Ministry of Energy Top Issues - June 12, 2016

From: "Cvjeticanin, Dan (ENERGY)" <dan.cvjeticanin@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY All" <energy-all2@msgov.gov.on.ca>
Date: Mon, 12 Jun 2017 06:59:06 -0400

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- Underground explosion in downtown Toronto caused by wires 'burning out': hydro -- Globalnews.ca
- Energy Board to open up talks with First Nations -- The Sault Star, pg. A3
- Protesters march against Energy East pipeline -- Times & Transcript. pg. B1
- Trudeau must hold the line on new methane rules -- The Globe and Mail, pg. B4
- Sarnia eyes energy storage project; Battery facility in Sarnia would help regulate frequency, act as a temporary backup during blackouts, Bluewater Power VP says --Sarnia Observer, pg. A1
- Jones questions Premier over wind turbine complaints -- Orangeville Citizen
- Nothing 'fair' about Wynne's promises; Premier's re-election bid ignores the people her policies will hurt -- Toronto Sun, pg. A4
- Don't sell Wasaga hydro distribution: Halton Hills mayor -- Wasaga Sun, pg. 1

Underground explosion in downtown Toronto caused by wires 'burning out': hydro

Globalnews.ca

2017-06-11

Byline: Jessica Patton Web Writer

Toronto Hydro says an underground explosion, resulting in a manhole cover blowing off in downtown Toronto, was the result of wires burning out.

A spokesperson for Toronto Hydro told Global News the wires were directly below the manhole which is why it blew off.

Toronto Fire said they responded to a call around 9:35 a.m. about an explosion in The Esplanade and Church Street area.

Witnesses reported seeing a manhole cover shoot straight up in the air after hearing a loud bang. Brown smoke was also seen coming from the ground.

Toronto police said there are no reported injuries.

Esplanade was closed from Market Street to Church, but the area has since been reopened.

Energy Board to open up talks with First Nations

The Sault Star
Mon Jun 12 2017
Page: A3
Section: News
Byline: Jennifer Hamilton-Mccharles

The National Energy Board hopes to open up the lines of communication with more than 150 indigenous communities including Nipissing First Nation.

The board has launched an program to gather input from Indigenous peoples to help shape the hearing process and other engagement activities for the Energy East and Eastern Mainline projects.

Energy East is looking to transport 1.1 million barrels of crude oil per day from Alberta and Saskatchewan to refineries in Eastern Canada and a marine terminal in New Brunswick.

Marc Drolet, communications officer for the National Energy Board, said First Nations communities were contacted individually on how they wanted to host a meeting.

He said the meetings, which will take place over the summer months, will be via video conference, face-to-face meetings and through written communication.

Drolet said the first meeting was held in a First Nations community in Quebec earlier this month.

It's unclear when the meeting at Nipissing First Nation will take place.

Drolet said he was unaware of any First Nations communities refusing to meet with the board.

"There's concerns about water protection, water crossing and emergency management. We want to be sensitive to Indigenous traditions and if additional meetings are required, that is fine."

There has been a lot of public outcry from those against the Energy East project for a variety of reasons, including the potential impact a spill could have on Trout Lake -the city's local drinking water source, possible spills throughout the pipeline and the challenges of spills during the winter months.

On the opposite side of the fence, Energy East says the project will create thousands of jobs across the country, the oil will be transported in a safe and environmentally responsible manner and it will displace imports to Eastern refineries that currently depend on foreign oil to meet the needs of Canadians.

The National Energy Board stated the federal government has committed to undertake deeper consultations with Indigenous people who are potentially affected by the project and provide funding to support these consultations.

The board is also helping to facilitate expanded public input into the National Energy Board review process including public and community engagement activities.

The Minister of Natural Resources intends to recommend the appointment of three temporary members to the National Energy Board, according to the National Energy Board, as well as assess the upstream greenhouse gas emissions associated with this project and make this information public.

Protesters march against Energy East pipeline

Times & Transcript
Mon Jun 12 2017
Page: B1
Byline: Luke Carroll

A protest against the proposed Energy East pipeline was held in Fredericton on Saturday, attracting about 100 marchers to the city's north side.

The march - entitled Hands Across The Water - was organized by the Council of Canadians, a national non-profit environmental activist group. The event was organized to encourage the Canadian government to focus on renewable energy as opposed to natural resources.

“We’re seeing a massive change in our economy and I think it’s wrong for Canada and New Brunswick to ignore the revolution,” said Mark D’Arcy, organizer and member of the Council of Canadians.

Energy East is a proposed 4,600-kilometre pipeline that would carry up to 1.1 million barrels of crude oil from Alberta to Saint John a day, which has been stalled by protests.

Protesters marched across the Nashwaak River walking bridge to “highlight the importance of protecting water from tarsands pipelines, train cars, and export supertankers,” according to a release.

TransCanada spokesperson Tim Duboyce said in an earlier interview with the Daily Gleaner that he understands why marchers are concerned, but said pipelines are the safest mode of transporting substances like crude oil. He also said TransCanada will ensure the pipeline is safe with appropriate route planning, strategically located shut-off valves and control centres that monitor any issues along the pipeline.

However, many at the march said they don’t believe that’s enough.

“You just watch the news and you can see all the damage these pipelines are creating all over the place,” said Jeff Graves, one of the marchers. “There’s more of a future in renewable resources.”

“I’m here to support the environment,” said Catherine Caissie, another marcher.

Caissie said she was happy with the number of people who attended the march, which was about 100. However, Graves said he hoped more people would be involved in the cause.

“I wish more people would wake up,” he said.

Trudeau must hold the line on new methane rules

The Globe and Mail
Mon Jun 12 2017
Page: B4
Section: Report on Business

Byline: ED WHITTINGHAM, DIANE REGAS

Despite Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's positive environmental rhetoric, he has been unable to shake Canada's "all climate talk, no climate action" reputation inherited from previous prime ministers. But that is beginning to change. New rules that require oil and gas companies to reduce methane emissions could be a turning point.

Mr. Trudeau earned international praise last year when he committed to cut methane emissions from the oil and gas industry by 45 per cent by 2025. It was a crucial step and a bold promise for a new prime minister. The proposed regulations unveiled recently are among the first steps the government has announced in its plan to ensure Canada meets its climate goals.

Before Mr. Trudeau can genuinely be called a climate leader, he and his government must strengthen this good proposal into more meaningful rules and regulations, and resist industry's efforts to weaken them or delay action. A key part of this will be ensuring that any provincial methane regulations lead to reductions equal to or greater than the national standard.

Implementation of limits on emissions of methane from oil and gas operations should be a no-brainer. Methane is a powerful greenhouse gas - so potent that it is driving about one-quarter of today's global warming. Without strong regulations, Canada, the world's fifth-largest producer of oil and gas, is a significant part of the global methane problem. Reducing these emissions is not only good climate policy, it is smart energy policy, because it keeps the product in the pipes rather than letting a national resource go to waste.

Capturing methane from oil and gas operations helps conserve valuable fuel, creates jobs in an emerging clean-technology sector, and represents some of the quickest, most cost-effective ways of reducing greenhouse gases. Each year, enough methane is lost from Canadian oil and gas fields to supply every household in Edmonton and Calgary combined.

The proposed regulations are the only place in the national climate plan where oil and gas methane emissions are addressed, so it is crucial that we get them right. Fortunately, the solution is far simpler and cheaper than industry wants us to believe. Major leaks from equipment can be prevented with frequent inspections and repairs that can typically be done with a hand-held wrench. The regulations announced late last month are cost-effective and ensure Canada's oiland-gas sector stays competitive in the global market.

Oil and gas companies successfully lobbied to delay compliance, getting themselves more years of limitless pollution.

And industry continues to push for higher limits and lessfrequent inspections - both of which would undercut the very mission of the regulations.

To keep on track toward the 2025 target, the Trudeau government should accelerate the implementation timelines. It should insist that the rules cover all sources that have the potential to vent methane rather than exempting some oil facilities. Leak inspections should also be conducted quarterly instead of three times a year, so emissions can be found and stopped quickly.

It is also important for Mr. Trudeau and his Environment Minister, Catherine McKenna, to ensure that provincial methane regulations, if they are proposed, match or exceed the foundation that this federal regulation establishes. Otherwise, weaker standards in the provinces will undermine the federal proposal.

Given concessions already made, no margin is left for additional backsliding on dates or targets. By fortifying the current proposal, the federal government can assure Canadians that it is driving this policy process, not the oil and gas industry.

Canada's work to deliver genuine climate action will continue to be tested as key elements of its climate plan are drafted and debated. On oil and gas, solutions are clear and the initial commitment from this government is encouraging. Holding the line against industry and with the provinces is a crucial opportunity for Mr. Trudeau to show that he is serious about turning Canada's climate talk into climate action.

Ed Whittingham is executive director of the Pembina Institute.

Diane Regas is executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund in the United States.

Sarnia eyes energy storage project; Battery facility in Sarnia would help regulate frequency, act as a temporary backup during blackouts, Bluewater Power VP says

Sarnia Observer
Sat Jun 10 2017
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Tyler Kula

The City of Sarnia and Bluewater Power are hoping a proposal for an energy storage hub gets the green light.

Sarnia City Council recently endorsed a plan to lease land to Renewable Energy Systems (RES) Canada for the company to build a 10-megawatt battery energy storage facility, large enough to balance out unsteady frequency from renewable sources like wind and solar, and act as a temporary backup power supply in the event of a blackout.

“We have a lot of green energy in our system,” said Chris Gould, vicepresident with Bluewater Power, noting eight solar farms contribute 80 megawatts to the Sarnia-Lambton utility’s distribution system.

While traditional generators - coal, gas, nuclear - are steady power producers, renewables require energy storage, like batteries, to be able to efficiently use the energy they generate when it’s needed, he said.

“As many solar farms go up and as many wind farms go up, I think over the coming years you’re going to see as many energy storage projects develop,” he said.

The Sarnia project, proposed for the Water Pollution Control Centre on St. Andrew Street, has been submitted to the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) - the Crown corporation responsible for operating the electricity market in Ontario - for funding.

The cost isn’t known yet, but it will be tens of millions of dollars to build and operate over its lifetime, Gould said.

Hopes are it gets the go-ahead in three to six months, he said.

RES Canada, which has its office in Montreal, is the bidder, but Bluewater Power and its affiliate companies are in line to do the building and maintenance, and will also have some say in the operation as it’s hooked into the grid, Gould said.

“At a high level, we offer technical expertise … and we offer what operation and maintenance of it will look like from our standpoint,” he said.

City officials said the project could also help attract new energy firms and demonstration projects, positive possibilities on the economic development front.

It’s the second time for the RES proposal, after it was passed over in favour of cheaper options in 2015, said Gould.

A lot has been learned since that experience, on both sides, he said.

“When the cheapest project gets awarded, it doesn’t'necessarily mean the best group and the best developer was awarded the project,” he said.

Renewable Energy Systems, the RES Canada parent company, has been involved in more than 100 wind and solar energy projects totaling 10,000 megawatts on four continents, city officials said.

It also operates one of the first grid-connected batteries in North America, the Amphora station in Strathroy.

The actual batteries are encased in sea containers, set in place on pillars or footings and connected to nearby transformers. The proposal calls for about a half acre’s worth.

The Sarnia battery hub’s proposed 10 megawatts is about five per cent of Bluewater Power’s distribution system, Gould said, noting the system operates between 185 and 200 megawatts at any given time.

“I would assume that our distribution system would benefit from one of these,” he said.

Ratepayers wouldn’t see a noticeable difference in their bills, he said.

City officials said the lease is $5,000 per year over a 10-year period. It starts when and if the contract is green-lighted, Gould said.

Jones questions Premier over wind turbine complaints

Orangeville Citizen
2017-06-09
Byline: Bill Rae

A report that the provincial government has not been investigating wind turbine noise complains has led Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones to ask Premier Kathleen Wynne why.

She and some of her Progressive Conservative colleagues brought the matter up in the legislature last week during Question Period, in light of a Global News report which stated the Minister of the Environment had ignored thousands of complaints between 2006 and 2014.

“It’s no surprise to me to learn from Global that the minister has failed to investigate noise and health complaints related to industrial wind turbines,” Ms. Jones told Premier Wynne. “Liberal ministers have been ignoring homeowners in Dufferin–Caledon for over 10 years.”

Hansard shows she told the House she had asked the minister to help a family in 2011, after their doctor had recommended they leave their home because of noise and electrical pollution. About two years later, this family received a one-sentence email from the Minister.

“The ministry has closed your file at this time and the minister will not be taking any action on your complaint,” she said the sentence stated.

“I am and have been very concerned about the community reaction to the siting of wind turbines,” Ms. Wynne replied. “I met with many groups over a period of years. I sat with them. I listened to their concerns . . . I made sure that we had studies in place.”

“I made sure that we worked with the federal government as the Health Canada studies were done,” she added. “We made changes in terms of siting of wind turbines. We gave more responsibility and more authority to municipalities.”

“We have made changes, Mr. Speaker, based exactly on the concerns that the members opposite are raising,” she said.

Stormont – Dundas – South Glengarry MPP Jim McDonell took up the questioning, saying Wynne’s minister “is either willfully uninformed of the number of complaints about wind turbine noise filed with his department, or deliberately neglectful of his duty.”

“People across Ontario deserve answers and a resolution to their complaints,” he stressed. “This government recently stated that, because of the surplus of power, they were cancelling the next round of energy projects. Will the Premier do the honourable thing and order her minister to put an immediate stop to all wind turbine developments until the massive backlog of complaints can be addressed?”

“We have responded to the concerns of the municipalities,” Ms. Wynne replied. “I take these concerns very seriously.”

Niagara West – Glanbrook MPP Sam Oosterhoff said it was past the time the Premier should be paying attention to the issue, noting hydro bills have increased by more than 300 per cent.

“Expensive and counterproductive power subsidies for turbines we don’t want or need have contributed to the soaring energy prices that are the greatest burden people are facing, yet this government has ignored the thousands of complaints they’ve received,” he charged. “This Liberal government has not paid attention to the many petitions MPPs have presented regarding this issue, nor have they paid attention to their own communities. Some of the 90 unwilling communities are in several of their ridings as well.”

“Why does the Premier continue to ignore and dismiss everyone’s concern?” he asked.

“That’s absolutely not the case,” Ms. Wynne shot back. “I have met with folks in that member’s own riding, in Binbrook, and heard their concerns.

Nothing 'fair'about Wynne's promises; Premier's re-election bid ignores the people her policies will hurt

Toronto Sun
Sun Jun 11 2017
Page: A4
Section: News
Byline: Lorriegoldstein

Premier Kathleen Wynne has revealed the Liberals’campaign theme for next June’s Ontario election.

It will be, she says, all about “fairness.”

“Everything we’ve done will be part of the re-election (bid), but I certainly hope there will be a discussion in the election campaign about how to have a fairer society,” Wynne said in a recent interview with The Canadian Press.

Not only does Wynne repeat the word “ fair ” ad nauseam when introducing Liberal initiatives, the word itself is included in her initiatives.

Hence Wynne’s Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Plan, Fair Housing Plan and Fair Hydro Plan.

Conversely, should Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown or NDP Leader Andrea Horwath criticize any of these programs, Wynne will attack them for being “unfair” to Ontarians, in a bid to define them before they can define themselves with voters - the oldest political trick in the book.

In reality, of course, there’s nothing “ fair ” about Wynne announcing out of nowhere a 31.6% increase to Ontario‘s minimum wage by January, 2019, as she recently did under her, “ Fair Workplaces and Better Jobs Plan.”

It will not be fair to the struggling mom-and-pop operations that go out of business because this is the straw that finally breaks their backs, in addition to runaway electricity prices and the added costs of cap and trade under the Liberals.

It will not be fair to workers who are laid off as businesses trim their costs to meet this sudden and huge Wynneimposed expense, given that the responsible way to introduce hikes to the minimum wage is gradually and in line with inflation.

Nor will it be fair to the workers never hired because businesses cancel expansion plans.

Nor to consumers hit with higher retail prices because of Wynne’s radical increase to the minimum wage.

Similarly, there is nothing fair about Wynne’s Fair Housing Plan, which includes a massive expansion of rent controls.

That’s because rent controls inevitably shrink the rental housing supply and result in the deterioration of the existing housing stock, both of which hurt newcomers to the rental housing market, who have to compete for fewer and fewer rental apartments.

Similarly, there is nothing fair about Wynne’s Fair Hydro Plan, which passes on to future generations the cost of paying for all the blunders Wynne and her predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, made that sent electricity prices soaring, and from which it will take generations to recover, no matter which party wins the next election.

Sticking our children and our children’s children with a price tag of up to $93 billion, according to Ontario‘s Financial Accountability Officer, to pay for $24 billion in hydro rate relief today, has nothing to do with “fairness” and everything to do with Wynne trying to get re-elected.

As the great conservative thinker Thomas Sowell writes in The Vision of the Anointed: Self

Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy, which could practically be Wynne's biography: "There is … no way the television camera can show which unemployed people would have had jobs, if the minimum wage laws had not made them too expensive to hire at their current levels of skills and experience - and thereby cut them off from acquiring the additional skills and experience they need."

So much for Wynne being " fair ."

Don't sell Wasaga hydro distribution: Halton Hills mayor

Wasaga Sun

Fri Jun 9 2017

Page: 1

After attending the May 24 public meeting to discuss the possibility of selling, merging or keeping the status quo of Wasaga Distribution Inc., I feel compelled to express my thoughts. I have been mayor for the Town of Halton Hills for 14 years. I am also a taxpayer of Wasaga Beach and have been for the past 16 years. I was very impressed with the passion and the logic of the residents of Wasaga Beach who spoke that evening. The moderator was awesome. One of the panellists, Murray Elston, was part of an all-party Ontario Distribution Sector Review Panel. His report was written in 2012 and has been collecting dust since for five years. Many mayors, including myself, opposed this report which would have seen 73 local utilities in Ontario reduced to eight to 12 super utilities with 400,000 customers per region. Where would Wasaga Beach fit in with 8,000 plus customers in a region of 400,000? You would be swallowed up without any autonomy. In the report, one of the ways of passing cost savings to the consumer was to reduce jobs in the smaller utilities, which (means) you probably see a drop in service. Most of the panellists seemed to make it sound like it is a bad thing to have the status quo of keeping the utility. I beg to differ. Wasaga Hydro has no long-term debt. There is no pressure from the province to push municipalities to sell. No political party wants to touch this right now. Some panellists suggest there is a risk by not selling. Hmmm, there is also no risk avoidance by selling. What happens if council sells now or merges - then in a few years it is resold? All of the conditions maybe out the window. The shareholder (the town) has lost control. You can't control what you no longer own. Your local hydro is doing all the things expected of them by the regulator and the community. The Ontario Energy Board shows Wasaga Distribution Inc. is in Group 1 category as one of the most efficient in Ontario. The customer satisfaction survey proves this fact as their score was higher than all of the Cornerstone Hydro Electric Concepts

Inc. By joining the Cornerstone group, Wasaga Distribution must be saving customer dollars which is one of the goals and objectives of the Elston Panel Report five years ago. Lastly, the Wasaga Distribution Inc. provides over $500,000 to the shareholder in dividends and interest. I know one community who didn’t get their dividend after they merged. Selling Wasaga Distribution Inc. would be like heating your home by burning your furniture. The status quo doesn’t mean you sit stagnant. It means you look for business opportunities to grow the company. As the Town of Wasaga grows, so will your customers and so will your dividends, as well as the value of Wasaga Distrubution Inc. Best of luck to the council and I hope you make the correct decision.
Rick Bonnette