Ministry of Energy Top Issues - December 20, 2016

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Date: Tue, 20 Dec 2016 07:15:11 -0500

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- Hydro bills may detail global adjustment fee – yorkregion.com (CP)
- Premier Says She Will Address Hidden Charges on Hydro Bills in Year-End Interview – CFTO
- Ontario premier reflects on hydro, road tolls and cap-and-trade ahead of 2018 election - Globalnews.ca
- Small businesses say hydro rates threaten their survival - The Globe and Mail
- Hydro rates let Quebec woo Amazon - Ottawa Citizen
- Rising school electricity bills worry trustee - Windsor Star
- Twenty Chambers Across Ontario Call for Deferral in Provincial Cap & Trade Program to prevent jobs, investment from leaving Ontario – News Release
- Nicholls Launches petition to include Wynne's extra natural gas charges on bills - Tilbury Times
- Call for auction-style process to procure energy - The Chatham Daily News
- Live green, don't prosper - National Post
- Too roads focused?; Professor wants province to reject city's proposed transportation master plan - Sudbury Star
- Auditor probes falsified FOI dates - Toronto Star

Hydro bills may detail global adjustment fee
Yorkregion.com
Mon Dec 19 2016
Section: News/Ontario

TORONTO - Premier Kathleen Wynne says she's open to adding a line on hydro bills so Ontario consumers see a breakdown of the so-called global adjustment charge, which accounts for up to 70 per cent of electricity rates.

The Ontario Energy Board rejected a request from the auditor general to have a separate line item on bills for the global adjustment, a charge levied to cover the gap between the guaranteed prices the Liberal government promised electricity generators in long-term contracts and actual market rates.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk estimated the global adjustment cost $50 billion between 2006 and 2015, and recommended bills be changed to separately disclose both the electricity market price and the global adjustment.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault had said the Liberals would not overrule the arm's-length Energy Board, but Wynne said Monday that the government should reconsider its position.

"I think being as transparent on bills as possible is a really good objective, but my challenge is greater than that," she said in a year-end interview with The Canadian Press. "It's not just about breaking out the number on the bill, it's actually figuring out how to reduce that number."

It’s a pretty straight forward issue for New Democrat critic John Vanthof.

“Consumers are paying the global adjustment fee and should understand how much they’re paying by putting it on the front of their hydro bill,” said Vanthof. “A lot of people are unable to pay their bills, and they want to know why.”

The OEB also decided that consumers should not see a line item showing the cost of the Liberals’ cap-and-trade plan to fight climate change, which kicks in Jan. 1 and is expected to add about $5 a month to natural gas bills.

The government said it does not have the power to order the OEB to change natural gas bills, but it does have the power to tell the board to change electricity bills to break out the global adjustment charge.

“That’s why this one’s an important one to ask the question on, is there a way to make it more transparent,” Wynne said. “I agree that if we can be more transparent about where the costs are coming from, and if we can do that then maybe we can get a handle on how we get some of those costs down.”

Progressive Conservative energy critic John Yakabuski said Wynne can tell the OEB to show the global adjustment charge on hydro bills and the cap-and-trade costs on natural gas bills.

“It is our position she always had the power to do both,” he said. “I’ll believe it when I see it, but it’s something we’ve been calling on her to do for some time.”

Wynne said the Liberals spent billions of dollars upgrading and rebuilding Ontario‘s electricity system, but admitted she made a “mistake” in not considering how hard soaring hydro rates were hitting consumers.

“There’s a cost associated with having clean air and not generating electricity with dirty coal and with jump-starting a renewables industry…but I didn’t pay close enough attention to the impact of that on people in their lives.”

The eight per cent provincial portion of the HST comes off hydro bills Jan. 1, but that’s less than the 10-per-cent discount provided by the clean energy benefit that the Liberals killed last January.

“There’s more we need to do,” Wynne said. “We’re looking around every corner and trying to find every opportunity to take costs off of people’s bills.”

With polls showing her personal popularity rating in the low teens, Wynne rejected suggestions she will resign to let someone else lead the Liberals in the 2018 election. The Liberals are delivering on their 2014 campaign promises to invest in public transit and infrastructure and grow the economy, she said.

“I’m not stepping aside,” Wynne said. “If we didn’t see job growth, if we didn’t see investment in the province, then that would give me pause, that would be a different thing, but what we’re doing is working.”

By Keith Leslie, The Canadian Press

Premier Says She Will Address Hidden Charges on Hydro Bills in Year-End Interview
Source: CFTO
Dec 19, 2016 6: 20 PM (14)

Anchor 1: The Premier wants to end the secrecy surrounding some of the hidden charges on your utility bills.

Anchor 2: Kathleen Wynne made the pledge during a sit-down interview with CTV's Paul Bliss today in her office at Queen's Park. This clearly has become the big issue facing the Premier.

Reporter: Oh, that's right, Ken. And she admits it. In fact, Kathleen Wynne admitted just a couple weeks ago that it was a failure on her part and a mistake to realize the growing strain that hydro bills are placing on Ontario families, but now she says it's time to do something about it. The hidden charges on your hydro and home heating bills jack up the cost, but bury the facts. It's frustrating for consumers.

Reporter: I see you're in trouble, too.

[Laughter]

Premier Kathleen Wynne: I'm always in trouble.

Reporter: In a year-end interview with CTV news the Premier said it's time for more transparency.

Premier Wynne: I think having more information rather than less information on electricity bills is a good idea. I think people to understand what they're paying for and what the costs are.

Reporter: Kathleen Wynne says she's very worried about the high delivery charges in certain places in the province. She's hinting relief is on the way. Wynne is also suggesting you'll be seeing more soon on your hydro bills about that mysterious global adjustment charge, it's hidden deep in the price of electricity. But that leaves the hidden charges coming to home heating bills, the Premier's cap-and-trade plan to fight carbon emissions will add $5 to $10 a month to your natural gas bills, but it will be buried in the delivery fee.

Premier Wynne: The OEB made a decision around that gas charge and so they have the authority to do that.

Reporter: Would you like them to reconsider it at least?

Premier Wynne: Well, again, we don't direct them in that, but, you know, I've said pretty clearly that I think more information rather than less is a good idea.

Reporter: The Premier admits she made a mistake by not keeping on top of how punishing hydro bills have become for some households. The Premier told me she had a meeting last week with the head of the Ontario Energy Board to try to figure out a way together they can tackle the rising rate of hydro. She won't say when relief coming because they haven't figured it out just yet. I'm Paul Bliss.
Transcript captured directly from source. Some typographical errors or omissions are to be expected.

Ontario premier reflects on hydro, road tolls and cap-and-trade ahead of 2018 election
Globalnews.ca
2016-12-19
Byline: Alan Carter and Adam Miller

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne sat down with Global News for a year-end interview and discussed some of the biggest issues facing her party in the coming year including hydro, road tolls and cap-and-trade costs as the Liberals prepare for a contentious provincial election in 2018.

Wynne called high electricity prices across the province her "mistake" during the party's annual general meeting last month, adding that the fact some Ontarians are being forced to choose between paying for electricity over food or rent is "unacceptable."

“I’ve taken responsibility for that,” she said. “I’ve said that there’s more we need to do and that’s what the minister and I will be looking for, is how can we take more costs out of the system.”

“I’ve said that I take responsibility for not understanding fully and early enough that this was such a burden on people.”

The premier said Monday that her government had been working to “take costs off people’s electricity bills” by removing the debt retirement charge, putting in place the Ontario Energy Support Program (OESP) for low income families and removing the provincial portion of the HST — which amounts to an eight per cent reduction on electricity bills.

“There are still low income families in Ontario who haven’t applied to that program, and you know I want them to,” she said. “They need to because they can see a significant reduction on their bills.”

With regard to her recent apology on growing electricity rates in comparison with the her previous contrition on the gas plants scandal, the premier said those were “very different situations.”

“In the one case, with the gas plants, I said right out that there were things that happened that shouldn’t have happened. I apologized and took responsibility on the part of the government for that,” she said.

“On the electricity prices and the investment in our clean electricity system, I’m apologizing that people have had to bear that load. But I wasn’t saying that the things that we did shouldn’t have been done.”

Wynne said shutting down coal plants, investing in infrastructure, provincial hydro lines and jump-starting a renewable energy sector to ensure a reliable, clean energy grid are pat of a costly process.

“We had to do those things. We inherited a dirty, unreliable system. We had to make those investments And so in making those investments, there’s a cost associated with that,” she said.

“But there’s a cost and that cost has been borne by people around the province.”

The premier pointed to the fact her government signed a $1 billion annual hydroelectricity deal with Quebec last week, which she said would “augment the supply in Ontario.”

“There may be more of those kinds of things that we can do to help electricity prices go down. So we’re going to be looking in many ways at how we can look across the system and reduce costs, but we don’t have those answers,” she said.

“What we do know is on Jan. 1, eight per cent will come off people’s bills.”

The premier said she was open to the possibility more money from the province’s general revenue stream could be accessed to help Ontarians with growing hydro costs, in addition to the eight per cent rebate from provincial HST already costing the provincial treasury $1 billion per year.

When asked if she was aware the problem of hydro affordability was worse in rural areas of the province, Wynne agreed more had to be done to address the issue.

“There are pockets of concern, absolutely,” she said, adding an additional 12 per cent will be offered to hydro consumers in rural and northern communities — meaning about 300,000 people will see a 20 per cent reduction.

“I think there are people who are in situations that are worse than others.”

Wynne also said she will work with her government to “even out the delivery charges” that disproportionately affect hydro customers across the province and is open to taking more money from city-dwelling ratepayers to make up the difference.

“We’re going to have to look at everything and that’s exactly what the minister and I will do,” she said. “I’ve already met with the head of the [Ontario Energy Board], I’ve met with the head of the OESP, so we’re looking across the system to see what more we can do to help people.”

When asked why her government hadn’t issued a directive to the OEB to force them to show the 4.3 cents per litre rise of gas prices in Ontario and the increase in residential natural gas bills by $5 a month under her cap-and-trade plan, the premier referred questions to the OEB.

“I think it’s a good question to ask about what should be and shouldn’t be transparently on electricity bills,” she said, adding that it was a conversation the province and the OEB could continue to have.

“I think the more information that people can have access to, the better.”

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“I think the more information that people can have access to, the better.”

“It’s not about the re-election. It’s about helping people to deal with their electricity costs,” she said.

“Yes, there’s a political reality that I deal with, but that’s not the reason for doing the things that we do.”

On the issue of road tolls, the premier said earlier this month she would not stand in the way of Toronto’s tolling of city-owned roads such as the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway.

“I have a strong belief in local democracy and I think that council needs to have the right to make a decision like this and bring a proposal to the province and so we’ll await the specifics of that proposal,” she said.

“Every level of government needs to work together in terms of investing in infrastructure and that’s exactly what the mayor and the council are trying to do."

The premier said that she’s prepared to defend her comments on road tolls against the opposition in the 2018 election, comments she said were in line with the plan the Liberals ran on in 2014 to invest in infrastructure across the province.

“Let me just say that Mr. Brown and Ms. Horwath, neither of them has a plan for building infrastructure in this province. What they choose to do is just say no to everything that comes forward,” she said.

“That doesn’t build the province, that doesn’t bring economic development, that doesn’t increase the province’s well-being. So they can continue on that path.”

“And so I’m happy to have that conversation with the opposition today or in 18 months.”

When asked if the cost of living has gone up in Ontario under her government, Wynne said the investments have been worth the province leading the country in economic growth.

“Making sure that kids have free tuition who are living in low income families, creating more subsidized child care spaces, making sure that people have a break on their electricity bills and helping to remove costs, those are things that affect people in their day to day lives too, making sure people have transit options,” she said.

“Those are investments that we’re making to help people every single day and we will continue to work to find those and at the same time, we’re going to continue to make investments, because if we don’t, we won’t continue to lead the country.”

With files from Madeline Campbell

Alan Carter’s full interview with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne will air on Focus Ontario on Dec. 24 at 5:30 p.m. ET

Small businesses say hydro rates threaten their survival
The Globe and Mail
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: B2
Section: Report on Business
Byline: SHOWWEI CHU

Tor Krueger has big plans for Udder Way Artisan Cheese Co., which sells handmade goat cheese in Stoney Creek, Ont.

But crushing hydro bills are hurting the artisan-cheese maker’s plans to modernize his facility so he can get federal certification and sell his cheeses across the country.

“After payroll, hydro is consistently one of my top-three operating expenses,” Mr. Krueger said.

Hydro One charges him upward of $2,000 a month, and “I don’t have any equipment in here that I would say is drawing a lot of power.”

Other small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) in Ontario, such as restaurants Berkeley North of Hamilton and Fred’s Not Here of Toronto, are struggling to pay their hefty hydro bills.

“That right now is the No. 1 issue for our members,” says Plamen Petkov of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB), which has 42,000 members in Ontario.

A crescendo of consumer anger prompted the provincial government to offer an 8-percent rebate on hydro bills for residential households and small businesses beginning Jan. 1. The discount will cost the treasury $1-billion a year and save the average household $130 a year.

Premier Kathleen Wynne apologized last month for high electricity bills that have forced some residents to choose between paying for hydro, food or rent.

The CFIB says hydro costs became a bigger issue for SMBs after mandatory smart-meters were introduced six years ago, charging time-of-use prices.

Unlike households, many SMBs open during regular business hours and have to pay peak rates for electricity that are more than twice as much as offpeak rates.

According to the Ontario Energy Board, on-peak rates have climbed 81 per cent to 18 cents a kilowatt-hour since November, 2010, when the smart-meter program began.

Those rates also include the global adjustment for the province’s energy conservation programs, which covers the difference between the market price of electricity and the guaranteed contract prices paid to electricity generators.

In a 2015 report, Ontario‘s Auditor-General said the global adjustment cost consumers $37billion from 2006 to 2014, and will cost another $133-billion from 2015 to 2032.

The audit also concluded consumers will have to pay $9.2billion more for renewable energy projects over the 20-year contract terms under the government’s guaranteed-price renewable program for wind, solar and biomass than under the previous program.

Other factors behind high hydro bills include the debt-retirement charge for the remaining debt of the former Ontario Hydro, as well as the delivery charge for distribution and transmission of electricity.

The delivery fee alone is nearly $720 a month for Udder Way Artisan Cheese, and $990 a month for Fred’s Not Here steakhouse, representing onethird of the companies’ hydro bills.

Owners have tried all sorts of ways to conserve energy - and have had to make tough business decisions.

Matt Webber, who opened Berkeley North in Hamilton on Sept. 26, had budgeted $500 a month in his business plan for hydro. But his utility bill is more than twice as high even though he built his new restaurant with energy-efficient features such as induction cooking and LED lighting.

“I’m not using anything that’s old and I’m still dealing with prices like this,” Mr. Webber said. “And at the same time I’m not open all day long.”

Mr. Webber has had to cut server shifts and adjust Berkeley North’s menu prices to make up for the extra $500 a month he must pay for hydro.

Fred’s Not Here owner Fred Luk switched to energy-efficient lighting at his downtown Toronto restaurant. In business since 1988, he’s taken other measures such as cutting back on refrigeration and turning off baseboard heaters when certain areas aren’t being used. He still gets a monthly hydro bill ranging from $3,000 to $5,000.

Mr. Luk says by his own calculation his Toronto Hydro bill has increased more than 14 per cent a year since 2008. He compared prices for hydro in Quebec, where the electricity rate alone would be more than 50 per cent cheaper, which would reduce his annual costs by at least $13,000.

“We’re the ones getting socked with this high rate and a lot of us cannot survive,” said Mr. Luk, who hasn't increased menu prices over concerns customers will choose to eat elsewhere.

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault was not available for comment.

Ontario NDP energy critic Peter Tabuns says he doesn't think the 8-per-cent rebate will make a dent since electricity prices are forecast to rise over the next few years. "I could say without hesitation that the decrease will be eaten up by the increases in the next four years," he said.

The CFIB has urged the energy minister to eliminate the time-of-use rates for small businesses and replace that with a lower rate for the first 3,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity.

Hydro rates let Quebec woo Amazon
Ottawa Citizen
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Vito Pilieci
Source: Ottawa Citizen

Internet giant Amazon Web Services has opened a cluster of data centres near Montreal due to the availability and cost of hydro-electric power in Quebec.

It's a coup for the city and the province, while neighbouring Ontario deals with hydro rates that have shot upward in recent years.

Amazon, which is notoriously secretive about its data centres, said there are now at least two data centres just outside Montreal to offer web-based services to the "Canada Region."

Canada joins 15 other regions around the globe from which Amazon is running data services on behalf of clients.

Teresa Carlson, vice-president of public sector with Amazon Web Services, said the cost and availability of hydro-electric power is ultimately what made Amazon choose Quebec as its Canadian home.

"We picked the area that we did because of the hydro power," said Carlson. "We did find them (Quebec) to be very business friendly."

Carlson said Amazon conducted a thorough review of various options within Canada, including Ontario, that involved looking at a number of factors, including the price of electricity. She also said Amazon is keen to source green energy where it can as the company is attempting to get all of its data centres on renewable energy sources.

The announcement is a boon to Quebec, which now finds itself at the forefront of cloud computing nationally. It's an industry the province has been pursuing heavily, using its cheap hydro electricity as a prime attractant.

A page on the province's Invest Quebec website spells out the benefits of setting up data centres in the province. It already secured one of the world's largest data centres from French cloud computing giant OVH in 2013. That investment led to OVH setting up its North American research and development labs in the province in 2016. IBM, Bell Canada, Cogeco Data Services and many others have also recently opened data centres in the province.

While Amazon wouldn't reveal how large the investment was that it made in its new Montreal facilities, U.K. newspaper The Independent reported in October 2015 that a comparable development in Dublin, Ireland, was valued at $280 million.

According to a recently released study by Persistence Market Research, companies will have spent more than US$40.4 billion on the construction of new data centres around the globe this year. By 2024, that amount is expected to hit $96.5 billion as more services move to the cloud and more businesses demand it.

In Canada, Quebec is preparing itself to take advantage of that opportunity and the highly skilled, high-paying technical jobs it will bring.

“Significant projects like the one ?being realized by Amazon Web Services represent the kind of large-scale investment that take Quebec a long way toward its goals in the digital world,” said Dominique Anglade,? minister of Economy, Science and Innovation in Quebec. “Indeed, this initiative will stimulate the development of cloud computing in Quebec, a key area that can be an engine for our province’s information technology and communication sector.”

Carlson promised outreach from Amazon in the months and years ahead to work with companies, colleges and universities through partnerships and various other initiatives in a bid to help foster more skill in the cloud computing sector.

The revelation that Quebec was chosen over other provinces to play host to Amazon’s data cluster comes at a time when Kathleen Wynne’s Ontario Liberal government is reeling from an energy policy that has sent electricity prices skyrocketing in recent years.

According to current statistics provided by Hydro-Québec, large commercial electricity users pay 5.17 cents per kWh in the province, while comparable businesses in Ontario pay around 13 cents per kWh, the highest rate in Canada. Hydro-Québec pricing is largely cited as the de facto industry standard.

Patrick Brown, leader of Ontario‘s Progressive Conservative party, was quick to jump on the news as more evidence that the province’s electricity prices are making it less competitive for big business investments and could hamper its opportunities when it comes to high-tech.

“I’m envious of Quebec. It’s a competitive destination for jobs. It’s a story we’ve heard all to often, and we need to rectify it,” said Brown. “These are jobs that could have gone to Ontario. We can do better in this province.”

Brown said the price of electricity for high-usage commercial customers has climbed far too high over the past decade due to Liberal energy policies.

Douglas Porter, chief economist and managing director of BMO Financial Group, had similar concerns when it came to his take on the current state of electricity pricing in Ontario.

“There is little doubt that Ontario‘s relative position has deteriorated markedly in recent years as a result of relatively large increases over the last couple years,” he said. “The most eye-popping number has been in the last 12 months alone, where we’ve seen a 15.2-percent increase in Ontario‘s electricity prices.”

In November, Wynne publicly admitted that skyrocketing energy prices in the province were her “mistake” and vowed to do something about them in 2017. Wynne’s office refused to comment on the issue, deferring all inquiries to Ontario Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault.

A spokesman for the minister, Dan Moulton, responded on behalf of Thibeault and blamed years of Conservative mismanagement prior to the arrival of the Liberal government in 2003 for today’s rising electricity prices.

“We know the costs associated with modernizing the badly neglected electricity system we inherited from the previous Conservative government remain a concern for some companies,” said Moulton. “We’re taking concrete action to reduce costs for businesses, like expanding the Industrial Conservation Incentive program to allow up to 1,000 new businesses to reduce their electricity bills by up to one-third. And we are taking action to reduce overall costs in the electricity system, including suspending new large, renewable procurements.”

He argued that commercial electricity rates aren’t as high as some have reported. Moulton pointed to a study released by the Ministry of Energy that states large commercial suppliers in Ontario cities such as Toronto and Ottawa were paying 8.35 per kWh for electricity as of May 2015, the most recent month for which the province has statistics.

Moulton also said that Ontario has a very good relationship with Amazon. The company just agreed to expand a warehousing facility that it has in Brampton, which could create as many as 700 jobs, he said. He also said the company has recently acquired office space that could fit as many as 800 employees in Toronto. Moulton pointed at other investments by major auto manufacturers.

However, an investment in a warehouse facility is a drop in the bucket compared to an investment in a data centre.

Amazon Web Services is the largest provider of cloud computing services in the world, accounting for more than 30 per cent of the global market. Cloud computing sees companies outsource information technology departments to another company, like Amazon, to host websites, run servers and handle Internet traffic for applications and video on a subscription basis.

In its most recent financial quarter, Amazon Web Services accounted for US$3.23 billion in sales, a 55-per-cent increase over the $2.1 billion it accounted for during the same quarter last year.

Rising school electricity bills worry trustee
Windsor Star
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A4
Section: City & Region
Byline: Dave Waddell
Source: The Windsor Star

Public school board trustee Ron LeClair has requested a costing of the Greater Essex County District School Board’s total electricity bills for the past three years with an eye to plugging a hole in the budget.

Board administration is currently compiling those numbers.

“I asked for three years as a starting point with electrical costs having dramatically gone up in the last 12 to 24 months,” said LeClair, the vice-chair of trustees. “I wanted to get an idea of the impact on the board’s budget.

“If it does show significant increases, I wanted us to use that information to lobby the province for higher funding for utilities.”

LeClair said the province did include more money for utilities in last year’s budget.

“The percentage increase doesn’t come anywhere near the actual costs,” LeClair said.

He added the board is no different than Ontario‘s residential and business customers when it comes to the burden that rising electrical bills are placing on its operational costs.

While no one is having to choose between paying the electrical bill and buying food, as some Ontario residents are doing, LeClair said the board has to make up the shortfall between funding and actual costs.

“That’s money we could be using for programming,” LeClair said.

He added that the board has been working to trim electrical and water costs while reducing its carbon footprint.

With the province set to introduce cap-and-trade regulations early next year, school boards expect to take another hit on gas heating costs.

“We’ve undertaken significant steps on the environmental side to minimize our costs,” LeClair said. “We’re doing what we can.”

The board has replaced all of its old lights - its biggest single electrical cost - with LED bulbs, which has resulted in an annual savings of 2.3 million kilowatt hours.

There is also an annual energy conservation challenge involving dozens of schools.

In 2015, the challenge resulted in the saving of 844,000 kilowatt hours and 20,130 cubic metres of water. That represented $200,000 in savings for the board.

A year ago, the board also signed a 20-year deal with Franken Solar Americas to install solar panelling on 25 more school roofs. In exchange, the board will receive an annual dividend of between $250,000 and $300,000 for the next two decades.

Those panels will produce enough energy to power 600 homes annually.

The deal means the board now has more than 30 schools with solar panels on the roof along with two wind turbines. dwaddell@postmedia.com

Media Release: Twenty Chambers Across Ontario Call for Deferral in Provincial Cap & Trade Program to prevent jobs, investment from leaving Ontario
Wire Service
2016-12-20

Today, 20 chambers across Ontario called for a deferral of the Provincial Government's Cap and Trade program scheduled to be implemented January 1, 2017, citing high costs of the program layered of top of skyrocketing electricity prices, lack of sector by sector economic impact and a change in policy direction in the United States.

WireService.ca Media Release (12/20/2016) Windsor, ON - On December 9, 2016, the Windsor-Essex Regional and Leamington District Chambers hosted a news conference with representatives from the greenhouse growers sector on the affects of cap and trade on their businesses and asked for a deferral of the Cap and Trade.

In Ontario, since 2004, electricity prices have increased by 383%, from a flat rate of 4.7 cents a kilowatt hour to 18 cents a kilowatt hour at peak times. The introduction of the Cap and Trade system will add further charges on natural gas, gasoline and diesel fuel that will be keenly felt by every individual and business in Ontario.

Matt Marchand, President & CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce (WERCC) says, "Businesses are already struggling under the weight of ever increasing costs and we are extremely concerned about the impacts of these additional charges on jobs and the economy."

"We have already lost hundreds of millions of investment to other jurisdictions like Ohio due to high electricity prices, layering on cap and trade will no doubt make it much worse," said Marchand.

"The unintended impact of Ontario's cap and trade may result in a removal of jobs and investment from clean grids like Ontario to much dirtier grids in the U.S. and elsewhere," said

Marchand.

Despite repeated requests, we still have not received a sector by sector economic impact analysis and given that President Elect Trump and a vast majority of states seem unlikely to participate in the cap and trade program, 20 Chambers across Ontario request that the Ontario government delay the implementation of the cap and trade program for at least one year.

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For more information contact:

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Nicholls Launches petition to include Wynne's extra natural gas charges on bills

Tilbury Times
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A31
Section: News
Source: Tilbury Times

Natural gas bills are set to increase on January 1st due to added costs from the Wynne Liberals' Cap and Trade scheme, and Chatham-Kent-Essex MPP Rick Nicholls is launching a petition demanding the government to show the cost as a separate line item on bills.

“The people of this province need to be treated with respect. Premier Wynne must stop trying to hide information and let the public know how much her plan will really add to natural gas bills,” Nicholls said. “The vast majority of my constituents in Chatham-Kent-Essex use natural gas to heat their homes. It is our way of life. If Kathleen Wynne wants to make our way of life more expensive and make it cost more for families and seniors to heat their homes as winter sets in, she should at least have the decency to be honest about how much money she is taking.”

“The people of this province need to be treated with respect. Premier Wynne must stop trying to hide information and let the public know how much her plan will really add to natural gas bills,” Nicholls said. “The vast majority of my constituents in Chatham-Kent-Essex use natural gas to heat their homes. It is our way of life. If Kathleen Wynne wants to make our way of life more expensive and make it cost more for families and seniors to heat their homes as winter sets in, she should at least have the decency to be honest about how much money she is taking.”

Without a separate line item consumers will not be able to see how much the plan is really costing them.

“The Wynne Liberal plan is to have these extra charges buried in the delivery line of your natural gas bill, so you will not be able to see the new charges,” Nicholls said. “That is deceiving and unacceptable as people struggle to pay their bills and put food on the table.”

Ontario‘s Auditor General commissioned a survey and found that 89 per cent of natural gas ratepayers want the Wynne Liberal cap-and-trade costs clearly displayed on their bills. Union Gas has also called for the government’s new charges to be displayed as a new line item on bills.

“In my opinion, this Liberal government lobbied the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to force natural gas providers to bury this additional cost in the delivery charges. The Minister of Energy and Premier have refused to even ask the OEB to display these new charges clearly on bills. It is a deliberate move to take political pressure off the government. It’s unfair, unjust and unethical,” Nicholls said.

This comes after the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, who represents the riding of Toronto-Centre, stated “home heating in the future is going to have to come from sources other than natural gas.”

“Life is more expensive under the Wynne Liberals. They have no idea how people actually live in Ontario,” Nicholls stated.

Nicholls is launching the petition in hopes that the Wynne Liberals will eventually do the right thing and come clean about the real cost of their Cap and Trade plan. The petition is available at www.ricknichollsmpp. ca.

Call for auction-style process to procure energy; C-K chamber joins provincial call to address rising cost of power
The Chatham Daily News
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A3
Section: News
Source: The Chatham Daily News

The Chatham-Kent Chamber of Commerce is joining the Ontario chamber’s call to have the province take bold steps - including adopting an auction-style process to procure energy to address the rising cost of electricity.

The adoption of a “capacity market system” was the top recommendation made by the local chamber in its submission on the Long Term Energy Plan (LTEP) that calls on the government to ensure future policies regarding energy pricing are affordable, transparent and flexible.

A joint media release from the local chamber and Ontario Chamber of Commerce states that under the new Climate Change Action Plan, businesses are already facing additional costs. Since the 2013 Long Term Energy Plan, industrial rates in Ontario have increased by 16 per cent, while the rate for households and small businesses have climbed 25 per cent, according to a media release.

“The OCC and its members have consistently reported that the price of electricity is undermining business’ capacity to grow, hire new workers, and ultimately remain competitive,” states the release.

While the provincial government is to be commended for some of the results achieved on the energy, the status quo is unsustainable for ratepayers, says the chamber organizations.

The OCC and its member chambers believe Ontario‘s energy system would benefit from the implementation of a capacity market. Under that structure, there would be significant cost-savings for Ontario energy consumers through procuring shorter term supply on a cost-efficient basis.

The OCC says for a capacity market to be successful, the system would feature an auction-style process where resources, such as generation facilities, imported resources, electricity storage and demand-side resources, are compensated for the potential energy they could produce.

Chatham-Kent chamber president and CEO Gail Hundt, said in a written release: “Ontario is at a turning in its planning process regarding the future energy needs of the province.

“In order for businesses in Chatham-Kent to grow and succeed, it is imperative that future energy policies respect the concerns of businesses and support future economic growth,” she added. “A vast array of energy sources are available and all aspects need to be considered for value to the end user with a balance in sustaining an environmentally conscience province.”

OCC president and CEO Allan O'Dette, said in a written release, that as the government seeks to find solutions to the province's energy challenge, Ontario must strive to balance objectives regarding climate change, renewable resources and maintaining a diverse supply mix without forfeiting the competitiveness and transparency of the capacity market system.

"This will result in increased accountability and confidence in the energy market for Ontario businesses," O'Dette said.

Live green, don't prosper
National Post
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: FP9
Section: FP Comment
Byline: Philip Cross
Source: National Post

We heard it repeated ad nauseum in the ongoing debates over Canada's climate-change policy, this hackneyed catchphrase that our society does not have to choose between clean energy and economic growth. This makes it sound as if there are no economic risks in our choice of energy sources. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The exploitation of energy is fundamental to economic growth. Ruth Sandwell, in her recent book Powering Up Canada, divides human economic development into two eras according to their principal sources of energy. The first was based on inefficient organic sources of energy, mostly plants and animals as well as wood, that produced a low standard of living for most of human history. Then the Industrial Revolution harnessed mineral sources of energy, mostly fossil fuels such as coal, oil and gas. Fossil fuels have the advantage of allowing us to tap massive stocks of energy immediately, which justified large investments in its infrastructure, including transporting it in bulk to the growing concentration of users in urban areas. As the cost of energy fell dramatically, our standard of living soared. The benefit to everyday life from more access to cheap energy is enormous; the average American household today commands 186,000 calories of energy per day, the equivalent of having 93 human beings at your service for work, transportation, household chores and recreation.

The price of fossil fuels is falling, notably for oil and gas, thanks to the fracking revolution. This should be propelling economic growth higher. Instead, many jurisdictions in Canada are raising electricity prices (Ontario, most notably) because of the higher cost of switching to renewable energy sources. Soon everyone will see prices rise as a carbon tax is imposed.

While this may be defensible as environmental policy, it clearly subtracts from economic growth. And forget about green energy creating many jobs; renewables are no different than fossil fuels in that they are more capital intensive than labour intensive. More importantly, the primary economic boost from energy is not the jobs supported by its infrastructure, but the proliferation of new goods and services and the saving to users from lower prices for everything from transportation to operating machinery and equipment. Higher energy prices have the opposite effect.

It is naïve or wilfully misleading to pretend there is an overall economic benefit from higher energy costs. There is no possible way of putting a positive economic spin on the doubling of electricity prices in Ontario since 2002. It is a drain on household budgets and a burden to the competitiveness of businesses. Not surprisingly, Ontario's economy has struggled, despite what should have been the benefit of lower prices for oil and gas (by comparison, Alberta's electricity prices have risen only five per cent since 2002 as it passed on lower energy prices, although the Notley government's policies will soon put an end to that).

Transitioning away from fossil fuels will be easier for some uses than others. Daniel Yergin, the world's leading energy economist, notes that "history demonstrates that energy transition takes a long time. It took almost a century before oil overtook coal as the number one energy source."

Green energy has not even begun to crack the nut of transportation fuel, where the enormous efficiency of gasoline in powering engines for vehicles and planes shows no signs of loosening its dominance as the fuel of choice.

Stephen Chu, Obama's energy czar, conceded in 2010 that oil would remain the world's dominant fuel "because oil is an ideal transportation fuel." Oil is also extremely versatile in manufacturing; there is more oil embedded in the materials in your car (such as paint, plastic, seats and tires) than in your gas tank. Renewable energy sources cannot replace these creative uses of oil.

Sandwell concludes that it is unlikely Canada will ever transition to a post-carbon economy. Our geography dictates that we will always need to continue consuming large amounts of energy, which are also one of our leading exports. We're good at energy production because we have to be, living in a dark, cold and vast land.

Bjorn Lomborg, the self-styled skeptical environmentalist, made the case that while climate change is happening, its costs pale by comparison with the enormous burden of stopping it, which he estimates at US$1 trillion a year for the global economy. A better strategy would be to invest in measures that mitigate its effects - it has, after all, always been mankind's mission to make inherently dangerous climates safer for habitation - and diverting more resources to invest in policies that better our health and environment at a much lower cost than the ruinously expensive effort to halt the rise in global temperatures.

The mounting cost of policies to fight global warming has helped keep the western world mired in slow income growth for eight years after the Great Financial Crisis. The longer the average person sees no prospect of income growth and jobs for himself and his children, the more likely he will be tempted to vote for populist leaders such as Donald Trump, who promise much different choices in the trade-off between restoring income growth and battling climate change than our liberal elites have been making. At least the average person and populist leaders know there is a trade-off between the economy and the cost of energy. Proponents who pretend that more expensive energy policies don't harm incomes simply demonstrate that they fail to understand the basics of economic growth.

Too roads focused?; Professor wants province to reject city's proposed transportation master plan

Sudbury Star
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A3
Section: News
Source: Star Staff

David Robinson, an economics professor at Laurentian University, is calling on the province, and specifically energy minister Glenn Thibeault, to apply a climate change lens to Greater Sudbury's recently approved transportation master plan.

"Come on, Glenn," Robinson said in a release. "Act like a real energy minister and make sure the plan isn't approved until it fits with provincial climate policy. No transportation plan without a municipal climate strategy. No transportation plan without an energy audit."

Change has to come from the top down and cities need to be reorganized, Robinson says.

"If Premier Kathleen Wynne and Environment and Climate Change Minister Glen Murray really want to reduce emissions, they've got to get serious about the way we build our cities," Robinson continued. "Focusing on moving cars instead of on quality of life for people may have made sense in the 1960s. In the 21st century, with automobile emissions driving climate change, it is a formula for death and disaster."

On Dec. 13, Greater Sudbury city council approved the transportation master plan, which includes a massive new road-building scheme for the city. Robinson does not approve.

“Greater Sudbury isn’t growing,” he said. “The Ministry of Finance is forecasting a quarter century of no-growth with massive population aging. As people get older they drive less. They sure drive less during rush hour. Road expansions will not be needed. We don’t have rush hour. We have rush minutes. Our little bit of congestion will get better on its own as people retire. We don’t need to waste hundreds of millions on increasing capacity and increasing taxes.”

Sudbury already has more roads per capita than any other city, Robinson argued.

“We have more potholes per capita and we have more road deaths,” he added. “How is this plan going fix those problems? Sudbury road planners think like beavers. Beavers hear water running and build a dam. City engineers see cars moving and want to build a road. Transportation planning should be about making happy people, not making happy cars.”

The plan, as laid out, commits Sudbury to a future of increased dependency on cars and increased spending on roads.

“Other cities are reducing fossil fuel use and improving quality of life by promoting walking, biking and taking the bus,” Robinson said. “We are talking about talking about these things.”

With the transportation master plan’s approval, a notice of completion will be published, providing for a 30-day comment period for the public to raise concerns and to request Murray to require the city to comply with part II of the Environmental Assessment Act.

“If the Liberal government is serious about climate change, it has to tell the City of Greater Sudbury to take its recycled 1960s transportation plan back to the drawing board,” Robinson concluded. “This is low hanging fruit for the Liberals. Glen Murray should tell municipalities to make energy reduction and quality of life the priority in transportation planning. Glenn Thibeault should explain to council that his government can only fund projects for people, not cars.”
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Auditor probes falsified FOI dates; Environment Ministry staff 'systematically adjusted' information on request forms
Toronto Star
Tue Dec 20 2016
Page: A8
Section: News
Byline: The Canadian Press

Auditors are investigating five Ontario government ministries after staff at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change altered dates on freedom of information requests to improve their compliance statistics.

Information and Privacy commissioner Brian Beamish says there were concerns with the accuracy of the compliance statistics submitted by the ministry in 2015.

Beamish says management became aware last June that staff in the ministry’s Corporate and FOI Services office were deliberately changing the dates recorded in the FOI tracking system.

He says auditors concluded dates “were systematically adjusted by staff” in the FOI office to show completion of requests within the 30-day requirement period.

Beamish says falsifying statistics is a serious issue, which can erode the trust and confidence of people who should be able to rely on their accuracy.

The commissioner says he remains “deeply concerned” about the fact staff altered the dates, but adds he is satisfied the issue was “addressed swiftly and thoughtfully” by the ministry.

“I am also pleased that the government intends, at my request, to conduct audits of five other ministries in order to determine whether the issues that arose in this ministry are more widespread,” Beamish said in a statement.

“My office will continue to work with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, and the broader Ontario Public Service, to provide guidance and support as they ensure their compliance with Ontario‘s access laws.”