

January 18, 2021

Dear Customer,

Over the last several weeks, there have been questions raised about power outages in Nova Scotia. On behalf of our team at Nova Scotia Power, I want to assure you that we recognize the challenges outages bring and the impact they have.

I wanted to reach out directly to you about the reliability of our power system and share some information. You expect and deserve reliable, affordable power and I want you to know we take our reliability commitment to you seriously. Our power line technicians, engineers and field support staff work across the province every day to strengthen the system and keep your power on. Not just because it's our job, but because Nova Scotia is our home too. We not only work in communities across Nova Scotia, our 1700 employees live in them.

In 2016, we worked with the regulator, the Nova Scotia Utility and Review Board, to establish Performance Standards that keep us accountable to you. Last year, we met the overall system reliability targets. Results for the average length and frequency of power interruptions have improved over the last five years by 7 per cent and 16 per cent respectively. In 2020, data shows that on average, customers in Nova Scotia experienced 2.7 outages and 6.6 hours without power—that includes outages during large weather events. It means customers on average had their power on 99.92 per cent of the time. When comparing our results to performance by other Atlantic electrical utilities, we perform similarly in terms of frequency and duration of outages.

But that doesn't mean there isn't work to be done. We know that for some customers in specific communities, the number and duration of outages is higher than average, and we're focused on improving that. The work to keep our power system strong is ongoing, as it is at all utilities across Canada and we will never stop making improvements that make our service more reliable.

Nova Scotia's power grid was built more than a century ago through forest, fields, and rock, and sits on the edge of the North Atlantic Ocean. It's made up of nearly 32,000 kilometres of power lines and almost 400,000 poles, spanning every community, reaching every corner of the province. It's a complex system that continues to be exposed to severe weather that is getting more severe with time. We're experiencing more storms each year where wind gusts exceed 80 km an hour. To put it in perspective, we experienced over 150 hours of these high winds in 2019 compared to just over 20 hours in 2009. These strong wind gusts cause damage, weaken trees and branches and can stress wire connections over time.

To ensure reliable service, we are aggressively investing in the power system. Each year we invest approximately \$100 million in new equipment, maintenance and tree trimming. Decisions on how we invest are guided by outage statistics and proactive equipment monitoring and data. We upgrade the power grid through large scale projects identified for each region and through equipment replacement and repairs.

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Some examples include:

- Approximately \$20 million spent on tree trimming along roughly 1000 kilometres of transmission and distribution lines each year. This is critical because tree contacts are the single largest cause of power outages. Work is prioritized based on the proximity of trees and branches and on areas that experience a larger number of outages caused by trees.
- About 15 to 20 multi-million-dollar projects are underway at any given time across Nova Scotia to provide increased reliability for our customers. Some of that work over the past year includes projects like:
  - Installing new protective devices in the Upper Musquodoboit area to improve reliability.
  - Upgrading existing lines and replacing poles in Ingonish along the Cabot Trail in the Cape Breton Highlands National Park.
  - Line rebuilds along the Fundy Shore in River Hebert which will see the replacement of poles, wires and transformers while improving access for future maintenance and faster response times.

We have also been implementing innovative technologies like batteries and micro grids to test how they can help improve reliability and better serve our customers. Our Intelligent Feeder Program in Elmsdale is one great example. This micro grid pilot project is helping us understand how batteries can store and use renewable energy—while also using in-home batteries to provide backup power to customers during outages.

We're also modernizing the grid by upgrading electrical meters to smart meters across the province. This will allow us and our customers to better understand how they are using electricity, including when they lose power, so we can respond faster and further understand which areas need more maintenance.

I want to assure you we work year-round to maintain, strengthen, and continue to improve the essential service we provide to Nova Scotians. When there is an outage, our sole focus is restoring power as quickly and as safely as possible and we do not stop until the last customer is restored. We take our job managing the grid very seriously. We're not only focused on improving the power system for today, we're building and designing the grid for the future.

As we move forward, I want you to know we remain committed to finding innovative and affordable ways to meet and exceed your reliability expectations.

If you'd like to learn more about reliability, please visit our website at [nspower.ca/reliability](https://nspower.ca/reliability) or you can write to me at [questions@nspower.ca](mailto:questions@nspower.ca)

Sincerely,



Mark Sidebottom  
Chief Operating Officer  
Nova Scotia Power