find the right balance between economic and environmental priorities, and ensure that there is public confidence in energy sector decisions. This requires asking tough questions. For example, how many jobs in the energy sector are we prepared to lose in this transition, and how do we minimize the negative impact on some subsectors? These questions pose a difficult challenge but one that must be addressed, as it is imperative that we recognize the effects of climate change and work to mitigate our impact on the environment.