

“Built To Last: A Successful Energy-Strategy Design Process”

Marlo Reynolds, Senior Advisor, Pembina Institute and Advisor to Tides Canada Energy Initiative

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Introduction

Energy is not only a complex inter-jurisdictional challenge for policy makers. It also touches the life and pocketbook of every Canadian. Any effort to create a national energy strategy, accord, framework, or agreement will therefore prove a tremendously ambitious task. To succeed, we will need to tap our brightest minds, unite unlikely allies, and employ both tried-and-true and cutting-edge 21st century tools to connect with a diverse array of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

With abundant renewable and hydrocarbon resources, Canada presently ranks high among the world’s energy leaders. Energy informs our economy, our sense of self, and our identity on the world stage. But the fact is, the world’s energy systems are changing rapidly. Leading economies are now competing in the race to a low-carbon future and greater self sufficiency. Given this backdrop, we believe that all stakeholders—including those representing the interests of civil society—must come together to create both a national vision of Canada’s energy future and a coordinated strategy to get us there. This—and *only* this—will ensure our nation continues to prosper and compete through the global transformation that is already underway.

A vision and strategy for Canada’s energy future must not only drive near-term policy reforms to prepare us for the transition, but also endure across multiple governments, jurisdictions, and generations. The task will be far from straightforward. But we can say with confidence that the success of any such initiative will hinge directly on how carefully the underlying process is designed, supported, and implemented.

This paper makes no attempt to define the details of such a process. Instead, it seeks to offer a few preliminary process-design parameters.

Designed for Success

The ultimate measure of success for any process to develop a vision and strategy for Canada’s energy future will be whether or not it achieves an agreement, and the degree to which that agreement endures. That longevity is a direct result of the degree of ownership perceived among those the agreement will most affect. It will not be enough for federal or provincial decision makers to sign-off on a given approach; everyone with an interest in the outcome must feel that their interests have been fairly addressed.

In a well-designed process, decision makers, energy stakeholders and average Canadians will all need to feel they genuinely have a voice and a sense of shared responsibility for policy outcomes. Put simply, the process must work for Canadians; it must create a true dialogue about Canada's energy systems and the future we wish to be part of.

We are fortunate that Canada has a well-deserved reputation for designing and managing complex, collaborative multi-party processes of this nature. We will doubtless draw heavily on our international diplomacy skills, and the experience of those who have managed and led complex negotiations over land use, resource management, and other public policy issues.

We recommend that all parties keen to define Canada's energy future invest in an appropriate collaborative process design. The Tides Canada Energy Initiative has already begun such work, and is ready to connect with others to advance the discussions. At this stage, however, and drawing on some of the basic lessons from collaboration theory and from first-hand experiences across the country, we believe that any process intended to generate a vision and strategy for Canada's energy future must clarify the following design parameters:

- 1) Principles of Engagement
- 2) Outcomes
- 3) Interested Communities
- 4) Engagement Tools
- 5) Resources and Leadership

Principles of Engagement

At minimum, the design of an effective collaborative process must embrace the following principles of engagement:

- a) **Inclusivity** – The process adopted for the development of a vision and strategy must engage all relevant sectors, regions, and communities in the energy system, via a diverse range of channels, including digital and face-to-face conversations. Such a process not only needs to engage many groups, interests and values, it also needs to meet Canadians “where they are” with respect to both physical location and their existing knowledge, understanding, and awareness.
- b) **Transparency and Accessibility** – All steps in the process must be transparent so that Canadians can understand what is happening, how their interests are being considered, and how they will participate in the key decisions that affect them. The process design must embrace multiple communications channels, and records of the proceedings must be made accessible across multiple media and platforms, in a timely manner.
- c) **Research Excellence and Rigour** – The success of a collaborative process will depend in part on access to appropriate technical support and the very best science and research. Moreover, such support needs to overcome the stifling problem of “dueling science and economics,” and instead provide a single, independent source of information and analysis to inform discussions and decision-making.

- d) ***Iterative, Adaptive, Enduring*** – Given the sheer scale and complexity of energy production and use, a collaborative process will need to be both iterative—allowing for multiple cycles of problem definition, analysis and experimentation—and adaptive, so that it is well matched to changing contexts and circumstances and well-equipped to revisit issues and areas as new information emerges. Such a process will also need to be longer term, able to outlast any single government, and capable of learning from its own successes and failures.

Outcomes

Our recent experience of energy dialogues across the country suggests considerable confusion exists among stakeholders with respect to intended outcomes. Multiple terms are seemingly used interchangeably—such as “strategy,” “policy,” “plan,” “framework,” and “accord”—but the important differences among these various end-points are often lost in translation. Any successful process design must clearly define both its terminology and desired outcomes, recognizing that outcomes may evolve through an iterative and adaptive approach.

One potential framing of the intended outcomes of a collaborative dialogue on Canada’s energy future would include:

- ✓ A VISION for the nation’s energy future—a vivid, compelling, and credible “picture” of what life will be like with a new energy system. The visioning process will start with a clear articulation of the questions we are seeking to answer, and will be framed in a manner that captures Canadians’ interests in their day-to-day lives in their homes and communities. The vision must also draw out and reflect key Canadian values.
- ✓ An intergovernmental AGREEMENT or ACCORD detailing how federal, provincial, municipal and First Nations governments intend to fulfill the energy vision at various scales and within different regions. Such an agreement will also clarify which level of government will have responsibility for delivery of which components, and governments will coordinate with one another.
- ✓ Within the scope of individual jurisdictions, the process will facilitate the development of IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES and ACTION PLANS, including specifics on fiscal, regulatory and other policy mechanisms.
- ✓ An agreed-upon EVALUATION FRAMEWORK will ensure the agreement and strategies move Canada towards its new energy vision, and make course corrections as needed.

Interested Communities

The opportunities and risks of producing and consuming energy differ widely across Canada. Different regions have different priorities and concerns, and are endowed with diverse energy assets and barriers. Any effective collaborative process must be capable of wrestling with these differences in a fair and equitable fashion.

A well-designed energy planning process would not only involve a critical and representative mass of Canadians, but would also make a particular effort to involve often-marginalized groups, such as those already coping with the effects of climate change, and those most vulnerable to energy price shocks. The process will doubtless fail

if we only engage elites and energy's perceived "winners," because the resulting political decisions will not be supported by a sufficiently wide range of constituents.

Engagement Tools

Despite the central role that energy plays in Canadian life, most Canadians know surprisingly little about it. They are largely oblivious to how, where, and why energy is produced or generated, and tend only to notice it when it is unexpectedly not available, when they have to pay more for it at the pump or meter, or when energy infrastructure is about to be built in their backyard. For this reason, any energy-planning conversations must begin with a commitment to robust engagement and education, so that all those involved are well equipped to do so, and so that the final products can be presented to—and ultimately supported by—an informed Canadian public.

Given the diversity of communities interested in energy—private sector, non-government organization, aboriginal communities, youth, municipalities, consumers, exporters, academics etc—any process will need to deploy a mix of engagement tools. These tools must bring together diverse perspectives to challenge assumptions and really listen to different views.

However, history is littered with examples of lengthy, costly and needlessly complex public engagement processes that have yielded little in terms of tangible success. Instead of relying on old-school involvement methods, we must embrace cutting-edge engagement tools and techniques. The advent of digital media and recent experience with deliberate dialogue and other similar processes has opened up many new horizons. We recommend modeling a 'public engagement 2.0' approach, enabling differing groups and interests to interact effectively and efficiently, and at the level appropriate to their role in the process.

There are many available engagement tools to draw from. In the end, a portfolio of tools will be necessary, and as a starting point might include a mix of some of the following:

- Visioning Processes
 - Scenario Planning
 - Future Search
- Analytical Framework
 - Technical Expert Panels
 - Technology Back-casting and Road Maps
 - Policy and Economic Expert Panels
 - Modeling
- Outreach, Engagement, and Energy Literacy
 - Citizen assemblies
 - Deliberative dialogue
 - Social media - YouTube, Vimeo, Twitter, Flickr, Facebook, etc
 - Wikis and other self-organizing networks
 - Open and collaborative digital online tools
 - Conferences, receptions, TEDx, PechaKucha, etc
 - Town halls and kitchen-table conversations
 - Traditional media outreach and advertising
- Advisory Panels

- Aboriginal
- Ethics
- Youth
- International trends

Resources, Leadership and Mandate

If a collaborative process is to achieve the required scope, scale, and ambition, it will need adequate resourcing. Drawing from other examples (such as the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, an ongoing project to develop and implement an approach to manage Canadian high-level nuclear waste), the design and delivery of a process for developing an energy strategy will require funding on the order of at least \$30 to \$40 million. It will also likely extend over a two- to three-year period.

Such a budget would support the required research and allow process leaders to reach a sufficiently diverse and politically representative cross-section of Canadians. This level of funding will create a robust, defensible, and enduring agreement on Canada's energy future.

The design of the collaborative process will also need to specify a leadership structure, and be equipped with a clear mandate. Two potential approaches have already come to light—although other models may also need to be considered:

- 1) **Top-Down:** A Federal and Provincial agreement establishes an arms-length body with the mandate to design and deliver the process; or
- 2) **Bottom-up:** A diverse group of Canadian organizations, companies, individuals, municipalities and aboriginals band together to create an entity to design and deliver the process, then present the outcomes to the Federal and Provincial governments for adoption and implementation.

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Regardless, the process leadership team must be of the highest caliber if it is to guide this very complex issue forward to a successful conclusion.

Summary

This paper can only scratch the surface of what will be required to design a collaborative process that will be truly legitimate to Canadians. The process design team can draw on a growing body of theory related to multi-party collaboration as well as the direct experiences of processes such as Royal Commissions, British Columbia's Citizens Assembly, and the National Citizen Dialogue, to name but a few. The bottom line is that if anyone is serious about developing a national approach to energy in Canada, they will have to design and deliver a process that is up to the task, and invest the time to do it right. Short-changing this critical step will ultimately lead to marginal results and potential failure.

Our recommendation: *That all parties interested in advancing the national energy strategy conversation now make a focused effort to identify and design an appropriate collaborative multi-party process.*