



February 2026 Newsletter

While no dramatic events have occurred with the move into the New Year we recognize that we are working up to much more significant changes within the next few months. Let's review the easy things first. At our last board meeting we agreed to commission a load analysis report from Strum engineering at a cost of several thousand dollars, to guide our infrastructure planning over the next five years. We discussed preparations for an application before the Nova Scotia Energy Board, who regulate the rates we are able to charge, for a flow-through to RELC of any increases in rates accorded to Nova Scotia Power, something which should seem simple and straightforward but is in fact much more complex than one would expect. And of course, Nova Scotia Power themselves are in dispute as to how much they will be permitted to increase their rates. Obviously, we are largely powerless in any of this bureaucracy, but we continue to plod along as best we can while protecting our own best interests.

Of more consequence is the necessity to prepare for a formal application for an increase in our rates, independent of Nova Scotia Power, a "GRA", or General Rate Application. This is not something which we approach with particular enthusiasm, but the simple hard fact is that we are running a small business in which both our income and most of our expenditures (purchase of electricity) are determined by an outside agency, the Energy Board, who unfortunately demand an extremely high standard of justification for anything we may require. In practical terms, at a minimum (and not unreasonably) we require up to date audited financial statements to support any applications we may make. And here we are able to report concrete progress: the audit of the 2023-24 accounts is completed and the 24-25 audit is almost finished. These audited accounts are necessary not only to support our next GRA, but also for presentation to you the ratepayers at our upcoming Annual General Meeting this spring.

Vigorous and active discussions continue on the ongoing viability of our utility, as well as structural and operational considerations, assisted by several volunteer experts and the Legislative Subcommittee (whose latest interim report is attached to this newsletter). The intention is to have a comprehensive slate of possible courses mapped out for consideration by the membership at the upcoming AGM.

Finally, a request of you, which may seem trivial but would be of great assistance to the Commission: Over the years a number of customers have accumulated incorrect account numbers associated with their payments, the result of historical changes made in the billing system, and it would be extremely helpful if, when you go to pay your bill this month, you could check that the 8-digit customer number (with a whole bunch of leading zeroes) in the upper left-hand corner of your bill is matched by the number associated with your payment information in the on-line banking application. The entry in your banking payment will have something similar to "Riverport Electric Light Commission" followed by an eight-digit number. This number should match with the number in the upper left corner of your latest bill. If they do not match it would be extremely helpful if you could modify the entry in the online banking to match the number on your bill.

Obviously, it would also be helpful if the few individuals who are paying by cheque or cash could note the customer number from their bill on their payment also.

David Maxwell,
RELC Board Chair

RELC Legislative Sub-Committee

Interim Report to Board & Community Members Regarding Restructuring RELC

December 30, 2025

On July 23, 2025, at a Special Meeting called by RELC, the Legislative Sub-Committee was reconvened after an eighteen-month hiatus. As part of the Resolution for reconvening, the LSC was instructed to report on its preliminary findings to the Board and Electorate by December 31, 2025.

To that end, we are now submitting our Interim Report for your consideration, including our Action Plan which is on page 4.

A. COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND BOARD REPRESENTATIVES

The LSC's Terms of Reference requires five voting members:

- One member of the Board of Commissioners appointed by the Board, with a vote.
- Four Electors drawn from RELC's District, based on their expressions of interest and qualifications, with a vote.
- The Chair of the RELC Board of Commissioners *ex officio*, without a vote.

We are not at full complement, as we await further information regarding a fourth community member who has recently applied to join us. In addition, one member needs to be appointed by the Board of Commissioners from among its members.

B. COMMUNITY INVESTIGATORS

Two local community members with extensive expertise in their fields have offered their services as external researchers and analysts. Their input is proving invaluable. They have obtained crucial data about existing RELC contracts. Additional information, critical to LSC's mandate, is also being sought from Town of Mahone Bay regarding RELC's finances and management.

C. STRUCTURAL MODELS

1. OPTION 1: CO-OPERATIVE MODEL

In researching the Co-operative model, we initially contacted Professor Tom Webb, a founder of the International Centre for Co-operative Management (ICCM) at Saint Mary's University. Professor Webb has expressed considerable interest in our project

and has offered extensive assistance should the Electorate choose the Co-operative model as their preferred option for restructuring.

Further, Professor Webb has linked us to Professor Karen Miner, Managing Director of the ICCM, who subsequently referred us to Professor Chad Walker at the School of Planning and the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University. We have made initial contact with Professor Walker, and he is amenable to helping us in the New Year, with a particular focus on community engagement.

In addition, Professor Miner referred us to a recently formed group called Community Energy Co-operative Canada (CECC), a national federation which represents the renewable energy co-operative sector in Canada. We have subsequently made contact with Jodi Conuel, who was part of the creation of the Bow Valley Green Energy Cooperative in Alberta and is now Manager and Project Lead with CECC, actively involved in the development of local energy co-operatives across Canada. It is our hope that Ms. Conuel can provide us with detailed information on the process involved in the creation of a community energy co-operative.

2. OPTION 2: AMALGAMATION

To date, we have been unsuccessful in identifying a utility in the Maritimes which has amalgamated with another company, either with another utility or with a company in another sector.

At the June 24, 2025 RELC Annual General Meeting, Dylan Heide, Chief Administrative Officer of the Town of Mahone Bay spoke about a possible amalgamation between RELC and TOMB. In order to explore this option, we have sent a letter to Mr. Heide, inviting him to speak to the LSC on the model he proposes for amalgamation. We look forward to such a meeting as early as possible in the New Year.

3. OPTION 3: MERGER

We are collecting information regarding the merger of the Town of Canso Electric Utility with Nova Scotia Power Inc. (NSPI) in 2019. We have thus far obtained a copy of the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board's (NSUARB) decision allowing NSPI to acquire the Canso Utility. We are seeking further details from Canso personnel regarding the process and outcome of this merger.

D. PARTNERSHIPS

RELC has partnered with Alternative Resource Energy Authority (AREA) for the purchase of wind power and other forms of assistance and with TOMB for the provision of operational and management services, including RELC's bookkeeping. RELC has also joined the Maritime Municipal Electric Utility Association (MMEUA) as part of a joint effort to strengthen grid reliability, enhance sustainability, and empower member communities across the Maritimes.

As distinct from the structural models described above, partnerships are more specific contractual agreements with specific time limitations.

E. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our goal, at the end of the research phase outlined above, is to obtain sufficient data to present to the community, including all options for proposed structural models with their associated pros and cons, financial structures, and governance. It is imperative that we reach as many community members as possible with this information in order to hold discussions and answer questions. Through this process, the Electorate will be able to make informed decisions on which option they will choose.

To this end, we have consulted with Badia Nehme, Co-ordinator at the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) in Halifax. Ms. Nehme has provided several viable suggestions, as well as offered her personal assistance in addressing the challenges of community engagement in this process.

F. ADDITIONAL CONTACTS AND RESOURCES

Initial contact has also been made with Elspeth McLean-Wile, Mayor of the Municipality of the District of Lunenburg (MODL), who has agreed to a future meeting. One of the avenues we shall pursue with the Mayor is community engagement, as this has been a hallmark of MODL's work during her current term in office. We also hope to discuss how RELC may fit in with MODL's renewable energy plans. Additional topics may also be explored.

Mayor Jamie Myra of Lunenburg has also agreed to a meeting in the New Year to discuss plans for the Lunenburg Electrical Utility. While nothing has been finalized, he has publicly proposed withholding building permits for any new structures, as well as for any new development which will negatively impact their electrical grid, now at capacity. He further proposes seeking provincial funding to assist with utility infrastructure resulting from community growth.

Finally, the LSC met with the RELC Board of Commissioners on November 26, 2025. The purpose of the meeting was to report to the Board on our activities to date, and to receive comments and feedback on our progress.

As noted in this report, much work remains to be done. We are grateful for the support of the Board and the community as our project continues to unfold.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or would like to learn more about LSC's work.

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Abberton, Chair
Jane Henson, Secretary
Sid Strowbridge, Member

RELC / Legislative Sub-Committee Action Plan, November 2025

| PHASE & TASK | START mmddyy | END | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|
| PHASE 1: Reconvene LSC | 7-17-25 | 7-21-25 | | | | | | |
| PHASE 2: Participate in Special Meeting Jul 23 | 7-20-25 | 7-23-25 | | | | | | |
| PHASE 3: Find 4th Community Member & Board Representative on LSC 1. Search for community member 2. Interview community applicants 3. Request for Board Representative on LSC | 7-23-25 | 12-21-25 | | | | | | |
| PHASE 4: Options/Pros + Cons: Research & Analysis by Community Investigators (CIs) 1. Research: Options available to RELC based on information collected 2. Analysis: Pros + Cons of all options | 9-5-25 | 2026 TBD ongoing | | | | | | |
| PHASE 5: Options/Pros + Cons: Co-operatives 1. Research: Options available to RELC based on information collected 2. Analysis: Pros + Cons of all options | 8-25-25 | 2026 TBD ongoing | | | | | | |
| PHASE 6: Options/Pros + Cons: Amalgamation, Merger, etc. 1. Research: Options available to RELC based on information collected 2. Analysis: Pros + Cons of all options | 10-6-25 | 2026 TBD ongoing | | | | | | |
| PHASE 7: Prepare Interim Report including Preliminary Findings & Outline of Next Phases | 12-1-25 | 12-21-25 | | | | | | |
| PHASE 8: Plan/Conduct Community Engagement, including vote for chosen option | 12-10-25 | 2026 TBD ongoing | | | | | | |
| PHASE 9: Draft New Legislation based on community's chosen option | 2026 TBD ongoing | 2026 TBD ongoing | | | | | | |

**RELC = Riverport Electric Light Commission | LSC = Legislative Sub-Committee |
CIs = Community Investigators | TOMB = Town of Mahone Bay | TBD = To Be Decided**