Ministry of Energy Top Issues - December 01, 2017

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Date: Fri, 01 Dec 2017 07:01:27 -0500

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- New Hydro One bills give Liberals unfair advantage: opposition parties -- thestar.com
- Employees raise concerns over Guelph Hydro, Alectra merger -- GuelphMercury.com
- Mayors urge feds to nix Bruce nuke dump -- Sarnia Observer, pg. A2
- More than 100 mayors oppose nuclear waste storage plan -- National Post
- 104 elected officials sign letter against nuclear waste burial site by Lake Huron -- CBC.CA News
- Bruce Power supplier officially opens facility in Paisley -- Saugeentimes.com
- Ontario to double gasoline's ethanol content requirement -- theglobeandmail.com
- Critics Question Purpose Of Revamping Hydro Bills -- Source: CKCO
- Changes paying off -- The Timmins Daily Press, pg. A3

New Hydro One bills give Liberals unfair advantage: opposition parties

thestar.com
Thu Nov 30 2017
Section: News
Byline: Rob Ferguson

New and simplified Hydro One bills, which highlight savings from the government's 25-per-cent-rate cut, are giving Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals an unfair edge as an election looms, rivals say.

"It's not appropriate," NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said Thursday.

"The only reason that information is on the bills is to provide a political advantage for the Liberals."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault denied the accusation , saying it was Hydro One's choice to put that information on the bills, which also highlight the money owed and when it is due.

"It's clarity," Thibeault told reporters. "We get questions in my office all the time saying 'I don't see the fair hydro plan on my bill."

The information about the rate cut is under the headline: "what do I need to know?"

Progressive Conservative MPP Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton) called the inclusion of the savings "a ploy" and "cynical," although her party would continue with the 25-per-cent-off plan if elected next June 7 and add a further reduction of 12 per cent.

The new bills were unveiled Wednesday following in-depth research into customer preferences, said Hydro One officials, who noted that 35 per cent of customer queries to the utility's call centres were to have bills explained.

"This was a wide open process that Hydro One did," Thibeault said. "It was an opportunity for them to do what they thought was best."

It's too early to say if a ministry committee studying bill redesigns, which could result in other utilities, such as Toronto Hydro, simplifying their bills, could include the government rate-cut information, the minister added.

The rate cut was passed last March, but was widely criticized by opposition parties because ratepayers will face an extra $25 billion in interest charges over the next 30 years as costs of upgrading the electricity system are spread out over decades.

Liberals have portrayed that extra cost as a trade-off for easing prices now and compared it to a homeowner extending a mortgage term to get lower monthly payments.

Under the plan, hydro bills will increase no more than the rate of inflation, which is roughly two per cent now, over the next four years.

Horwath has said her hydro plan unveiled last February, which includes buying back shares in Hydro One, could save ratepayers up to 30 per cent by getting the federal government to cut its 5 per cent HST on bills and by capping profits for private power-producers.

The Wynne government has sold roughly half the shares in Hydro One to raise $9 billion for debt repayment and infrastructure projects, including public transit.

Employees raise concerns over Guelph Hydro, Alectra merger

GuelphMercury.com
Thu Nov 30 2017
Section: Opinion

You may have heard in the news, on Facebook, Twitter, via the mayor's blog or have seen an insert with your hydro bill that the City of Guelph is proposing to merge with a newly formed and very large company called Alectra.

We are a group of Guelph Hydro employees who are very concerned with how this proposed merger is being marketed to you, the rate payers and tax payers of the City of Guelph and Village of Rockwood.

Here are some points to consider:

The city claims that a merger will enable your hydro provider to be more efficient and you will have better customer service. The fact is that Guelph Hydro's customer service rating is currently higher than any of the four former hydro companies that make up Alectra. Guelph Hydro has exceeded provincially-set conservation targets in the past, outperforming the four former companies that make up Alectra, and is already at 70 per cent of its conservation target that needs to be met by 2020. Also, if the proposed merger is approved, customer service and conservation staff will no most likely longer work in Guelph, along with many other staff currently located at 395 Southgate Dr. When it comes to customer service and billing efficiencies, we need look no further than Hydro One to demonstrate that bigger is definitely not better.

The city claims that this proposed merger makes sense due to similar employee cultures. The fact is that Alectra was just formed this year. There is no established culture at this time, the bargaining unit employees don't have a contract and there is still a lot of movement within the company as existing employees apply for jobs and must move locations.

The city claims that a merger would ensure a higher dividend payment each year. The fact is the mayor of Hamilton has stated in the news that Hamilton is to receive a $6-million dividend payment this year (up from a predicted $4 million). Hamilton has an 18.5-per-cent share in Alectra. Guelph is purported to be on deck to receive about a four-per-cent share of Alectra. Doing the math, this translates to $1.32 million, or about $200,000 less than was paid to the city last year by Guelph Hydro.

The city claims that the Green Energy and Technology Centre (GETC) will bring local jobs to Guelph. The fact is that at least 38 jobs that currently exist in Guelph will be moved to other locations or will be lost. These are good-paying jobs with benefits and pensions. It is reported that there will be five or six jobs added for the GETC and there are no details on the types of jobs these may be.

The city claims that the GETC will be used to develop residential conservation and green energy programs and will encourage entrepreneurs through the use of the centre's "incubation" and "acceleration" programs. The fact is that groups like this already exist in the community, such as eMerge and Innovation Guelph. Additionally, "incubation" labs are in place in several universities throughout southern Ontario, including Waterloo and Toronto. Also, no definitive plans have been made about funding for this GETC, with recent outreach sessions suggesting to attendees to "assume funding isn't a problem."

The city claims that Guelph will be in a better position when further mergers occur, if Guelph is the first in the "southwestern hub." The fact is that it has been reported in the news that Alectra is not planning any further mergers after Guelph.

The city claims rates will be lower over the next 10 years than they are now. The fact is our residential rates are about the same as other similar utilities in Ontario and our general service rates are 37-per-cent lower than Alectra's existing commercial rates. Rates will factor into any merger deal that it put on the table. We are already seeing downward pressure on rates through provincial government mandates with more to come in the upcoming June 2018 election.

The mayor is using the phrase "we're listening." The fact is the mayor is not hearing. The comments on the Energizing Tomorrow website, letters to the editors in papers and comments on the city's Facebook pages for merger information are overwhelmingly not in favour of this merger. Additionally, we are hearing first-hand the disapproval from our residential and commercial customers when we communicate with them on a day-to-day basis.

The fact is that Guelph Hydro is a well-run, highly-performing local utility that the City of Guelph has never had to invest a cent into yet is gifted millions of dollars in dividends to each and every year. This is a decision that the mayor is rushing to under the guise of not wanting to stress Guelph Hydro employees, yet appears to be intended to be pushed through before the municipal election next year.

Guelph Hydro is a $230-million local asset. All of the rate payers of Guelph and Rockwood deserve to have a say in its future.

Guelph city council will vote on this proposed merger on Dec. 13. We encourage everyone to get involved. Email and call your council members and demand the facts behind this proposed merger.

Don't let speculation drive this bus. Once your local hydro is gone, it will be gone forever.

Jane Woolven

Tiny, Ont.

On behalf of a group of concerned Guelph Hydro employees

Mayors urge feds to nix Bruce nuke dump

Sarnia Observer
Fri Dec 1 2017
Page: A2
Section: News

More than 100 mayors and other elected officials on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border are urging Environment Minister Catherine McKenna to put the kibosh on a proposed nuclear waste bunker in Southwestern Ontario near Lake Huron.

In an open letter to McKenna on Thursday, the officials say they speak for 16 million people who want the Ontario Power Generation (OPG) proposal shelved.

Deeper than the CN Tower is tall, the underground vault would store non-fuel waste from the province's nuclear reactors near the world's largest operating nuclear plant, the Bruce Power site.

"We are deeply concerned that Ontario Power Generation (OPG) is proposing to bury nuclear waste in close proximity to the Great Lakes," the letter states. "We find it irresponsible and deeply troubling that OPG failed, and continues to refuse, to investigate any other actual sites."

The 104 signatories, mayors, wardens and reeves in Ontario, include St. Thomas Mayor Heather Jackson and South Huron Mayor Maureen Cole.

A covering note from Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley says the message is clear: “We oppose the risk to our precious fresh water.”

In an email, Bradley said the backlash to the project could become as politically significant as the opposition in rural and small-town Ontario to the province’s imposition of wind turbines.

“A decision to approve (the deep-burial vault) will define the federal Liberals’commitment to the environment and the Great Lakes for millions of people,” he wrote.

The project, estimated at $2.4 billion and growing, would see a bunker built at the Bruce plant near Kincardine, 1.2 kilometres from the Lake Huron shoreline. Hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of low and intermediate radioactive waste, stored for years above ground, would be buried 680 metres deep.

More than 100 mayors oppose nuclear waste storage plan

National Post
2017-11-30
TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. — More than 100 mayors and other municipal officials have urged Canada’s environment minister not to allow burial of nuclear waste near Lake Huron.

Ontario Power Generation wants to permanently store low- and intermediate-level waste from nuclear plants in a rock chamber 2,230 feet underground. The proposed site is at the Bruce Power Generating Station near Kincardine, Ontario.

The company says there’s virtually no chance of the waste reaching the lake. But many officials and groups in the U.S. and Canada oppose the plan.

In a letter Thursday to Catherine McKenna, minister of the environment and climate change, the mayors said it’s unsafe to bury nuclear waste anywhere in the Great Lakes watershed.

Karen Weaver of Flint, Michigan, said her city’s experience with lead-tainted water shows the danger of putting water resources at risk.

104 elected officials sign letter against nuclear waste burial site by Lake Huron

CBC.CA News

Thu Nov 30 2017, 6:05pm ET

Section: Windsor

A “mammoth” list of 104 elected officials from cities and municipalities surrounding the Great Lakes have signed an open letter to Canada’s Minister of Environment condemning a plan to bury nuclear waste near Kincardine, Ont.

In the open letter addressed to Catherin McKenna, the officials state their signatures speak for millions of people living around the lakes who feel the project could present a threat to the “life-blood” and economy of the Great Lakes region.

Gathering all of those signatures from both sides of the border took months of hard work, but Beverly Fernandez, spokesperson for Stop The Great Lakes Nuclear Dump, said it was worth it.

“This is a very, very significant effort,” she said. “Putting a nuclear waste dump beside the Great Lakes is more than risky it’s a knowing disregard for the health of millions of people.”

Reports prepared by Ontario Power Generation (OPG) describe the location as the “safest and most appropriate site” for a Deep Geological Repository or DRG.

The site would see 200,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste products buried 680 metres underground just over a kilometre from the shores of Lake Huron.

Waste would range from low-level radioactive material such as mops, rags, protective clothing and floor sweepings to intermediate-level radioactive material like used reactor core components, filters and refurbishment waste.

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley’s signature graces the long list at the bottom of the letter. He said three other DRG sites exist in the world and all have had problems.

“When you have the largest body of fresh water in the world, over 40 million people take their drinking water from the lakes, it’s just wrong to even consider there might be something that could happen there to pollute and damage our environment,” he explained. “It’s Russian roulette because … we try to protect the Great Lakes and this is a huge step backwards if this proceeds.”

Bradley also maintains the OPG didn’t “actively search” for another site further from the Great Lakes.

In a statement, OPG said other locations are technically feasible, but “would result in greater environmental effects and higher costs, as well as a project delay of 15 years or more, while offering no additional benefits in safety.”

Fernandez refuses to accept that and stated she and her organization plans to continue fighting the site. She’s hoping the letter and signatures will make the government listen.

“The Canadian government needs to stand up for all citizen’s rights to clean water and they need to clearly state that no Deep Geological Repository for radio-active nuclear waste should be buried anywhere in the Great Lakes Basin.”

Bruce Power supplier officially opens facility in Paisley

Saugeentimes.com
2017-12-01
Byline: Sandy Lindsay

ABRAFLEX2004 Ltd. officially opened its facility in Paisley (ON) in the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie on Wednesday, November 29th.

ABRAFLEX 2004 Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of ABS Group of Companies, purchased the 12,000 square foot manufacturing facility on 44 acres of land in the community of Paisley, located in the Municipality of Arran-Elderslie, to support Bruce Power and Ontario’s nuclear industry.

The facility is the former Bruce Packers building and has been completely refurbished to become a manufacturing plant.

ABRAFLEX is one of the most recent suppliers to Bruce Power to move into the region and have a local presence. The company manufactures Mark IIIB plastic suits used for radiation protection.

Desiree Norwegian, former Treasurer/Clerk in Wawa, holds controlling shares in the company and has recently moved to Paisley. She is an aboriginal partner working full time managing purchasing logistics, technology and human resource. ABRAFLEX is a Certified Aboriginal Business and member of the Canadian Council of Aboriginal Businesses.

"We are very pleased to locate in Paisley and work with Bruce Power. The people here have been very warm. We currently have 21 full-time employees and are training more for part-time work. We're looking forward to increasing our production and hiring more people."

ABRAFLEX is part of ABS Group of Companies and according to John Bradley, President and CEO Paisley was an ideal location. "There is the availability of a labour supply, affordable housing and proximity to the Bruce Power Site. The 12,000 square foot facility is on 44 acres of land which can provide flexibility to grow our manufacturing, warehousing, storage and repair areas as we anticipate expanding. "

We are very pleased to welcome ABRAFLEX to the community," said Arran-Elderslie Mayor Paul Eagleson. "This is an excellent repurposing of a building that has long been unused. This will go a long way in the economic development of the community. We are willing to help in any way we can to ensure the success of this company."

ABRAFLEX's commitment in Arran-Elderslie is a significant investment in our local economy," said Mitch Twolan, Warden of the County of Bruce. "Creating new employment opportunities for our residents, diversifying our economic base, and establishing an anchor operation in a small town is important for the growth and sustainability of our communities."

Ontario to double gasoline's ethanol content requirement

theglobeandmail.com

Thu Nov 30 2017, 4:16pm ET

Section: Business

Byline: SHAWN McCARTHY

The Ontario government is increasing its mandate for ethanol in gasoline to 10 per cent from the current 5-per-cent requirement, as part of its effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions from fuels.

In a notice issued this week, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change indicated it would amend its ethanol-in-gasoline regulation to increase blending requirements to 10 per cent by 2020, while reducing emissions from the fuel. It will also provide incentives for emerging technologies such as renewable gasoline and biocrude. “By 2020, the proposed actions are projected to result in greenhouse gas pollution reductions that are equivalent to taking up to 130,000 cars off our roads each year, and up to 300,000 cars off our roads each year by 2030,” ministry spokesman Gary Wheeler said in an e-mail.

The province’s two largest corn-based ethanol producers applauded the move, saying it would not only contribute to Ontario’s climate-change strategy, but provide a boost to the local economy as well.

“Ethanol is the cleanest, cheapest way to reduce carbon in gasoline available today,” said Howard Field, president of Greenfield Global. He added that the new standards “will help the province achieve its GHG emission targets while ensuring continued local investment, innovation and job creation.”

The Ontario move comes as the federal government works on its own clean-fuel standard, which is expected to include incentives for greater ethanol use and perhaps an increased federal mandate, which currently sits at 5-per-cent ethanol content for gasoline.

In anticipation of the provincial move, IGPC Ethanol Inc. embarked earlier this year on a $200-million expansion of its farmer-owner ethanol refinery Aylmer, Ont., in order to double its production.

“We’re right in the middle of a very major construction project right now,” IGPC president Jim Grey said in an interview.

The move to require lower GHG emissions from fuel will provide a competitive advantage for Ontario ethanol producers over their U.S. competitors in the Midwest, who rely on carbon-intensive, coal-fired power to produce the fuel additive.

Canadian ethanol reduces GHGs by 62 per cent compared with gasoline, said the lobby group, Renewable Industry Canada.

The association is urging the federal government to incorporate a higher mandate on its planned clean-fuel standard. Mr. Grey - who also serves as chair of RICanada - said countries that have reduced or removed mandates have seen ethanol use drop. The petroleum-refining industry has expressed concerns about increasing mandates, particularly if provinces move on their own and create a patchwork of differing standards. “We are disappointed that Ontario has moved forward in a way that further fragments the national policy environment for refiners,” said Peter Boag, president of the Canadian Fuels Association, which represents refining and marketers of petroleum production.

Mr. Boag noted that the federal government is proceeding with its own clean-fuels standards and urged governments to agree on a “coherent and co-ordinated national approach to achieving transportation emissions reductions.

Refiners in Ontario are currently blending up to 7 per cent or 8 per cent ethanol in their regular grade gasoline. Producers no longer receive subsidies for the ethanol they provide.

However, the use of crops for fuel remains controversial, as corn growers in North America increase production to satisfy the ethanol market.

Mr. Grey acknowledged that the increasing demand for ethanol has been a boon for corn farmers who had been struggling before governments began mandating its use.

“Ontario this year is actually going to export corn, there is just so much of it,” he said. “In the [U.S.] Midwest, production of corn is just staggering down there; it’s driving corn prices down and ethanol production keeps ramping up.”

Critics Question Purpose Of Revamping Hydro Bills

Source: CKCO

Nov 30, 2017 6:23 PM

Anchor: CTV News was first to report on the new hydro bills being rolled out. Tonight, criticism, the Ontario government is using these revamped bills to promote themselves. CTV’s Paul Bliss is at Queen’s Park with the fallout.

Reporter: Hot on the heels of the newly designed hydro bills, anger over some prominently featured graphics.

Andrea Horwath, Provincial NDP Leader: Our hydro system should be putting people first.

Reporter: NDP Leader Andrea Horwath says this box on the bill is Liberal campaign messaging. It's the second largest feature on the bill and shows how much you're saving thanks to the Liberal 25 per cent cut to electricity prices.

Horwath: The only reason that those -- that information is on the bills is to provide a political advantage for the Liberals.

Reporter: The Liberals say it's all about transparency. This in spite of the fact they elected to hide the cost of their cap and trade carbon tax on your home heating gas bill. Opposition says the only thing transparent here is Liberal self-interest. In fact the Liberals passed a regulation forcing hydro utilities to boast about the 25 per cent discount. The passage reads in part "a requirement that LDCs provide a customer specific dynamic calculation of savings associated with the Fair Hydro Plan for each billing period invoiced."

Unidentified: This is sort of a ploy by them and I think it's cynical but I don't think tax payers and rate payers are buying it anymore.

Reporter: We asked the Energy Minister if he was going to order hydro companies to show similar graphics when the prices go up.

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy: We don't want to overcrowd the bill to make it confusing. That's what we're hearing right now for many customers is the bill has so many pieces on it that it's hard to understand.

Reporter: The government says price increases are usually well publicized in the media so the info doesn't necessarily need to go on to the monthly bills. Paul Bliss, CTV News, Queen's Park.

Changes paying off

The Timmins Daily Press

Fri Dec 1 2017

Page: A3

Section: News

Byline: Len Gillis

The City of Timmins is gradually reducing its overall energy costs and in some instances the change is beginning to pay off.

That was part of the message this week from Steven Schmidt, a consultant with VIP Energy Services, an energy management firm that is working to bring down energy costs for the city. As mandated by Ontario's Green Energy Act, the city must produce an annual report to show that active steps are underway to conserve energy.

Schmidt is the same consultant who told city council last year that Timmins was indeed bringing down the amount of energy it was using, but because of rate increases for hydro and natural gas, there were no actual money savings.

This week Schmidt told council there have been money savings in part because his company has been monitoring the city's energy bills each month as well as applying for rebate programs.

"By doing that, we've been able to find some areas where we've been able to recover some costs for the city," said Schmidt.

By example, Schmidt mentioned the Global Adjustment Rebate (IESO Ontario) and the PST rebates (Ontario Electricity Consumers Act) that are available for small residential and business users. He said the PST rebate is 8% savings, while the Global Adjustment Rebate savings are 17% "We found part of the statute that allowed us to get the Golden Manor included in that, even though they're a user much larger than what is typically stipulated," he said.

Schmidt said the rate correction for the Golden Manor resulted in a credit adjustment of $140,000.

"We also found through working with Hydro One there is some rate correction that needed to take place, which also recovered some funds for the city," said Schmidt.

"There was a couple of other areas where the utility was looking at pushing some rate increases from the delivery point of view that we were able to avoid through some analysis and negotiations."

He outlined that Timmins has a set a goal to reduce energy intensity by 2019. Energy intensity is a measure of energy efficiency as related to GDP, or gross domestic product. A high energy intensity would mean too much energy is being used to create a product or service.

Schmidt said Timmins is gradually moving to have a lower energy intensity.

"From an overall energy performance point of view when we first did the energy conservation and management plan for the city, which was mandated by the Ontario government in 2014, we set a goal of five per cent by 2019, for energy intensity, which is a measure of equivalent kilowatt hours per square metre," Schmidt explained.

"We are well ahead of that at this point. Up to 2016 and it looks like 2017 numbers are coming in fairly similar so, we're on our way to meeting that goal," he said.

Schmidt also revealed that Timmins, and other Ontario communities, will have to begin concentrating on reducing its carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) with goals that have been set for 2020, 2030 and 2050.

Schmidt said this will not happen so much with electricity usage but more with finding ways to reduce the usage of natural gas for heating and fossil fuels for running the city's fleet of vehicles.

Schmidt said funding could be available to offset costs, especially if the city's effort is combined with a community energy plan.

In his energy report to council in 2016, Schmidt explained the cap and trade system and how it could affect Timmins. He said it means the city would eventually be paying more for carbon-based energy because of the provincial cap-andtrade energy program.

The "cap" is a limit, or a cap on the amount of greenhouse gas that can be produced by a factory for example. A factory that produces less greenhouse gas pollution gets credits for that.

The "trade" is the system that lets one factory trade or sell their credits to another factory or business that cannot reduce pollution so easily. The provincial target is to reduce carbon emissions by more than 4% per year.

The hope is that the system will encourage more big factories and refineries to innovate and reduce their carbon pollution in the long run.

Schmidt said the cap-and-trade program would not be a benefit for Timmins.

“In order to directly participate, you have be a very large user, in terms of per facility, far beyond any facility the city has,” said Schmidt. In fact, it would cost the city money.

“The fuel distributors are required to purchase credits on behalf of their clients and then pass the costs of those down to the city,” Schmidt explained.

It means Timmins will likely have to pay a share of the cost of carbonbased pollution based on the rate of $17 per tonne of carbon. In real terms that means Timmins might be expected to pay 3.2-cents extra per cubic metre of natural gas and 4 to 6 cents more per litre on gasoline and diesel fuel.