The development of an energy security plan has long been a priority for my office and, indeed, the Nunatsiavut Government. The lack of energy security in our communities is a hindrance to economic and social growth and stability, and if we are to develop our economy and improve the lives of Nunatsiavummiut, then it is essential we find ways to address our long-term energy requirements.

All of our communities rely totally on diesel generation for the production of electricity, resulting in a complete dependence on imported fuel and high production costs which are also highly subsidized. So, it’s really difficult to determine the true cost of generation when you factor in everything else.

The Nunatsiavut Energy Plan, which was tabled in the Nunatsiavut Assembly January 24, 2017, is a proactive and sustainable development approach to meeting the energy needs and security in our communities while, at the same time, taking into account local social and economic conditions. It also touches on other municipal infrastructure dimensions, notably housing and community facilities.

Our plan has been produced through extensive national and global research on sustainable energy in remote and Northern communities, and through consultations within our communities.

Through a comprehensive, inclusive and substantive process, this plan directly addresses community needs for Nunatsiavut in a manner that considers the social, economic and environmental dimensions of energy. Equally important, it is grounded in the regulatory and policy umbrella of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the economics of energy that are a reality for all.

The preparation of this Energy Security Plan is a “first step” towards forging a more sustainable energy future in Nunatsiavut. Effort has been taken to ensure that the proposed actions can produce a range of energy security benefits for Nunatsiavummiut and businesses, and are community-centered and achievable over the short and medium-terms.

This plan has been shared with provincial and federal partners, and we are currently following up on that engagement with targeted asks in hopes of securing federal funding – including opportunities that are anticipated in light of the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. That Framework was developed by the Government of Canada with the provinces and territories and in consultation with Indigenous peoples. It includes an approach to pricing carbon pollution, and measures to achieve reductions across all sectors of the Canadian
economy. It also aims to drive innovation and growth – increase technology development and adoption to ensure Canadian businesses are competitive in the global low-carbon economy.

Early drafts of that Framework had language that was very concerning for the Nunatsiavut Government, as we felt it did not take into account the current realities in our communities. There are concerns Nunatsiavut will be excluded from considerations that are being made for the Territories, especially in regards to carbon pricing. It notes the federal government will “work with the Territories to find solutions that address their unique circumstances, including high costs of living, challenges with food security, and emerging economies.”

The Framework is still not clear in defining “Indigenous, northern, remote and vulnerable communities”, nor is it clear how these different categories may be accommodated or implicated in any special considerations. The Nunatsiavut Government has communicated these specific concerns to ITK as well as the federal and provincial governments, and we remain hopeful these concerns will be addressed as we move through this process.