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*Green entrepreneur, Dan Roscoe, sees selling homegrown wind energy to Nova Scotians as key to the energy transition.*

by Philip Moscovitch

Climate Story Network

Dan Roscoe’s involvement with renewable energy started off with a simple investment. He was a young engineer with some extra cash, and in the early 2000s he put some of it into a community economic development fund called Chebucto Wind Field, dedicated to investing in locally owned wind generation.

Soon, he became the company’s VP, before going on to serve as chief operating officer of its successor, Scotian WindFields, for a decade.

“I made a small investment, and then quickly got interested in the technology,” Roscoe says. “In Nova Scotia, we have wind, and it was clear to everyone that we have all this energy, so why can’t we be converting this to our local needs? There was a basic concept that benefits from developing our resource should stay as much as possible in Nova Scotia. Those were good concepts, and they got me excited.”

Today, Roscoe is CEO of Roswall Development, a company founded in 2018. He believes local ownership and distributed generation are key to the clean energy transition.

In addition to developing renewable power generation projects, Roswall also owns Renewall — the first company in Nova Scotia with a licence to sell renewable energy directly to residential and commercial clients, giving them an option besides Nova Scotia Power. Legislation allowing competition has been in effect since 2015, but a decade ago the economics of renewables were far more challenging.

“Some people have this concept that I’m going to have to pay more to be clean. That’s not the case anymore,” Roscoe says.

At the moment, Roswall is focusing on two projects: Mersey River Wind, and a Caribbean venture that brings together local investors, government, and Roswall as a minority partner.

Roscoe can’t discuss the Caribbean project but is happy to talk about Mersey — a plan to build 33 wind turbines on Crown land formerly used for logging in Southwest Nova Scotia. The project’s two phases will see construction of 33 turbines, generating 148.5 MW each.

Roscoe says the company is focusing on "commercial, industrial, and public sector entities" as the first customers for electricity generated by Mersey River Wind. After that, they hope to "bring on between five and ten thousand small-volume customers; those will be residential and small business."

"We only have so much generation," Roscoe says, "So we do want to make sure that people that live near the wind farm have the first opportunity to participate. This is not just selling to Nova Scotia Power; it’s selling to customers, giving them our best rate, and helping them save money on their power bill. And these are the first turbines [in Nova Scotia] to do that.

That means offering those in Queens County the ability to buy power generated from the Mersey project. Eventually, anybody connected to the power grid in Nova Scotia will be able to buy renewable power from Renewall (or any other competitors that come along). And in terms of future demand, Roscoe anticipates that his company will eventually be buying renewable power from other projects to meet demand.

The project got environmental approval in March 2023, and a green light from cabinet seven months later. But details of the land leases have yet to be worked out. Roscoe points to the attention given to other, higher-profile projects (like wind farms to produce “green” hydrogen) as one of the causes for the delay. But he still hopes to start construction in summer 2024.

While Roscoe acknowledges there is some opposition to wind farms, he believes Nova Scotians are more willing to accept them.

“If people have an opportunity to participate in something that's happening in their community, they look at it completely differently than if it's just someone from away coming to do something in their backyard,” he says.

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*The Climate Story Network is an initiative of Climate Focus, a non-profit organization dedicated to covering stories about community-driven climate solutions.*