

Strong future in N.S. burying its greenhouse gas emissions - consultant

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HALIFAX - There's money to be made in capturing and storing Nova Scotia's carbon dioxide emissions, says a businessman who argues that burying greenhouse gases is a key "short-term" solution to global warming.

Robert Niven, president of Halifax-based Carbon Sense Solutions Inc., spoke Tuesday at the Atlantic Climate Change conference, telling delegates that Nova Scotia needs to start storing emissions in caverns and capturing carbon in construction materials.

The engineer and chemist said he moved his firm from British Columbia to Halifax to launch a pilot project that will combine carbon emissions with calcium to make limestone, which in turn will be used to make concrete.

The process essentially locks the emissions in rock "indefinitely," said Niven.

As well, the process is more cost effective than traditional concrete production because the chemical reaction requires little heat.

"The breakthroughs that we found to store carbon dioxide in the concrete in an economical way is new," he said.

Niven said his firm also hopes to provide consulting services to the province as it maps out areas where carbon dioxide emissions from its large, fossil-fuel burning power plants and factories could be stored.

Ottawa announced in last week's federal budget that it will provide Nova Scotia with \$5 million for further research in this area.

Saskatchewan received \$240 million, and has announced it will invest in a \$1.4-billion "clean-coal" power plant in the southeastern part of the province.

Mark Parent, Nova Scotia's environment minister, said the federal funds were a pleasant surprise.

"It means we'll be able to proceed further in terms of plans to map out the geology of Nova Scotia to determine the suitable areas of carbon capture and storage," he said.

Parent said the province is particularly interested in seeing if abandoned coal mines can be used to store carbon dioxide.

That could help Nova Scotia meet its stated goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 10 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020.

"Any technology that would help in carbon capture and storage would be beneficial," said Parent.

However, some conference delegates said major financial obstacles remain.

Nova Scotia's electric utilities, for example, would have to boost rates by as much as 40 per cent to pay for the pipelines and other systems needed to build carbon storage facilities.

Dan Roscoe, vice-president of Scotian Windfields, said Ottawa should have invested more in renewable energy and energy conservation.

"The big question is: How do you ensure this storage? How do you ensure it doesn't slink back up into the air?" he said.

"I think the (federal) money could be better used to reduce emissions rather than to store emissions."

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