

Offshore Wind Call for Information NS25-1R

What We Heard Report
Executive Summary

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CNSOER
CANADA - NOVA SCOTIA OFFSHORE ENERGY REGULATOR

Introduction

On September 18, 2025, the [CNSOER received joint Strategic Direction from the Government of Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia](#) to formally initiate the process to issue a Call for Bids for offshore wind within the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area. Strategic Direction from Ministers is part of the offshore renewable energy land tenure process and occurs prior to the CNSOER commencing Call for Information and Prequalification. Learn more about the [Offshore Renewable Energy Land Tenure Process](#).

The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Energy Regulator (CNSOER) [announced offshore wind Call for Information and Prequalification NS25-1R](#) on October 16, 2025.

The [offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R](#) was open for 90 days, from October 16, 2025, to January 13, 2026. As the lead and lifecycle energy regulator of the Canada-Nova Scotia offshore area, the CNSOER recognizes that in carrying out our regulatory processes, it is important to engage with Indigenous groups and rights holders, the fishing sector, industry, government, the public, and other interested stakeholders.

As part of the offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R, the CNSOER welcomed feedback on governments' Strategic Direction letter, including:

- The Wind Energy Areas being considered and the location(s) of potential parcel(s) within these Wind Energy Areas.
- The possible evaluation criteria to be used as part of the Call for Bids process.
- The possible draft terms and conditions for a submerged land licence.

The offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R What We Heard report is a summary of key themes and perspectives that emerged in response to each of the ten questions included in the offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R digital feedback form, expressed by Indigenous groups and rights holders, the fishing sector, industry, government, the public, and other interested stakeholders.

The following is an executive summary of the [offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R What We Heard report](#). Whereas the full report highlights in detail the process and key themes and perspectives that were heard during the offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R public engagement period, this executive summary is a concise, stand-alone synthesis, allowing readers to quickly understand what engagement occurred, who participated, and the main themes raised.

To access the offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R What We Heard report documents, please visit the [CNSOER website](#).

Executive Summary of What We Heard

➤ Identifying Parcels within the Government-designated Wind Energy Areas

Across submissions, respondents provided extensive and detailed feedback on the identification of WEAs and the factors that should guide parcel design for offshore wind development in Nova Scotia. There was broad agreement that parcel identification is a pivotal decision point with long-term implications for Indigenous rights, fisheries, environmental protection, navigation safety, infrastructure planning, and public confidence in the regulatory process. While respondents expressed varying levels of support for offshore wind development, there was strong alignment on the need for precaution, meaningful engagement, avoidance of high-conflict areas, and a phased, learning-based approach that reflects data limitations and cumulative effects.

Key themes:

- Protection of Indigenous and Treaty Rights and Meaningful Engagement
- Fisheries Protection, Access, and Displacement Risk
- Data Gaps, Uncertainty, and the Need for Precaution
- Environmental and Ecological Protection
- Navigation, Safety, and Marine Traffic
- Phasing, Scale, and Learning-Based Development
- Infrastructure, Ports, and Onshore Implications
- Compensation, Equity, and Public Benefit
- Supplemental Information about Government-designated WEAs

➤ Potential Evaluation Criteria for Bids Submitted as Part of the Offshore Wind Call for Bids Process

Overall, feedback indicated strong interest in the offshore wind Call for Bids process and general support for a structured, criteria-based evaluation framework. At the same time, submissions consistently emphasized that the effectiveness and credibility of the process will depend on clear, transparent, and well-defined evaluation criteria. Respondents highlighted the importance of clearly distinguishing between mandatory requirements and scored criteria, explaining how criteria will be weighted and assessed, and ensuring that evaluation frameworks are proportionate to the early, leasing-stage nature of the process.

Across respondent groups, there was broad agreement that bid evaluation should extend beyond price to include non-price considerations such as technical capability, financial strength, environmental sustainability, coexistence with fisheries and other ocean users, engagement quality, and community benefits. Many submissions stressed that these criteria must meaningfully influence bid outcomes, while also cautioning against placing undue weight on early-stage commitments that cannot yet be substantiated. Engagement, coexistence, and environmental stewardship were identified as particularly important, reflecting the existing uses and ecological value of the offshore area.

While there is broad alignment on the importance of transparency, non-price criteria, engagement, coexistence, and environmental protection, respondents differ in their views on appropriate weighting, sequencing, and readiness. These perspectives underscore the importance of a balanced approach that advances policy objectives, protects existing ocean uses and ecosystems, and supports a credible, investable offshore wind sector.

Key themes:

- Transparency, Clarity, and Rigor of Bid Evaluation Frameworks
- Weighting and Role of Non-Price Criteria
- Engagement, Rights Recognition, and Social Licence
- Coexistence with Fisheries and Existing Ocean Users
- Environmental Sustainability and Biodiversity Protection
- Technical Capability, Financial Strength, and Deliverability
- Community Benefits, Local Content, and Workforce Development
- Process Timing, Readiness, and Sequencing

> Coexistence

Across all submissions, coexistence is widely recognized as essential but there is deep disagreement about whether, where, and how it is achievable. Respondents consistently called for early definition, meaningful engagement, avoidance first planning, practical safety considerations, and enforceable monitoring frameworks. Differences emerge primarily around confidence in feasibility, degree of regulatory prescription, and the balance between flexibility and certainty, but there is strong alignment that coexistence must be real, demonstrable, and grounded in shared decision making rather than assumed outcomes.

Key themes:

- Coexistence Must Be Clearly Defined, Operational, and Established Upfront
- Early, Continuous, and Meaningful Engagement Is Essential
- Avoidance and Mitigation Must Be Prioritized Over Compensation
- Safety, Access, and Operational Feasibility Are Central to Coexistence
- Monitoring, Transparency, and Adaptive Management Are Critical

> Considerations for Fisheries' Compensation

Submissions consistently emphasized that the continuation of fishing activity is the priority in the context of offshore wind development, with broad agreement that compensation should be considered only as a last resort after avoidance, mitigation, and coexistence measures have been fully pursued. Across submissions, compensation was not viewed as a substitute for careful project design, siting, timing, and engagement intended to minimize impacts on fisheries. Many respondents stressed that compensation should not function as a mechanism to normalize or enable displacement of fishing activity, noting that fishing livelihoods are long-standing, intergenerational, and central to the social, cultural, and economic fabric of coastal and Indigenous communities.

Feedback also highlighted strong concern regarding the absence of clear, advanced, and enforceable fisheries compensation frameworks. Submissions emphasized the need for frameworks to be established before key regulatory milestones, including bid acceptance and the issuance of Submerged Land Licences, to reduce uncertainty and risk for fishing interests, communities, and developers. Submissions stressed that compensation frameworks must clearly define eligibility, compensable impacts, valuation methodologies, governance and administration, and dispute resolution processes. Many submissions underscored that fisheries impacts may be direct, indirect, cumulative, and long-term, extending beyond short-term construction disruption to include loss of access, displacement, increased operating costs, and longer-term effects on fishing enterprises and licence value. There was strong support for transparent, independently administered compensation mechanisms, with meaningful involvement of fishing and Indigenous representatives, and recognition that compensation approaches must be embedded within a broader commitment to coexistence, regulatory clarity, and long-term sustainability.

Key themes:

- Compensation as a Last Resort Within a Mitigation Hierarchy
- Need for Clear, Advance, and Enforceable Compensation Frameworks
- Scope of Compensable Impacts and Long-Term Effects
- Governance, Administration, and Independence of Compensation Mechanisms
- Recognition of Rights, Culture, and Community Continuity

➤ Proposed Fees for all Bid Submissions and Successful Bidders

Respondents provided extensive and detailed feedback on the proposed bid submission and licence issuance fees for offshore wind development, reflecting a strong shared interest in ensuring the offshore wind Call for Bids process is credible, competitive, and aligned with public-interest outcomes. Across submissions, there was broad agreement that fees play an important role in signaling seriousness of intent and discouraging speculative participation. However, respondents expressed sharply differing views on the appropriate magnitude, timing, and structure of those fees, particularly in the context of Nova Scotia's emerging offshore wind market and prevailing uncertainties related to offtake, transmission, permitting pathways, and project timelines.

A recurring concern across all respondent groups was that large, upfront, non-refundable fees could create unintended barriers to participation, reduce competition, and favour large, well-capitalized incumbents over smaller, innovative, Indigenous-led, or community-based proponents. At the same time, several respondents emphasized the need for mechanisms that ensure proponents have the financial capacity to meet long-term obligations, including environmental protection, coexistence with fisheries, and decommissioning. Many submissions suggested that financial guarantees, milestone enforcement, and licence conditions may be more effective than sunk fees in achieving these objectives.

Another dominant cross-cutting theme was the use of fee revenues. Respondents consistently called for greater transparency and accountability regarding how fees are calculated and how revenues would be used. There was widespread expectation that bid and licence fees should deliver tangible benefits to affected regions, Indigenous communities, and fisheries, rather than flowing into general revenues without clear linkage to offshore wind impacts. Overall, feedback emphasized the importance of designing a fee framework that balances seriousness and accountability with accessibility, fairness, and long-term public trust.

Key themes:

- Transparency, Accountability, and Use of Fee Revenues
- Level and Structure of Bid Submission Fees
- Licence Issuance Fees and Timing of Payments
- Deterring Speculative Bidding While Maintaining Competition
- Allocation of Fees to Community, Regional, and Fisheries Benefits
- Financial Security, Decommissioning, and Long-Term Liability

➤ Principles Listed in the Accord Acts

Across submissions, respondents consistently emphasized that the principles set out in the *Accord Acts* should meaningfully guide offshore wind development, particularly through enforceable requirements rather than high-level statements of intent. While there was broad support for applying the Accord Acts principles to offshore wind, respondents differed significantly in how prescriptive, flexible, or precautionary that application should be.

Core areas of focus included the Crown's duty to consult with Indigenous Peoples, the interpretation of "importance" with respect to fishing activities, transparency and accountability in governance and decision-making, and how principles related to equity, participation, and Canadian content should be operationalized through bid criteria and licensing.

Distinctions emerged between respondents regarding roles, responsibilities, and acceptable levels of discretion. Collectively, submissions underscored that the credibility of the offshore wind regime will depend on whether these principles translate into measurable actions, clear governance accountability, and durable coexistence with existing ocean users.

Key themes:

- Interpreting and Operationalizing *Accord Act* Principles
- Indigenous Consultation, Rights, and Reconciliation
- Consideration of Fishing Activities and Coexistence
- Equity, Participation, and Canadian Content
- Governance, Transparency, and Regulatory Certainty

➤ Community Benefits

Across submissions, there was strong consensus that community benefits must be a core, credible, and integral component of offshore wind development in Nova Scotia, rather than an ancillary or symbolic consideration. Respondents emphasized that community benefits should be clearly defined, grounded in evidence, and proportionate to the scale, duration, and impacts of offshore wind projects. While there was broad support for offshore wind as an economic opportunity, stakeholders consistently stressed that benefits must flow directly to communities and marine users directly impacted – particularly Indigenous communities, coastal and fishing-dependent communities, and rural regions – through mechanisms that are transparent,

enforceable, and responsive to local priorities.

Many submissions cautioned against premature or overly prescriptive benefit commitments at early project stages, while others argued that minimum standards and enforceable frameworks are necessary to ensure equity, accountability, and social licence. Overall, feedback highlighted the need for a balanced, phased, and justice-oriented approach that delivers long-term, place-based value and supports reconciliation, coexistence, and durable community prosperity.

Key themes:

- Defining Community Benefits and Who Should Benefit
- Timing, Phasing, and the Role of Socio-Economic Assessment
- Governance, Transparency, and Accountability
- Economic Participation, Employment, and Local Supply Chain Development
- Revenue Sharing, Funds, and Financial Mechanisms
- Justice, Reconciliation, and Long-Term Community Value

➤ Terms and Conditions to be Potentially Included in the Draft Submerged Land Licence

Across submissions, respondents emphasized that Submerged Land Licences (SLLs) for offshore wind must operate as enforceable performance-based instruments rather than passive tenure grants. While there was broad alignment on the value of clear, standardized licence terms to provide regulatory certainty and enable offshore wind development, respondents diverged significantly on how prescriptive, precautionary, and front-loaded those terms should be.

Overall, feedback underscored that SLL terms and conditions are viewed as foundational decisions that will materially shape project feasibility, environmental outcomes, and social licence throughout the full offshore wind lifecycle.

Key themes:

- Licence Duration, Structure, and Milestones
- Consultation, Engagement, and Decision-Making Authority
- Fisheries Coexistence, Compensation, and Access
- Environmental Protection, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management
- Financial Assurance, Decommissioning, and Long-Term Liability
- Fees, Rentals, Royalties, and Economic Structure
- Community Benefits, Workforce, and Supply Chain Development
- Transparency, Accountability, and Enforcement

➤ Participant Funding Program

Feedback received for a Participant Funding Program (PFP) demonstrated broad support for the

establishment and expansion of program with strong convergence around the need for adequate, accessible, long-term, and independently administered funding. Differences among respondent groups tended to relate to the perceived sufficiency of the current program specifically in place for offshore wind Call for Information NS25-1R, and the scale of funding required, rather than the underlying principle that participant funding is essential to meaningful, equitable participation in offshore wind decision-making.

Key themes:

- Adequacy of Participant Funding to Enable Meaningful Participation
- Scope of Eligible Expenses and Cost Coverage
- Timing, Duration, and Long-Term Nature of Funding
- Funding Delivery Model (Advance Funding vs. Reimbursement)
- Equity, Accessibility, and Local-First Participation
- Governance, Transparency, and Independence of the Program

➤ Additional Feedback and Comments

Submissions consistently emphasized that the success of offshore wind development depends on credible governance, early and meaningful engagement, robust science, precautionary decision-making, and equitable distribution of risks and benefits. While perspectives differed by respondent group, the below cross-cutting themes reflect shared concern about getting the foundations right before development proceeds at scale.

Key themes:

- Governance, Process Integrity, and Regulatory Credibility
- Timing, Sequencing, and Meaningful Engagement
- Scientific Uncertainty, Data Gaps, and the Precautionary Approach
- Cumulative Effects, Coexistence, and Long-Term Sustainability
- Economic Risk, Cost Distribution, and Public Interest