UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK HOSTS CITIZENS JURY ON THE FUTURE OF NB’s ELECTRICITY SYSTEM

FREDERICTON – A 20-person citizen values jury will create a vision for a future electrical energy system for New Brunswick on Saturday, Oct. 3 and Sunday, Oct.4, 2015. The two-day event is being hosted at the Wu Centre on the University of New Brunswick’s Fredericton campus by a team of researchers led by Tom Beckley, a professor with UNB’s faculty of forestry and environmental management.

The NB Energy Futures Citizens’ Values Jury is comprised of randomly selected New Brunswickers who will receive an intensive one-day briefing from experts in electricity and energy policy on Saturday, Oct. 3. On Sunday jury participants will deliberate on what kind of electricity system should be developed over the next 25 years. The jury is charged with articulating a vision for a future electrical energy system that is in the best interest of all New Brunswickers.

Researchers are interested in learning more about the role information, knowledge and deliberation play in increasing citizens’ capacity to participate in electricity/energy-related discussions, decision-making processes, and choices.

“We know from survey research that Canadians and New Brunswickers feel their lack of knowledge about energy is a barrier to their participation in energy choices – both personal and social,” said Dr. Beckley. “We want to learn more through the Jury process about whether an intensive briefing and engagement process helps citizens feel more informed and empowered,” says Dr. Beckley, who is leading the research team for the Jury portion of a larger Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council project studying Canadians’ energy literacy and values and attitudes regarding energy issues. Research team members from the University of Alberta, Dalhousie University and Cornell University in the United States will also be part of the study.

New Brunswick has diversified sources of electricity, with varying levels of efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions. NB Power utilizes electricity generated from non-emitting sources such as nuclear power, hydro and wind, as well as thermal power stations using coal and petroleum products. Jury participants will be asked to deliberate and come to a consensus on a preferred electricity mix for the future.

The jury selection process is mostly complete and among the jurors drawn from the general public there will be a nurse, a music teacher, two retirees, a truck driver, a massage therapist, a stay at home mother, a stay at home father, a food and beverage server and more. The expert panelists that will make presentations and answer questions from the jury include: William Cook, UNB’s faculty of engineering; Bill Thompson, former co-chair of the New Brunswick Energy Commission; Brad Wasson and Mike Bourque of NB Power; Bill Marshall, former head of SYSCO; Keith Helmuth of Sustainable Energy Group Woodstock, and more.

The Saturday portion of the jury will be open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4p.m. The public is encouraged to attend and expand their own understanding of our electrical energy system and its future possibilities.

For more information, contact: Tom Beckley, beckley@unb.ca, 506.238.5451