



Town of Lunenburg Electric Utility

While the Lunenburg Electric Utility does not generate its own electricity (now purchased from NSPI), its early founders did. The original “electric light” development in Lunenburg was a steam plant established by Mr. E. L. Nash in 1889 on a piece of land situated on the northern side of Creighton Street, Lunenburg, measuring 85' on Creighton Street and 65' in depth. A large, deep well was located on the land and an engine house was constructed with a boiler, two engines, four “dynamos” (electrical generators) and other electrical instruments. On October 14, 1890, he was authorized to place electric light poles on Lincoln Street and wires across Town streets. Council ordered 30 street lights of 24 “candle power” (level of light intensity measured by a standard size candle) at a cost of \$18.00 each per year.

In 1891, the Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd. (“Company”), was incorporated under Chapter 133 of the Nova Scotia Acts of 1889. James R. Rudolf, David Smith, Alfred Heisler, A. J. Wolff, James A. Hirtle and George L. Rankin were authorized to supply the Town of Lunenburg, buildings and places within its corporate limits, with light, heat, and power, including electric lighting service, both arc and incandescent, and other improved systems of illumination, plus fuel, gas, natural gas, water gas, gas motor, and electric motor for supplying power for mechanical, manufacturing, industrial and domestic purposes. Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd.’s capital stock was \$45,000.00 in shares of \$20.00 each. The first Company meeting was on June 5, 1891, in the office of S.A. Chesley. Company by-laws were adopted and the following directors elected: Messrs. W. N. Zwicker; G. L. Rankin; J. Jos. Rudolf; W. L. Romkey; and E. L. Nash. At a meeting of the Board of Directors in August 1891, the following officers were elected: President - W. N. Zwicker; Vice-President - J. Jos. Rudolf; and Secretary-Treasurer-E. L. Nash.

Soon after, Nash offered to sell his property for \$12,500. to Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd., including the engine house, well and equipment on Creighton Street, together with all electric light poles and wires on the streets. The Company unanimously accepted his offer.

Nash agreed to stay on free of charge as the Company’s Secretary-Treasurer and General Manager, in exchange for the supply of electric light for his shop and house until the Company was in a position to pay him a 6% dividend.

On January 17, 1892, it was agreed to supply 16 candle power lamps for bedrooms not used as sitting rooms for \$2.50/annum. Customers using hall, sitting room, or other lights were charged the “regular rates”.

The Company’s annual statement for the year ending August 1, 1892, was presented at a meeting held on August 9, as follows:

Receipts from Lighting	\$1,777.87
Working Expenses	<u>\$1,402.60</u>
Net Gain	\$375.27

The Company directors recommended that a dividend of 3 ¾ % be paid on the stock sold to date.

The Company's business continued to increase and on July 27, 1898, it was decided to purchase for \$3,500. from Mr. T. G. Nicol of Mahone Bay, his property and water privileges on Mush-a-Mush River at Clearland. It was further agreed to acquire other properties and water privileges, erect the necessary dams and provide adequate machinery to supply electricity to Lunenburg and Mahone Bay by water (hydro) power. The lands were acquired and the plant built for \$21,000. Electricity rates were established:

- 1 X 16 candle power lamps - \$5.00/annum
- 2 X 16 candle power lamps - \$9.00/annum
- 3 X 16 candle power lamps - \$12.50/annum
- 4 X 16 candle power lamps - \$14.50/annum
- 5 X 16 candle power lamps - \$15.00/annum
- Each additional lamp - \$3.00/annum
- Each customer using 5 or more 16 candle power lamps, was supplied by meter at 8¢ /KW and 25¢/month meter rental.

At the Company's August 21, 1899, annual meeting of stockholders the following report was presented:

We are now supplying about 225 more lamps than at this season last year and though we, on January 1st, 1899, reduced the price on house lights from \$5.00 to \$3.00 and shop lights from \$7.00 to \$5.00, our income is larger than last year and our profits better. We expect a large increase in the number of lamps in use this fall and feel that the success of the company is assured and that in a short time the public will consider the stock of the Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd., the most 'gilt edged' of stock in Nova Scotia.

In 1906 the Company offered to sell its power development, franchises, etc., to the Town of Lunenburg for \$45,000. The offer was voted down by the Town ratepayers. In 1919 the Company re-offered to sell to the Town for \$65,000., but this was also rejected by ratepayers. Despite this, the Company's growth continued and on February 8, 1921, it sold its Mush-a-Mush River power plant to then Nova Scotia Power Commission ("NSPC") for \$55,000., representing more than one-half of the assets of the Company.

In 1921, the flat rate for electricity was discontinued and all customers were metered. NSPC supplied 224,000 KWH/annum to the Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd. at 4.75 ¢/KWH. The Nova Scotia Board of Public Utilities approved the following rates for the Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd.'s distribution to its 488 residential and 89 commercial customers:

- For Lighting Purposes - 10¢/KWH
- For Power Purposes - 6 ¢/KWH

On February 19, 1923, the Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd.'s capital stock was reported as being reduced to \$22,500. Complaints about utility service levels and high rates, led Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd. stockholders to sell their remaining electricity distribution system to the Associated Gas and Electric Co. Ltd., of New York, N. Y., on December 27, 1928.

Associated Gas and Electric Co. Ltd. tried to expand the utility system and increase load, including extending power lines to Blue Rocks and other rural areas. However, in December 1935, they decided to sell their Lunenburg assets to then Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Ltd. of Halifax.

Lunenburg Town Council subsequently reconsidered purchasing the Lunenburg electric utility distribution for the community. After many meetings with various individuals, Boards and Town ratepayers, on July 1, 1937, the Town of Lunenburg purchased the assets of the former Lunenburg Gas Co. Ltd. from Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Ltd. for \$60,000. The Town continues to operate its own Electric Utility. It is one of only six remaining Municipal Electric Utilities in Nova Scotia. The Town buys power from Nova Scotia Power Incorporated ("NSPI", the successor of Nova Scotia Light and Power Company Ltd.) and distributes it to approximately 2,100 customers in the Town and vicinity.

(Reference: "Town of Lunenburg, Nova Scotia 65th Annual Report for the Fiscal Year January 1st to December 31st, 1952".)