Ministry of Energy Top Issues - October 1-3, 2016

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Date: Mon, 03 Oct 2016 07:12:35 -0400

Good morning,

Here's what's making news:

- Province plugged into concerns: minister - The Sault Star
- Minister says hydro crisis was 13 years ago - SaultOnline.com
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- Access to gas creating regional divide - Tbnewswatch.com
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- Cancel the contracts, Minister Thibeault - Wind Concerns Ontario
- Liberal wind hypocrisy - Toronto Sun
- Wind turbines out, cap-and-trade in - Ottawa Sun
- 10 reasons pipeline hearings should be stopped - The Hamilton Spectator
- Remote First Nations leading the way with renewable energy - The Chronicle Journal
- Wynne open to request for Toronto Hydro tax breaks - Toronto Star
- Climate-change policies won't come without pain - Peterborough Examiner
- Ontario's handout economy - National Post
- Ontario has an electricity crisis - The Chatham Daily News
- An Ontario Man Composes A Popular Song About High Hydro Rates – Global News
- 'Huron Resolve' Nuclear Emergency Exercise Starts Today - Blackburnnews.com

Province plugged into concerns: minister; Legislation penned to ease energy costs, Glenn Thibeault says
The Sault Star
Sat Oct 1 2016
Page: A1 / Front
Section: News
Byline: Elaine Della-Mattia
Source: The Sault Star

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said he understands that energy costs can be difficult for some families, but the province is doing its best to implement programs that offer some relief. It was announced earlier that the Ontario government has penned legislation that will reduce Ontario residential electricity bills by 8 per cent on the amount before tax, creating an average savings of about $130 annually.

Rural ratepayers - about 333,000 families - in remote communities will receive an additional relief and should see an annual average decrease of about $540 on their bills.

About 1,000 more businesses will be able to access an expanded Industrial Conservation Initiative that could see their bills reduced by about 34%, Thibeault told reporters.

"That's so key for some of the businesses that we have in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie that use more than 1 mW of power," he said.

The key, Thibeault said is communicating these programs to Ontarians so that they know they are available and accessible, he said.

Thibeault said the greatest assistance is going to those in the most rural areas where distribution costs borne on the consumer are highest.

That means urban centres like the Sault and Sudbury, or their outlying districts, won't see the benefits of that program but will receive the 8 per cent reduction if the legislation is passed, come Jan. 1, he said.

Thibeault said the other factor is that cities like Sudbury and the Sault are not seeing rates as high as the rural or remote communities.

“That’s why we’re making sure residents in those rural or remote communities are getting the full benefit,” he said.

Thibeault was in Sault Ste. Marie as a guest at a roundtable hosted by Sault MPP David Orazietti to discuss issues that affect the energy

providers and stakeholders in the community. Participants included the PUC, the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, Brookfield Power, Algoma Power, the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, N-Sci Technologies and others.

Discussion included reliability, efficiency of energy, smart grid technology and the awareness of provincial programs offered to help reduce energy costs.

Thibeault said he learned that Sault Ste. Marie could be a new micro grid communities where innovative ways of delivering energy could be developed.

“For me that’s exciting,” Thibeault told reporters. “I think if you look at the 100 days I’ve been minister, the thing I’ve been tasked with is to find ways we can take our system to the next level and make it as affordable as it can be for businesses and families across the province.”

Thibeault said Ontario has built a safe and reliable system without brownouts or blackouts and now is the time to do more to help families and businesses.

“Today was an opportunity for us to get that message out,” he said.

He said the province’s recent suspension of new large renewable energy projects will not hamper Sault Ste. Marie’s efforts to establish itself as the Alternative Energy Capital of North America, he said.

The Liberal government’s announcement means the province won’t sign another $3.8 billion in renewable energy contracts but that will translate into a savings of about $2.45 per monthly on an average homeowner’s bill, Thibeault said.

“We still have the FIT Program and the MicroFIT program and we’re bringing forth the metering program and the LRP 1 (large renewable procurement program),” he said. “There is still large opportunities for companies to be in this sector. We have 18,000 mW of renewable energy on line. We’re not walking away from this.”

But the Canadian Wind Energy Association has warned that the plan to cancel renewable energy will make it harder for Ontario to reach its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Thibeault said Ontario still produces the capacity to handle energy requirements that are greater than the hottest and coldest days of the year.

About 15 per cent to 18 per cent more energy than required is created to meet industry standards and make sure emergency capacity is available, he said.

In the end, Ontario sells offits extra electricity and ultimately makes a profit off that sale, he said.

“Michigan needs power and we sell it to them at market price and make money offthat,” he said, creating about $230 million of net revenue that’s put back into the system.

Under the Liberal Wynne government, coal-fired electricity generation has been eliminated and replaced with cleaner sources of energy.

The province has also removed the Debt Retirement Charge from residential electricity bills and introduced the Ontario Electricity Support Program to provide a monthly credit to low-income households who have applied and meet the eligibility requirements.

Incentives have also been provided for large electricity consumers to shift their electricity consumption to off-peak house to reduce their bills by up to onethird. Expanding ICI would reduce cost pressures on the electricity system by enabling more consumers to lower their electricity demand during peak periods.

Energy minister explains why Sault not eligible for remote electricity discount
Sootoday
2016-09-30

In town holding a round-table discussion with local municipal and business leaders, Ontario's minister of energy says he hopes to get word out on initiatives the province has introduced to lower electricity costs for all Ontarians.

One measure in particular, a 20-percent discount on delivery charges for remote and rural customers, is not available to residents of Sault Ste. Marie.

Glenn Thibeault, provincial minister of Energy, said Sault Ste. Marie residents are not eligible because their rates are within the provincial average.

"What we are paying in Sudbury or in the Sault and in places like Thunder Bay in those urban centres — you have good utilities doing a good job of maintaining those rates," said Thibeault.

The Rural or Remote Electricity Rate Protection program will be available to about 330,000 customers in rural Ontario and will result in about 20-percent in savings when combined with the 8-percent incentive all residential customers will be eligible for in 2017.

In 2013, a previous energy minister, Bob Chiarelli, suggested Ontarians control their own hydro costs by conserving energy, but last spring Ontario customers were met with a rise in hydro rates, which the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) attributed to lower energy usage over the mild winter.

Sault MPP David Orazietti said consumers should not be penalized for energy conservation efforts.

"(The OEB) certainly should not be justifying a rate increase based on the fact they believe there was too much conservation in the province, because that sends the wrong message. We certainly want to see consumers conserve, but we also want to see consumers rewarded for conserving," said Orazietti.

Instead, the 72 local distribution companies across the province should look within for cost savings and efficiencies, said Orazietti, which may include further amalgamation.

Orazietti said it may be time to have a conversation about the effect the markups charged by those local for-profit distribution companies are used to offset municipal tax rates.

The effect of those markups, said Orazietti, is a higher cost of electricity.

He said about $2-million is being added to the local rate base from those markups.

"Your taxes are actually higher than what you are paying, and your energy costs are actually a fair bit lower than what you are paying. Your energy bill is helping to subsidize your property taxes and municipal services the city is providing," said Orazietti.

During the round table discussion with local municipal and business leaders, Thibeault listened to concerns and used the meeting to communicate programs like the Industrial Conservative Initiative (ICI), which offers up to 34-percent reductions in energy bills to industrial customers using more than 1-megawatt of electricity per month.

Thibeault said the current 300 companies enrolled in the ICI program collectively conserved about 1,000 megawatts in 2015.

"That means we don't need to build two more nuke units. That's $15-billion in savings. When we conserve, that's the best way we can save," said Thibeault.

Today's meeting offered Thibeault an opportunity to inform local leaders, including the Sault Ste. Marie Chamber of Commerce, about the discounted energy programs offered by the province.

"The chamber and Algoma Power are going to work together and create a package that they can get out to their members so they can find out about some of the programs we have on top of the 8-percent reduction," said Thibeault.

Recently, the governor of Michigan asked electricity distributors in the state to draft up a feasibility study looking into tapping into the Ontario energy grid through Sault Ste. Marie.

Thibeault said he wrote a letter to the Governor Rick Snyder, offering to help look into the possibility of selling electricity to the Upper Peninsula through the Sault.

Orazietti said opening a new market by selling power to Michigan through the Sault could be a great opportunity.

Tom Vair, outgoing executive director of the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre, recentlytold SooToday there has been issues adding additional renewable energy projects projects in the area because of the state of aging transmission lines to southern Ontario and that creating a corridor to sell electricity to Michigan could be a good opportunity.

Orazietti said there are similar cross-border transmission lines selling Ontario power to states like Minnesota and New York.

“We can’t be fixated on the fact that, regardless of where you are in Ontario, we can only work within our own province in terms of transmitting and distributing energy,” said Orazietti.

As for the sale of Ontario’s electric exports being sold at a loss, Thibeault said excess power needs to be sold and one must take a step back to put that into perspective.

“At the end of the year, when you look at the ledger it’s $230-million in net revenue that we take in and put back into the system to put lower pressure on rates for our customers right across the province,” said Thibeault.

He said today, between 7 and 9 a.m., the province required 15,000 megawatts of electricity but actually produced 17,000.

“We need to sell it. It needs to go somewhere. There is no place to inventory electricity, so we sell it to make sure it gets used,” said Thibealt.

Minister says hydro crisis was 13 years ago
SaultOnline.com
2016-09-31

Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy met with local community leaders to talk about the on-going Hydro “crisis” in the province.

The Liberal government recently announced legislation that, if passed, would rebate the provincial portion of the HST from the electricity bills of residential, small business and farms as of January 1, 2017.

“I think if you look at the past 100 days I’ve been Minister, the thing I have been tasked with is making sure we can find ways to take our system to the next level and make it as affordable as we can be for businesses and families right across Ontario.” Thibeault said while talking to media Friday morning.

Over the last number of years, Ontario’s economy has recovered from the impact of the global recession. While the province and independent economic analysts project consistent economic growth for Ontario, many families are not yet feeling the impact of the recovery in their everyday lives. Therefore, Ontario intends to take action to help with the costs related to electricity.

When asked if the hydro situation was a crisis in the province, Thibeault admitted that families are hurting right now.”It may be a crisis for some families but the real crisis was 13 years ago when our entire system was blacked out and we had to spend billions and billions of dollars to get that system back up and running and the cost to our economy and everything else, that was a crisis”

Thibeault talked about his government’s four part plan to help ease the cost of energy for families and businesses that are trying to cope with escalating hyrdro bills.

Reducing Ontario residential electricity bills by 8 per cent on the amount before tax, an average savings of about $130 annually or $11 each month;
Providing eligible rural ratepayers with additional relief, decreasing total electricity bills by an average of $540 a year or $45 each month; and
Empowering businesses to reduce their bill by up to 34 per cent through the expansion of the Industrial

Conservation Initiative.
Across Ontario, about five million residential consumers, farms and small businesses, along with more than one thousand industrial customers will be positively impacted by these changes the Minister claims.

“The actions we’re announcing today would benefit all ratepayers in a meaningful way. Customers across Ontario would receive significant rate relief through these initiatives. Expanding incentives across Ontario would create more opportunity for businesses to be competitive and manage their electricity costs. The proposed rebate would add an extra relief for families, farms and small businesses.” said Thibeault.

Since 2003, Ontario has invested more than $35 billion in over 16,000 megawatts (MW) of new and refurbished clean generation, including nuclear, natural gas and renewables – this represents about 40 per cent of our current supply and is the main reason why hyrdo bills will continue to rise in the future.

When it comes to delivery charges, which seems to be the biggest complaint from consumers the Minister didn’t have much to say. “The delivery charges is what it costs to build and get that power to that home” When asked if that costs was already being paid by the Ontario taxpayer Thibeault said, the taxpayer doesn’t pay it, it comes from the ratepayer, we’re not taking taxes to do that, it’s done with the ratepayer”

Thibeault stresses there are programs available to businesses and families, especially those who live in rural areas. “we have 135 thousand families who are currently on the Ontario Electricity Support Program but many many more families can apply and qualify for this so I want them to know to contact their utilities to find out what programs they qualify for”

Access to gas creating regional divide. The divide in energy costs between Northern and Southern Ontario is a regional divide between communities that are and aren't located along the natural gas pipeline.
Tbnewswatch.com
2016-10-02
Byline: Jon Thompson

THUNDER BAY – Northern Ontarians are spending more on energy than any other region of the province but within the region lies a deep divide between communities who have natural gas and those who don’t.

The Financial Accountability Office of Ontario issued a report on Tuesday that found Northern Ontario households spend the most on electricity and other fuels.

FAO chief financial analyst Peter Harrison refused to release specific data his office used in its study due to its small sample size but expressed confidence in the accuracy of its regional relativity.

“It’s probably for a variety of reasons,” Harrison said of Northern Ontario’s high home energy cost.

“Climate is one of them, the availability of different types of heating and cooling technology, particularly electric heating and oil in areas that don’t have access to natural gas.”

Municipalities across Northwestern Ontario whose citizens face increasing electricity costs have been looking into the prospect of bringing natural gas to their communities but the cost has proven prohibitive.

Goldcorp served as a corporate catalyst to construct a gas pipeline into Red Lake in 2012. Without an industrial proponent, however, Sioux Lookout falls short of Ontario's "profitability index" to expand the line, even though Red Lake was three times further away from the existing pipeline.

Even municipalities near the existing grid would face unjustifiable costs in paying for its expansion.

A meeting between the municipality of Neebing and a natural gas company in 2015 concluded expanding the line from Boundary Road to Mink Mountain would cost $76.5 million.

At a cost of $191,000 for each of the 249 properties the project would serve, being connected to natural gas would cost each household more than the median value of a Neebing home.

Other towns are seeking alternative natural gas delivery options.

Building a pipeline from Red Rock down the hostile terrain of Lake Superior’s north shore to serve the 11,000 people who live in towns between Schreiber and Wawa would cost $250 million.

Those five municipalities will produce a feasibility study by November that will consider a Northeast

Midstream proposal to liquefy natural gas in Red Rock and transport it to local gasifying stations by road or rail.

Terrace Bay Mayor Jody Davis said the towns' populations can't support the project on their own.

"It is expensive. It would be very difficult to proceed with an LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) proposal if we didn't get some kind of assistance, loans or grants from the province to help us move forward with this."

In October 2015, Northeast Midstream CEO Joshua Samuel urged the district's leaders to lobby the province to subsidize natural gas expansion.

Common Voice Northwest Energy Task Force co-chairman Iain Angus approached the province with a solution this spring, arguing those subsidies should come from all Ontarians.

Speaking before an Ontario Energy Board proceeding on ways to expand the province's natural gas network in April, common voice and the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce suggested all energy consumers pay an additional two per cent on monthly bills.

"All future expansions should be paid for by all natural gas ratepayers across the province, much like electricity used to be paid for in terms of its expansion and how much of the natural gas distribution system was paid for in the first place," Angus said.

"I'm sure a lot of the consumers in Southern Ontario would not be happy about paying it but up here in the north, we recognize that if we are to reduce everybody's cost of living, we have to work together to do that."

The OEB panel will publish its decision in December.

Hydro at the forefront of Queen's Park question period: Robert Fisher
CBC News
2016-10-01

The Ontario Liberals are taking a "daily pounding" in the provincial legislature over the energy portfolio, and it's put the most recently-appointed Minister of Energy, Glenn Thibeault, in the political cross-hairs.

That's according to Robert Fisher, a political analyst covering Queen's Park.

He said even though the government promised in its throne speech that it will remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax from electricity bills, the Liberals' handling of hydro is proving unpopular with many residents and opposition MPPs.

The CBC's Markus Schwabe spoke with Fisher, and here's an edited and abridged transcript of that conversation. You can listen to the full interview by clicking the image at the top of this page, or byclicking here.

The Liberals have promised to remove the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax from hydro bills, but is that catching on with the public?

No, not really. If you watch question period, there continues to be a daily pounding from the opposition on the hydro file, which remains a big issue.

The Liberals have to begin to counter-punch on this, which means more energy-related announcements will likely be forthcoming from Glenn Thibeault, while the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP continue to hammer away at the government day after day in question period.

The opposition is also using a lot of anecdotal evidence — a tactic often favoured by the Liberals — including stories from the ridings about how people have been impacted by hydro rates, and how people feel about the sell-off of Hydro One.

The province also announced that the green energy initiative will be scrapped, promising further hydro savings, but the provincial Green Party is saying that it's a short sighted move, is it?

It's a bit of a gamble, because stopping things like wind farm developments gets one issue off the back of Kathleen Wynne, but these are projects that would have developed over decades. In addition, there are some people — including those in the Liberal party —that feel this is the wrong way to go.

There is a great divide on this issue in Ontario, and how Thibeault handles it and how he responds to the opposition may determine whether the Liberals retain power in the next election.

How surprised do you think the Liberals were by the booing of Premier Kathleen Wynne at the International Plowing Match, especially considering it came just after the hydro HST rebate announcement?

I think the government thought the rebate announcement would quell the anger over hydro costs, but, as was clearly seen at the plowing match, the energy issue is proving to be unpopular, especially in rural and northern Ontario.

The Financial Accountability Officer also added fuel to the fire through a recent report that areas outside of large urban centres are paying disproportionately more for electricity than residents in big cities like Toronto and Ottawa.

Again, it's an issue that refuses to go away, and it's not hard to expect more booing from crowds in various parts of the province, unless the government can get a better handle on the hydro issue.

What's the strategy going to be for the Liberals going forward?

Largely to try and ride out the storm, similarly to past scandals like the gas plant issue, despite the daily pounding at Queen's Park.

Glenn Thibeault knows that every day he's going to feel the heat from the opposition, as evidenced, for example by Tuesday's question period where, of the 30 questions asked by members from all parties over a one-hour period, 20 of them were about hydro. Thirteen of those went to Thibeault or were passed to him by the Premier.

By and large, Thibeault's shoulders are the ones that this issue rests on for the Wynne Liberals. Up to this point, he's giving as good as he gets, but the hydro issue is the one that will determine whether the opposition is successful in 'pulling the plug' on the sitting government.

Cancel the contracts, Minister Thibeault
Wind Concerns Ontario
2016-09-30

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault was busy this past week dancing around issues plaguing his portfolio. The issues are: rising electricity bills, energy poverty and polls showing falling voter approval of the Ontario Liberal Party. In an effort to stem the bad news Minister Thibeault announced the suspension of his predecessor's directive to IESO ordering up another 600 megawatts (MW) of wind and 300 MW of solar.

Minister Thibeault issued a news release, delivered a speech to the Ontario Electricity Association, and held a press conference. He looked somewhat embarrassed to be claiming that, because the Large Renewable Procurement or LRP II was not proceeding, the average electricity ratepayer will not have to pay an additional $2.45 per month in the future. About 4 million of those average ratepayers, however, will have to pay from $6-$8.00 more per month if they use gas as a source of warmth (gas furnace) or hot water to cover the costs of the cap and trade tax starting January 1, 2017. Those same ratepayers will also see the benefits of the removal of the 8% provincial sales tax and a drop of $6-8.00 in their monthly electricity bill meaning they shouldn't see an increase in their energy costs. Or will they?

Let's examine the ministerial pronouncements about "suspending" LRP II to see if the actions will really stop rate increases.

First, put the suspension of 600 MW of wind and 300 MW of solar in context. A look at the 2016 Ontario Power Generation (OPG) 2nd Quarter report helps. If wind operated at 30% of capacity and solar at 15% they could have produced 986,000 MWh of intermittent electricity or enough to supply about 220,000 average Ontario households for the six months in that report. That in itself is interesting but it doesn't highlight what else was happening with existing generation facilities. For example, "During the six months ended June 30, 2016, OPG lost 3.4 TWh of hydroelectric generation due to SBG [surplus baseload generation] conditions, compared to 1.5 TWh during the same period in 2015."

In other words, 3.4 terawatts hours of electrical power was dumped because we had too much.

$150 mil wasted

If it hadn't been "spilled," (the technical term) that steady reliable hydroelectric power could have supplied 750,000 average households with power for six months. And even though the power was "spilled," ratepayers were charged for it at a rate of 4.4 cents per kilowatt hour — at a cost of $150 million for the 3.4 TWh! Ontario's 4.5 million ratepayers picked up an annual cost of $33 for spilled power, while Minister Thibeault was suggesting those same ratepayers would "save" future rate increases of about $30 annually!

What about even more spilled hydro, increasing amounts of curtailed wind, and steamed off power coming from Bruce Nuclear?

As we ratepayers continue our conservation efforts and demand for power remains flat, or falling, wind and solar generation contracted but not yet constructed will enter service producing more surpluses. The spilled, curtailed and steamed off power will be added to our bills once again driving rates higher.

Minister Thibeault should cancel any unbuilt wind and solar projects, and complete a cost-benefit study before launching the revision of the long-term energy plan (LTEP) as Premier Wynne has instructed him in her recent Mandate Letter.

Ratepayers would be delighted to experience a year or even six months without a rate increase.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent Wind Concerns Ontario policy.

Liberal wind hypocrisy; Wynne, McGuinty governments showed blatant double standards in how they treated rural versus urban Ontarians
Toronto Sun
Sun Oct 2 2016
Page: A8
Section: News
Byline: Lorrie Goldstein
Source: Toronto Sun

Premier Kathleen Wynne's decision to abandon new, large-scale wind turbine projects ends, for now, the Liberals' disgraceful treatment of rural Ontarians on this issue.

One marked by blatant double standards in how the government dealt with people living in rural communities compared to cities.

In 2009, under Wynne's predecessor, Dalton McGuinty, the Liberals took away, through their Green Energy Act, the planning rights of municipal governments related to the location of industrial wind turbines in their communities.

This was a direct attack on the rights of citizens in rural Ontario, since industrial wind farms don't operate in big cities for obvious reasons.

Imagine the reaction in Toronto if the Liberals had wiped out local planning rights on such issues as a developer wanting to build a 50-storey apartment building in a residential neighbourhood.

And yet rural Ontarians lost their say in the location of industrial wind turbines as high as 50 storeys.

By contrast, in 2010, when Toronto Hydro proposed a 60-turbine wind farm in Lake Ontario offthe Scarborough Bluffs near four Liberal-held urban ridings, prompting widespread protests, the government effectively killed the project by proposing a 5-km minimum setback for offshore wind farms.

(In 2011, it imposed a moratorium on all offshore wind projects.)

This 5-km minimum offshore setback compared to the Liberals' 550-metre minimum setback for onshore wind turbines, which thousands of rural Ontarians argued, to no avail, was inadequate to protect them from the adverse health effects of wind turbine noise, low-frequency vibrations and shadow flicker.

In announcing the 5-km offshore setback, then energy minister Brad Duguid told the Toronto Star that, among other issues: “I think it sets to rest the concerns of some moderate people, who were concerned if they go to the beach, they could be looking up at a huge wind turbine.”

In other words, Duguid was acknowledging local concerns about the esthetics of wind turbines, in terms of size.

That contradicted statements by McGuinty and then energy minister George Smitherman in 2009 - ironically in relation to the Scarborough Bluffs project

- that the only legitimate opposition to wind farms was for environmental and safety reasons, and that people who objected to anything else were “NIMBYS.”

In fact, rural Ontarians were complaining to the government about environmental concerns that wind turbines are notorious killers of birds and bats, and safety concerns about the possible adverse effects on human health, when turbines are placed too close to residential dwellings.

Those complaints largely fell on deaf ears.

But when protesting residents in the cities of Oakville and Mississauga expressed environmental and safety concerns about another form of electricity generation - gas plants -

McGuinty cancelled the projects prior to the 2011 election.

That cost the public $1.1 billion in what the opposition parties dubbed the Liberal “seat saver” program to save local Liberal MPPs from losing their seats.

Small wonder so many rural Ontarians are furious at the Liberals, even beyond what the government’s wind energy fiasco did to their electricity bills.

Wind turbines out, cap-and-trade in
Ottawa Sun
Sat Oct 1 2016
Page: A15
Section: Comment
Byline: John Snobelen
Source: Ottawa Sun

My friend, John Wilkinson, environment minister in the former Dalton McGuinty government, once told me that governments and horses had one thing in common; it’s hard to get either to back up.

Having had some experience with both, I’ll take my chances with horses.

Wilkinson’s words were informative in light of this week’s announcement by Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault that the government of Premier Kathleen Wynne will “suspend procurement” of 1,000 megawatts of mainly wind and solar energy.

It isn’t difficult to figure out why the government is backing out of the next round of green energy procurement.

Ontarians are fed up with ever increasing energy costs and are none too happy with the Liberal approach to green energy.

Who can blame them? Back in 2009, McGuinty and his then minister of energy, the indomitable George Smitherman, proudly rolled out the Green Energy Act.

Ontario was going green in a big way.

Smitherman said the shift to renewable energy would create 50,000 new jobs.

And these weren’t just any old jobs. Ontario was going to be the North American leader in the blossoming world of green energy manufacturing.

Ontarians would abandon those nasty, old economy carmanufacturing jobs and skip gleefully into the 21st century, busily building solar panels for a grateful world.

Or something like that. When pressed, Smitherman acknowledged there would be some modest investment of public funds required for this glorious transformation, about $5 billion dollars.

And consumers could expect marginally higher energy bills. Smitherman estimated hydro rates might rise 1% per year for the next 15 years.

Who could pass up such a marvelous opportunity?

Sure, there might be a few Neanderthals who objected to having towering rows of wind turbines surrounding their tranquil, rural landscapes.

But Smitherman had an answer for the not-in-mybackyard crowd.

He took local community say out of a “streamlined” approvals process.

After all, progress shouldn’t be blocked by grumbly old farmers.

Heck, the folks in Smitherman’s Toronto riding didn’t mind wind turbines whirling away in rural Ontario.

It seems that folks in the hinterlands were less than impressed by this heavyhanded approach.

In the 2011 election, rural voters showed their displeasure and Wilkinson, running in Perth-Wellington, was defeated by a mere 210 votes - ironically denying McGuinty a majority government.

Wilkinson perhaps finds some solace in the knowledge that Smitherman won the 2009 World Wind Energy Award.

According to Ontario‘s Auditor General, the Green Energy Act failed to come close to generating 50,000 jobs - which might be a good thing.

Recent studies have found that for every job created, the high cost of green energy kills two to four other jobs.

Smitherman was wrong on jobs and way off on cost.

In 2015, the AG reported that renewable energy had cost Ontarians an extra $9.25 billion. And what about that 1% annual increase in energy costs?

Since the introduction of the Green Energy Act, Ontario energy rates have skyrocketed, with no end in sight.

I could go on but you get the point - the Green Energy Act has been a dismal failure.

There is no harm or foul in a government backing away from a bad policy.

Even better if they learn from it. Now would be a good time to check the arithmetic on the next big green initiative - cap-and-trade.

But what could go wrong with what amounts to a $1.5-billion annual carbon tax?

Snobelen was a cabinet minister in the Conservative government of Ontario premier Mike Harris from 1995 to 2002

10 reasons pipeline hearings should be stopped; NEB is facing credibility problems as it scrutinizes Enbridge's Line 10 project in Hamilton

The Hamilton Spectator
Sat Oct 1 2016
Page: A19
Section: Opinion
Byline: Don McLean

The National Energy Board comes to Hamilton next month to rubber stamp 35 kilometres of expanded oil pipeline across our city. The evidence is overwhelming that it should be stopped before it starts.

1.Every country has agreed we have a global climate crisis and careful readers are aware that it is already causing destruction and thousands of deaths across the planet, especially in the poorer countries that ironically have made the smallest contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

2.Fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) are the biggest source of those emissions. We must reduce their use, not increase it. Any expansion of their extraction, transportation or use is simply illogical. Pipeline expansion assumes increased tarsands extraction.

3.The National Energy Board, which approves pipeline projects, is in disarray. Its key officials including its chair and panellists examining the Energy East proposal got caught meeting with lobbyists for the company that is pushing the 4600-km tarsands pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick. After also getting exposed as lying about the contents of the meeting, the entire panel has resigned, and the chair and vice-chair have also agreed they cannot be involved in naming a new panel.

4.These are only the latest in a long series of scandals and court decisions that have discredited the NEB and its numerous panellists who come from the oil and gas sector that it is supposed to regulate. Very vocal critics include the mayors of Montreal and Vancouver; a former deputy minister of energy in seven federal and provincial governments; the former president of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia; and the Quebec Minister of the Environment.

5.The NEB process overrides the rights of First Nations. In B.C., the Board approved the Northern Gateway pipeline despite fierce opposition from multiple First Nations whose unceded lands lie in its path. There are multiple court actions underway against that decision. In Ontario, a challenge to the NEB approval of the controversial Line 9 project faces a Supreme Court hearing in November from the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation.

6.The National Energy Board dates from the 1950s. It refuses to consider climatic impacts, and has no mandate to examine any of the modern energy sources such as wind, solar and geothermal. It also pays no attention to the possibilities of conservation and other energy efficiency measures. It has never turned down a pipeline proposal, and other recent scandals have caught it failing to monitor or enforce its own decisions.

7.Mr. Trudeau and the Liberal Party recognized many of these NEB shortcomings and campaigned on a promise to reform it. Instead, it has been allowed to stumble along in an increasingly dysfunctional fashion, and continue to make decisions that will have repercussions for decades into the future.

8.In mid-October, an NEB panel will convene in Hamilton to likely rubber-stamp a 35-kilometre pipeline project that is entirely within the city boundaries. Enbridge Inc. wants to replace its 12-inch Line 10 pipe running across rural Hamilton with a 20-inch pipe that can carry three times the oil (over 200,000 barrels per day). The Haudenosaunee Development Institute, which is connected to the traditional Six Nations Confederacy, has stated that the project will have “a significant impact upon Haudenosaunee rights and interests,” but that hasn’t been addressed by either the NEB or Enbridge.

9.To save the company money, five kilometres are being relocated across farmland wherever the existing right-of-way crosses golf courses. The company has rejected city council’s request to remove the old pipe with assurances that Enbridge will take care of it “forever.” The route crosses the city’s largest stream (Spencer Creek), the Beverly Swamp, and near the watersheds of Chedoke Creek and the Welland River.
10.The Line 10 NEB panel was appointed by the officials who subsequently got caught illegally meeting with the Energy East lobbyists. One of the three panellists joined the NEB last year despite being a consultant for the Kinder Morgan (Trans Mountain) pipeline then being reviewed by the NEB.

All NEB hearings, including the one in Hamilton, should be suspended immediately by Prime Minister Trudeau until the required reforms he believes in and has promised to make are completed and implemented.

Don McLean is co-ordinator of Hamilton 350 Committee for real action on climate change. He can be reached at info@hamilton350.org .

Remote First Nations leading the way with renewable energy
The Chronicle Journal
2016-10-02
Byline: ROOPA RAKSHIT

Nestled in the boreal landscape of Northwestern Ontario, the people of Poplar Hill First Nation live along the banks of the Berens River. Families travel the land and the waterways to practise traditional skills.

The First Nation, like other remote communities, is built within a reserve that is dependant on electricity generation to meet its energy needs. The landscape is beautiful; by contrast, when entering the community, there are rows of fuel storage tanks and diesel-powered generating stations adjacent to the airport. These tanks store diesel that is trucked in by winter road or flown in at the cost of approximately $1 million per year for a community of 400 people.

According to a socio-impact analysis report published in 2015 for Wataynikaneyap Power, it is estimated that a total of 115 litres of diesel fuel are burnt every minute in Northern Ontario's remote First Nation communities, adversely affecting the environment, individual health, socio-economic opportunities and overall well-being.

First Nations with growing populations are challenged to increase fuel storage and energy generation capacity to meet an ever-increasing demand for electricity.

"Our community is growing and the diesel generators can't keep up", says Dennis King, a council member from Poplar Hill, and adds that the lack of reliable power is compromising community development, infrastructure, and basic needs like good medical care, food, and shelter.

The energy crisis prevalent in the six First Nation communities under the Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO) Tribal Council is mirrored in 140 First Nations across Canada.

There are 25 remote off-grid First Nations in Northwestern Ontario that rely solely on diesel for the production of heat and electricity. In Northern Ontario, electricity production and distribution is handled by the provincial utility, Hydro One Remote Communities Inc. (HORCI), and nine communities are currently served by community-based utilities or Independent Power Authorities.

Remote locations, the absence of all-season roads, off-grid status, and diesel dependency are leading to acute energy insecurities. Also, as climate change progressively and significantly affects weather patterns, remote communities are feeling the impacts. With shorter and warmer winters and more variable temperatures, winter roads are available for shorter durations and are mostly unreliable. Thus, communities are seeking alternatives to their dependence on diesel generation.

The KO communities are leading the development of alternative energy sources and are committed to community energy planning. They are pursuing energy-saving opportunities such as energy efficiency upgrades, energy conservation and investing in alternative sources of energy.

"The First Nations have always been innovative and have built unique solar intallations to relieve their dependance on diesel generation," says Franz Seibel, the Director of Research at the KO Research Institute (KORI). "There are First Nation processes, values and terms related to energy and renewables that are understood in the language and cultural context that can be described for the purposes of technical design."

KORI is mandated to support the KO communities in enhancing community literacy on research and economic development planning. A key outcome expected is building local capacities to make informed decisions to undertake renewable energy projects. Efforts are underway to develop bilingual tools, online educational modules, animations, posters, and flyers.

A KORI facilitated survey conducted in these communities highlighted a general level of awareness on renewable energy and considered its development a priority to diversify the energy mix. Solar power, wind turbines and run-of-the-river hydroelectricity ranked high in their preference of renewable options.

Presently, biomass is a less familiar option that requires further understanding of the source of fibre, processing, and how it could be implemented in a remote First Nation without timber operations.

The First Nations have been overcoming challenges related to implementing renewable energy projects. They range from raising the initial investments, efficiency and reliability factors, building local capacities, keeping pace with emerging technologies, and finding the right partners.

Amidst ongoing debates about environmental protection versus development in the nation-building decision processes, Ontario acknowledges that climate change affects remote reserves and has encouraged First Nation-led solutions to address energy insecurities.

In early August, Wataynikaneyap Power, a transmission company owned by 21 First Nations, was designated by Ontario to make application to build an 1,800-kilometre power line linking 17 remote First Nations communities to the provincial power grid (see www.wataypower.ca).

Fort Severn First Nation is one of several other communities that are out of reach of the transmission line, but is exploring ways to minimize diesel dependency and retrofit its diesel-generated microgrid with renewable energy sources. Fort Severn currently generates 20 MW through solar power and additional 300 MW is under construction.

Successful renewable energy development examples from the KO communities include Deer Lake supplementing its power demand with a 152 MW solar installation on the school roof. The community already benefits from a partnership with HORCI in a 450 kW run-of-the-river hydro generating station constructed on the Severn River in 1998. The community's leadership has stressed the need to invest more in renewable energy.

Keewaywin and North Spirirt Lake First Nations benefit from 20 MW solar generators and McDowell Lake First Nation generates 10 MW of solar power. Poplar Hill's fuel tanks are balanced by the solar panels covering the roof of the community's newly renovated hotel.

First Nations are leading the way in remote community renewable energy. "Renewable energy can be First Nation-owned and operated, when we build meaningful partnerships and local capacity," says Geordi Kakepetum, NCC Development's CEO (see nccsolar.com), a not-for-profit company owned by the KO member. "Our full potential will be realized only when local capacities are enhanced, policies and programs engage with the First Nations at equal footing, and all stakeholders work in meaningful partnership with First Nations."

Roopa Rakshit is a Ph.D. candidate, Faculty of Natural Resources Management, Lakehead University. She is pursuing community energy transition planning for the Keewaytinook Okimakanak First Nations. Her columns appear monthly.

Wynne open to request for Toronto Hydro tax breaks
Toronto Star
2016-10-01
Byline: Robert Benzie and David Rider Toronto Star Section: News Page: A10

Premier Kathleen Wynne's government will be all ears if Mayor John Tory asks for tax concessions to expedite the sale of Toronto Hydro.

But no such formal request has come from Tory, and Finance Minister Charles Sousa cautions the city would have to account for a 22 per cent provincial transfer tax.

"Toronto Hydro will be subject to the same conditions as everybody else," Sousa told the Star in an interview.

That suggests the city could be on the hook for $220 million in transfer tax if a $1-billion stake in Toronto Hydro were sold.

"Toronto Hydro would have to abide by that transfer tax number," the finance minister said, noting he lowered that levy to 22 per cent last year from 33 per cent. It will go back up to 33 per cent in 2019.

While there are writeoffs the utility could use to reduce its transfer tax tab, the more complicated matter of a departure tax has yet to be determined.

Senior government officials, speaking on background in order to discuss sensitive matters, say Tory has yet to formally ask Queen's Park for any such tax breaks.

They said Wynne's administration is willing to listen to any pitch from the mayor and council - especially if the money the city saves in provincial taxes is plowed back into municipal infrastructure.

Amanda Galbraith, Tory's communications director, said Friday the mayor "had initial discussion several months ago with the premier about the fact that council has asked the city manager to report back on asset monetization, including Toronto Hydro."

Galbraith added that the mayor's office is "awaiting the report from the city manager, which was directed by council, around how we make best use of city assets to meet the growing needs of our city.

"To be clear: the mayor is not bringing forward anything. City council voted to direct the city manager to report back on this and other city assets."

Toronto Hydro pays the city an annual dividend that amounted to $56 million last year. Sousa's office said Friday that a departure tax would apply if public ownership of the utility fell below 90 per cent.

"The Ontario government does not possess the information necessary to calculate departure tax until the information is provided by the taxpayer, and once such information is provided it would be confidential taxpayer information," said Kelsey Ingram, the treasurer's press secretary.

With files from Jennifer Pagliaro

Climate-change policies won't come without pain
Peterborough Examiner
Mon Oct 3 2016
Page: A4
Section: Opinion
Byline: David Reevely
Source: Peterborough Examiner

Ontario's renovation of its electricity system puts us near the head of Canada's provinces in dealing with climate change, a new report from the green-minded Pembina Institute says.

It's a little lifeline - a life-string, a strand of life-thread - for a government that's getting blasted for the increase in electricity prices it's presided over in the past decade.

Ontarians are furious over the price of power, Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown put to Premier Kathleen Wynne in the legislature last Thursday. Why do you suppose that is?

"Maybe it's because, according to the auditor general, between 2006 and 2014, the people of Ontario have been overcharged $37 billion for electricity and global adjustment fees," he said. "Maybe it's because this government has overpaid $9.2 billion for renewable contracts, while the Liberal Party took $1.3 million in donations from 30 companies. There are a lot of reasons why the people of Ontario would be angry, but I want to ask the Premier, why do you think the people of Ontario are so angry at your energy policy?" We did things we had to do, Wynne responded.

"We now have an electricity grid that is 90 per cent renewable," she said. "The shutting down of the coalfired plants in this province and the investment in a renewable industry was the single largest initiative in terms of reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions in North America. We're proud of that. We've done away with smog days and reduced that pollution."

The Pembina report backs her up. Of course, most of Ontario's power comes from nuclear reactors, which is not what most people think of when we hear about renewable

energy. There's a large but finite supply of uranium to run them and they produce poisonous nuclear waste that we still just submerge in pools near the reactors for years and then tuck into warehouses because we don't know what else to do with it yet. But nuclear power doesn't burn fossil fuels and throw exhaust up into the atmosphere, so if that's what you mean by "renewable," nuclear reactors count.

This has made a difference. According to the Pembina Institute report, which relies on publicly available data, Ontario is now thirdbest among the provinces in greenhouse-gas emissions per person, at about 12.4 tonnes a year. Hydro-powered Quebec is the best, at 10.1 tonnes, and Prince Edward Island is just ahead of Ontario at 12.3 tonnes.

Both Alberta and Saskatchewan have active plans to move to renewable energy. Alberta's planning to phase out coal entirely. Ontario's already done it.

Nice as the Pembina Institute report is to Ontario, it urges more.

Freight transportation accounts for 10 per cent of Ontario's greenhousegas emissions, the report says. The province has promised fuel standards for trucks, but the expectation is that trucks on Highway 401 will stay the dominant means of hauling freight here indefinitely.

"The province should release a stand-alone goods movement strategy to map out a climatefriendly future for the sector," the Pembina report says.

But a major move away from trucking would mean a big investment and probably increased prices for manufacturers and the goods they produce to help pay for it.

This might sound familiar - it's an echo of the renovation the government's carried out to the electricity system. Big changes to a basic system with a ton of money at stake. It'll be a brave government that decides to take on another such challenge.

David Reevely is an Ottawa Citizen

Ontario's handout economy
National Post
Mon Oct 3 2016
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Section: Opinion
Source: National Post

The way the Ontario Liberal government sees it, the route to a successful economy is via an ongoing supply of government handouts.

According to recently released figures, Ontario has awarded more than $900 million in grants since 2013, mainly to profitable technology firms and big automakers. Internet technology giant Cisco Systems got $220 million, Fiat Chrysler and Honda Canada both got over $85 million, while the Ford Motor Company got over $70 million.

The grants are on top of other subsidies, worth billions more, that are sprinkled throughout the economy. In February, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk calculated that the Liberals had handed $2.36 billion to 374 private business projects in the decade ending in May 2015, with $1.87 billion in grants and $489 million in loans. They kicked in another $118 million between the time the report was prepared and the day it was released.

Another report, by an expert panel examining the government's support programs, calculated that all the province's direct and indirect grants, tax credits and programs designed to grow certain sectors of the economy add up to about $5 billion a year.

The CBC reported in May that one of the biggest corporate recipients was an ethanol firm that received $160 million in taxpayer support, while donating $480,000 to the Liberal party. The firm got between $1.3 million and $31 million a year for 10 years starting in 2006. Another report indicated the Liberals had subsidized five buyers of Porsche 918 Spyders - a luxury sports car that sells for about $1.1 million - under a program meant to encourage sales of electric vehicles. The Liberals are so keen on subsidies that one subsidy program can occasionally bump into another. Electricity costs for consumers have doubled in seven years, even as usage has declined substantially, thanks to generous support programs the Liberals have offered to producers of alternative energy. Ontario pays 11 cents a kilowatt hour for electricity, then exports the same power for two cents. The province doesn't need the power - it already has more than it can use - but it continues to expand the program nonetheless.

To offset consumer anger, former premier Dalton McGuinty introduced a subsidy plan to reduce the impact on household bills.

McGuinty's plan ended last year, but Premier Kathleen Wynne recently reintroduced it. Her motive was the same as McGuinty's: to curb voter anger at the Liberals' gross mishandling of power needs. Meanwhile, her government will continue to build subsidized power projects it doesn't need, producing high-cost power to be sold at a loss, while subsidizing consumers so they won't feel the full burden of the whole crazy-quilt, selfdefeating program. Wynne has recently conceded people are upset at the damage Liberal policies are doing, but gives no hint the government is likely to change its ways.

Indeed, Economic Development Minister Brad Duguid makes clear that the Liberals remain as convinced as ever at their ability to pick winners and losers. In reaching a surprisingly generous contract deal with its workers recently, General Motors noted it would "be working with government on potential support and will provide further details on the investment at the appropriate time," a strong hint that more public funding will be flowing its way soon. Duguid made little effort to hide that likelihood, telling the Financial Post: "This government is the biggest champion of the auto sector that the province has probably ever had, and we've made it very clear that these are the kind of projects that we would partner on as we have in the past and we expect to in the future."

It seems pointless to note that, as a rule, one government subsidy only leads to another, that propping up struggling businesses is not a formula for long-term growth and that jobs "created" by subsidies usually end as soon as the handouts do. Or that a province that's up against a $300 billion wall of debt can't afford to keep up the freebies forever. It's pointless because Ontario's is a tired government that's out of ideas. It spends money it doesn't have, because that's what it knows how to do. It will continue to buy its way out of pain until voters end its access to their money.

Ontario has an electricity crisis
The Chatham Daily News
Mon Oct 3 2016
Page: A4
Section: Opinion
Byline: Toby Barrett
Source: The Chatham Daily News

Skyrocketing electricity prices in Ontario have reached the point of crisis.

Since this government first took office, households in Ontario are now paying on average $1,000 more a year on their electricity bills. Out-of-control hydro costs have created unprecedented levels of energy poverty, and significantly reduced business investment and the jobs that come with it.

This summer, Ontario achieved a new dubious distinction. For years those of us in opposition have speculated we have the highest energy rates in North America. But now it's official: Ontario has the highest rates. Our low-density price is 25.9 cents/kWh. That now surpasses Hawaii, the previous record-holder at 22.6 cents/kWh.

Now we learn 17 per cent of Hydro One customers, or 225,952 people, have their account in arrears. When that many people can't pay their bill, it screams of crisis.

The province has pledged to provide a hydro rebate equivalent to the provincial share of the HST. This amounts to 36 cents/day, on average. This does absolutely nothing to remedy the root causes of our hydro crisis. The province is still generating heavilysubsidized power we don't need; still paying the U.S. and Quebec to take our surplus power. And the solution is to borrow another billion dollars annually for taxpayers to subsidize ratepayers. This is all about appearing to do something rather than actually doing something. It's too little, too late. The paltry credit won't help those who are already in arrears. It shows how out of touch this government is with people.

Despite the government's talking points, we know signing contracts for power we don't need is what caused, and continues to cause, electricity bills to skyrocket.

Premier Kathleen Wynne has recently admitted this energy procurement system was a disaster, and has promised to stop signing renewable contracts. Unfortunately, the damage is already done.

The Independent Electricity System Operator's (IESO) long-term outlook confirms the cost of delivering electricity has skyrocketed by $5 billion over the past decade - a 32 per cent hike. The IESO notes a drop in overall energy demand, which has driven up the average unit cost of electricity.

The outlook also illustrates a startling drop in industrial energy use as companies have either cut production or moved out of Ontario. Recall that Ontario has lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs over the past decade.

And now we learn Ontario's electricity is not only overpriced - it's unreliable. Last year, the province had 135 electricity outages, or more than B.C., Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Alberta combined.

As a result, we have energy poverty today, and given the loss of energy-dependent manufacturing jobs, we will see continued poverty tomorrow.

- Toby Barrett is the MPP for the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk.

An Ontario Man Composes A Popular Song About High Hydro Rates
Source: Global
Oct 2, 2016 6:08 PM (10)

Anchor: Well soaring Hydro rates have become a hot button issue right across the province, with many Ontarians changing their habits and yet they're still barely able to afford their bills. Well one Ontario man has taken his frustration out through music and it is getting a lot of traction online. Take a look.

Dave Bush, Hydro Song Goes Viral On Social Media: [♪] Cause the Ontario Hydro corporation is screwing this province's population. In the last ten years, you've gone to hell.

Bush: We're agriculture-based. I mean we've got a lot of farm operations here and these poor farmers are going from $500 Hydro bills to $1500 and $2000 a month to run their farm. It is just making it really, really challenging and the frustration is growing.

Bush: [♪] Oh behalf of Ontario, we've had enough.

Bush: We've got a Hydro generating system that is underutilized already. And we're throwing money into solar panels and wind turbines, and we produce enough electricity for a province already. I mean, there are 60,000 people in Ontario that have their power cut off right now because they cannot pay their bills. And there's another 600,000 or so that are in the rears. They're behind on their Hydro bills. 600,000 people are behind on their Hydro bills. Doesn't that speak something to this issue?

Bush: [♪] [inaudible] corporation is one messed up operation. Oh behalf of Ontario, we've had enough.
Transcript captured directly from source. Some typographical errors or omissions are to be expected.

'Huron Resolve' Nuclear Emergency Exercise Starts Today
Blackburnnews.com
2016-10-03
Byline: STEVE SABOURIN

Bruce Power, the County of Bruce, the Municipalities of Kincardine and Saugeen Shores, and the Province are involved in a full-scale, nuclear emergency exercise this week.

The exercise – called Huron Resolve – will simulate an emergency that will require coordination between a wide-range of organizations.

Residents can expect to see an increase in emergency vehicles and response personnel in the area as the exercise gets underway.

The goal of the exercise is to test emergency protocols and procedures. The focus will be on the Provincial Nuclear Emergency Response Plan and how the government, municipalities and emergency personnel would respond in the event of a nuclear emergency.

The Kincardine Davidson Centre will be used as an Evacuation Centre and Reception Centre as part of the Municipal Emergency Response Plan on Thursdsay. The Canadian Red Cross will be setting up at the Davidson Centre along with Salvation Army and St. John Ambulance as part of the emergency response plan.

Exercises like Huron Resolve provide an opportunity for responding agencies to test their plans and work side by side. The last nuclear exercise was held in October of 2012.