Energy & Climate
in Unama'ki – Cape Breton

Homeward Bound
Empowering Aging Rural Nova Scotians

A coal legacy, a clean-power future

Unama'ki – Cape Breton's modern history was intertwined with coal. Today the island sits at the centre of one of the country's fastest energy shifts, with high stakes for **heating bills, jobs, and the climate.** We compiled this to show where things stand, and what's underway.

The Coal Legacy

Nova Scotia holds just **3% of Canada's population** but produces **34% of the country's coal-fired power emissions.**

Three of the province's coal-burning stations sit right here on the island.

34%
of Canada's coal-power emissions
— for just 3% of its people

50%
of in-province generation still comes from coal & coke
Target: 80% renewable by 2030

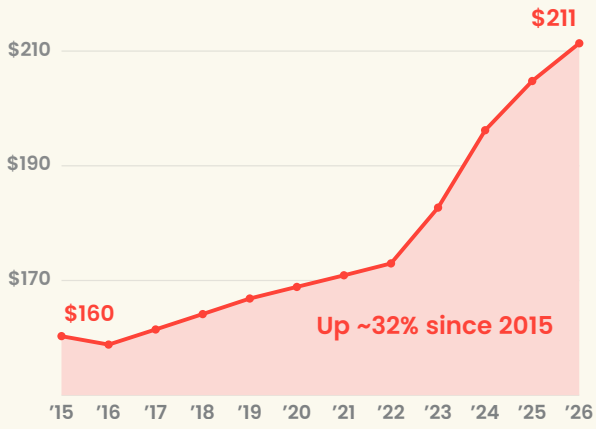


5,000+ jobs

More than 5,000 jobs could come from building out **offshore wind** and its supply chain.

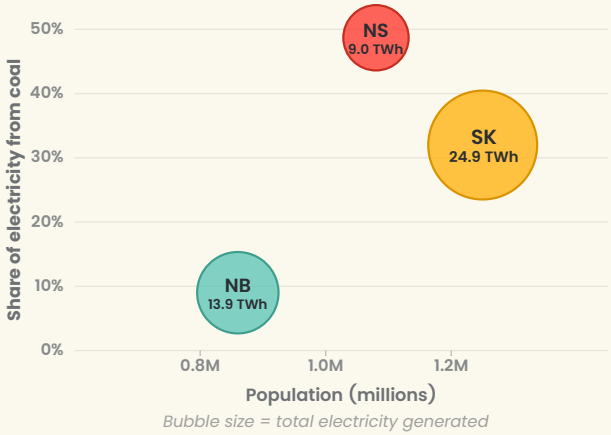
Power Bills at Crisis Territory

Typical NS residential bill · 1,000 kWh / month



One of the Last Coal Provinces

Provinces still burning coal for electricity, as of 2025



Federal Net-Zero Targets

by 2035
Net-zero electricity generation

by 2050
Net-zero economy-wide

Energy costs are going to kill people... We have some tenants whose utility bills are a second rent payment. They'll pay $600 in rent and then $600 between their oil bill and their Nova Scotia Power bill.

— Community Member

What's at the Root?

Cost, regulation, and a coal legacy over centuries have formed barriers that technology alone could hardly solve.

A North America First

1720

First organized coal mine site in North America

Coal has been mined and burned in Cape Breton since as early as 1720. Mined coal was used to fuel the Fortress of Louisbourg.

A Coal Legacy

3

coal-fired stations still run on the island

Large-scale underground mining in Nova Scotia ended in 2001. However, 3 coal-fired power plants still provide most of Cape Breton's output.

Locked Into Oil Heat

2nd

highest rate of energy poverty in Canada

Many Cape Breton homes still heat with oil. Federal **Oil-to-Heat-Pump** program began winding down in the NS in 2025, after helping 9,000+ homes finish their switch.

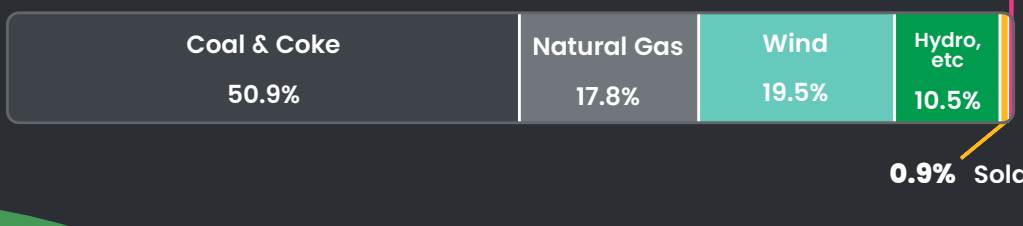
Cape Breton's coal-fired stations

Station	Location	Status & plan*
Lingan	New Waterford	Converting to heavy fuel oil, 2030–2050
Point Aconi	Boularderie Island	Coal-fired; federal phase-out by 2030
Point Tupper	Strait of Canso	Converting to natural gas by 2029



*Transition is federally mandated and provincially committed, but exact plans and dates are contested as of publication.

The province's energy structure still skews heavily toward coal and gas.



*It's a socio-economic challenge, not a technical one. We have the technology to do 80% of the job now. But we've got to get past the **cost** and the **regulations**.*

— Community member

*"There's this looming fear that the earth is going to implode because you've just **destroyed it to a point of no return** … In the past three days we've surpassed 30 degrees in Cape Breton. For some people it's 'great weather.' It's terrifying."*

— Community member

Local Response

As energy transition deadlines loom, communities, First Nations, researchers and businesses across Unama'ki – Cape Breton are already building the clean-energy economy, often ahead of the bigger institutions.

Mi'kmaw equity partners

Membertou **Potlotek** **Eskasoni**
We'koqma'q **Wagmatcook**

Five communities hold equity in Nova Scotia wind projects as partners. Training pipelines still need investment.

Renewable energy arrives

- Sydney Bight (500MW); Middle Bank (1,000+MW)
- Q Energy (France) + Hanwha Ocean (South Korea) undergoing pre-qualification processes.
- Solar adoption: New Dawn Enterprises and partners driving up community installation of solar panels; Eskasoni Renewables offering training pipelines.

Who's building



As a joint venture between Eskasoni First Nation and Natural Forces Solar, Eskasoni Renewables trains and employs band members on solar installation.

The Verschuren Centre hosts researchers, modelers, and incubators of climate projects across residential, commercial, and institutional levels.

Q Energy and Hanwha Ocean applied for pre-qualification to fulfill the offshore wind project buildout; Everwind Fuels is tapped to transform Point Tupper into a hydrogen and ammonia hub.

New Dawn Enterprises, along with its community partners, have piloted solar projects at Pine Tree Park, and is working to drive community adoption of solar energy.

CBRM hosts energy efficiency initiatives led internally by an efficiency manager. The initiative upgrades thermal envelopes for buildings, replaces glass with higher insulation ratings, and is working towards electrification of the transit fleet.

Opportunity for Households

The technology and the money exist; the task is getting both to the people who need them most while ensuring that **Cape Breton stands to be a net gainer.**

Support programs available to households

Program	Up to	Status
Oil to Heat Pump (OHPA)	$15,000	Standby list
Home Energy Assessment	$5,000	Open
Moderate Income Rebate	$5,000	Open
HomeWarming	Free upgrades	Open
Heating Assistance (HARP)	$400	Reopens Oct 2026

A heat pump runs at 300% or even higher coefficient of performance versus 65–85% for oil systems, translating to thousands saved a year.

"Everybody knows what needs to be done. A lot of people know how to get it done. But then, the speed at which you can do it is determined by things like regulatory change."

—Community Member

*Cape Breton is a microcosm of the rest of the world. We have a chance to be one of the **net gainers in new jobs and new industry.***

—Community Member

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