

Afternoon Energy Media Summary - June 27, 2017

From: "Halford, Gavin (ENERGY)" <gavin.halford@ontario.ca>
To: "@ENERGY All" <energy-all2@msgov.gov.on.ca>
Date: Tue, 27 Jun 2017 15:03:15 -0400

Good Afternoon,

Here is a roundup of the day's news:

- Reducing hydro bills is the right thing to do: Energy minister- Peterborough Examiner
- EPCOR opens Kincardine natural gas office in space offered by Bruce Telecom- Kincardine News
- Hydro One's distribution rate application, explained- The Review
- Quebec's new energy strategy includes large-scale solar- PV Magazine
- No Decision on Hydro Merger- Bayshore Broadcasting

Please see below Today in Twitter for news articles.

June 27, 2017 Today in Twitter

- [@nerd0](#) - First Nations in [#Ontario](#) Are Grappling With [#Nuclear](#) Waste on Their Lands [https:// goo.gl/fb/xF2sS6](https://goo.gl/fb/xF2sS6) [#energy](#)
- [@ckdrnews](#) - Ontario Energy Board holding meeting in [@CityofDryden](#) tonight to discuss hydro rate hike application <http://www.ckdr.net/news/180434455/1/oeb-holding-public-meeting-proposed-hydro-rate-hike> ...
- [@PatSackville](#) - Wonderful having [@MayorAlMcDonald](#) bring greetings on behalf of the [@CityofNorthBay](#), one of [#Ontario](#)'s municipal champions 4 [#hydrogen](#) energy

[Reducing hydro bills is the right thing to do: Energy minister](#)

By: Glenn Thibeault

For: The Peterborough Examiner

On: June 27, 2017

Hydro bills are coming down in Ontario, and here's why it's the right thing to do

When we introduced Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan in March, our government committed to fundamentally restructuring the system to deliver the biggest cut to electricity rates in Ontario's history.

I'm happy to say that the Fair Hydro Plan is now a reality. And I believe this is the fairer way forward.

This past week the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) announced it had taken the final steps to lower electricity prices by an average of 25 per cent for all residential consumers in the province. As many as half a million small businesses and farms will also benefit.

The OEB, the province's independent body that sets rates, lowered bills in response to the Fair Hydro Act, 2017, which passed in the Ontario Legislature on May 31. All Progressive Conservative and NDP MPPs in attendance that day opposed our plan to bring down electricity rates and voted against the Fair Hydro Plan.

Relief through the Fair Hydro Plan is immediate. We also designed these reductions to last, by holding electricity rates to inflation for four years. In addition, we're updating our Long-term Energy Plan, which will continue our trend of taking costs out of the electricity system and making it more affordable for ratepayers.

Fifteen years ago, our electricity system had become unreliable, the victim of years of neglect by governments of all stripes, which culminated in the unforgettable blackout of 2003. We had to reinvest in our system, and that came at a cost to ratepayers. But the fact is electricity bills were becoming unaffordable for too many people. Premier Wynne and I spoke to people across the province about their electricity bills, hearing how they were struggling with rising payments.

In September, 2016 we announced an eight per cent rate reduction, equivalent to the provincial portion of the HST. But that wasn't enough. People's bills were still increasing too much, too fast. As we continued to listen to peoples' concerns it became clear that we needed to bring even more relief, and it had to apply to everyone in the province, which led to our Fair Hydro Plan. We heard that the most vulnerable among us needed even more support. That's why we expanded the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP), providing 50 per cent more support in the form of monthly credits for people with low incomes. Today, more households are eligible for the program than ever before.

People in rural and Northern communities also pay more for electricity, because it takes more infrastructure to deliver electricity to where they live. Today, the Rural or Remote Rate Protection program has been expanded to help about 800,000 households - cutting electricity bills by 40 to 50 per cent for eligible customers, effective July 1.

These changes to the way we pay for electricity are fairer, and they are lasting. We can afford them because of Ontario's strengthening economy, which is the fastest growing in Canada, and we need them to ensure the growth in our economy translates to more opportunity and security for people right across Ontario. There is no better way to use the province's recently balanced budget than by giving everyone the break they need on their hydro bills. It's the right thing to do for Ontario and the fair thing to do for your family.

Sudbury MPP Glenn Thibeault is Ontario's minister of energy.

[EPCOR opens Kincardine natural gas office in space offered by Bruce Telecom](#)

By: Troy Patterson

For: Kincardine News

On: June 27, 2017

EPCOR is opening up communications with future customers in the region through an office space offered up by Kincardine's Bruce Telecom.

The Alberta-based company made the announcement and cut the ribbon at the location on June 23, with staff and elected representatives from the Municipality of Kincardine, Huron-Kinloss and Arran-Elderslie celebrating the milestone, which will allow residents and businesses to inquire about costs and methods to convert to natural gas.

EPCOR president and CEO Stuart Lee attended the event to express his confidence in the project, adding approval from the Ontario Energy Board is anticipated this fall, with hopes they could begin constructing lines into the partnering communities by late 2017 or early 2018.

"We're confident we're in a good position and the municipalities remain committed to the project," said Lee. "We need one final open house with the public and we'll be ready to go in a short time."

The project has been in the works for six years, and was facilitated by the three municipalities who currently aren't serviced by natural gas. Lee said by their estimates, ratepayers could end up saving up to \$25 million in utility costs per year if natural gas conversion takes hold.

"It's an important event and now EPCOR will have a chance to meet folks and get an understanding of what they're offering," said J. Mark Rodger, who has been representing the municipalities throughout the project.

Lee said they're currently awaiting the release of \$100 million in funding for natural gas expansion from the Ontario government, which will aid in reducing capital costs of the project and the overall cost to the company will charge the consumer.

The office space offered by Bruce Telecom will allow EPCOR staff to build their visibility, answer questions and educate potential customers about the benefits of conversion.

Kincardine mayor Anne Eadie said the community is looking forward to natural gas both for residents, and as a significant economic driver in attracting industry and employers.

Arran-Elderslie mayor Paul Eagleson said the office shows the project is alive and well, and said he looks forward to the benefits of natural gas, and hopes for offices in Chesley or Paisley at some point.

Lee said despite the length delays, and the patience all parties have shown, once the project rolls out the short term challenges will start demonstrating their long term benefits.

EPCOR's Thomas Stachowski, a customer care representative, will be staffing the Kincardine office.

[Hydro One's distribution rate application, explained](#)

By: Francis Tessier-Burns

For: The Review

On: June 27, 2017

The Ontario Energy Board held a public consultation session last week in Rockland, regarding Hydro One's application to up its delivery rates over the next five years.

At the meeting, Oded Hubert, the vice president of Regulatory Affairs for Hydro One, presented why the utility's Distribution Plan.

The plan highlights necessary infrastructure upgrades and future investments for increased productivity.

For example, after identifying about 400,000 poles—of the 1.6 million owned by Hydro One—that will reach the end of their service life within the next five years, the plan indicates only about 72,000 will be replaced within the time frame relevant to the application, so between 2018 and 2022, for a total cost of \$579 million.

That's nearly \$8,050 per pole.

According to Hubert, a large part of the infrastructure was installed in the 1950s and 1960s and now "requires attention," since the average life of a power pole is 62 years.

Hélène Dutrisac asked why this wasn't taken into account before now.

"Yes, we did know there would be a bulge, but until now the work program did not require massive investment, now is the time we need to step up the investment," said Hubert.

Also over the next five years, Hydro One wants refurbish an average of 15 stations per year, for a total of \$148 million, about \$1.97 million per station.

When it comes to maintenance, the presentation showed it will cost about \$150 million to maintain 12,750 kilometres of "rights-of-way," and \$78 million for an estimated 42,645 trouble calls in 2018 alone.

To fund these projects, the utility application would increase the base distribution charge from \$51.02 per month in 2017 to \$62.77 per month in 2022. This is according to the OEB's presentation at the public meeting.

Fair Hydro Plan

Earlier this year, the province approved the Fair Hydro Act, which will drop hydro prices next month.

On average the Act is said to drop overall hydro bills by about 25 per cent for an average consumer, using about 750 kWh per month.

But that cut will likely lead to increased costs down the line.

Both Hubert and Kristi Sebalj, the registrar and senior legal counsel for the OEB, said they received many messages asking why Hydro One was upping its prices

The Fair Hydro Act introduces distribution rate protection. In the case of Hydro One, that protection applies to R2 and R1 customers.

Under the protection, the OEB sets a maximum monthly base distribution charge, which

is says is a decrease for most eligible customers.

On June 22, the OEB set the maximum monthly base charge at \$36.43, which will kick in on July 1 and will remain until changed by the OEB.

When it comes to Hydro One's application, Sebalj said the OEB is still currently collecting customer input.

[Quebec's new energy strategy includes large-scale solar](#)

By: Emiliano Bellini

For: PV Magazine

On: June 27, 2017

The Quebec Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (MENR) has unveiled the first action plan of the 2030 Energy Policy, which was launched in April 2016 and was then approved by the local National Assembly through the Act to implement the 2030 Energy Policy and to amend various legislative provisions in December of last year.

The action plan 2017-20120 is a package of 42 measures that is expected to help the Canadian province's transition to clean energy over the next three years.

According to the MENR's document, large-scale solar, which was an option that was never seriously considered by the local government to date, will now become part of the province's energy mix. The MENR announced that a first pilot solar park will be built by Hydro-Quebec, the local state-owned utility that manages the region's generation, transmission and distribution of power.

Although the MENR has not specified the size of the solar park, local newspaper LaPresse.ca reports that the plant may even reach 100 MW of capacity. The site for the project, however, has not yet been identified. The government's intention is to test how power generated by large-scale solar facilities can be integrated in the regional power system. Furthermore, the MENR's document reveals that the project could be launched by the end of this year.

The action plan 2017-20120 also includes the testing of how the PV technology for distributed generation can be made more efficient. Hydro-Quebec is currently supporting the installation of PV and renewable energy power systems with a capacity of up to 50 kW through net metering. PV system owners can currently feed their surplus power into the Hydro-Québec grid in exchange for credits in kWh that will be applied to their electricity bill. The scheme is open to residential customers, farmers and small businesses.

The entire action plan is being managed by Transition énergétique Québec (TEQ), a new public body that is responsible for supporting the energy sector. The agency is also responsible for outlining the programs and measures to achieve the energy targets set by the government.

Under the 2030 Energy Policy, Quebec's government is targeting a 40% reduction in the amount of petroleum products consumed, to eliminate the use of thermal coal, to increase by 25% the share of renewable energy in total energy production, and to increase bioenergy production by 50%.

Compared to neighboring Ontario, which has installed more than 2 GW of PV capacity,

Quebec has only a few hundreds of kilowatts of solar connected to its grid. Ontario's PV capacity represents the vast majority of Canada's cumulative grid-connected PV power.

[No Decision on Hydro Merger](#)

By: Peter Jackson

For: Bayshore Broadcasting

On: June 27, 2017

No Decision on Hydro Merger
Goderich | by Peter Jackson

Council tabled a motion that would merge Goderich Hydro and Erie Thames Powerlines

There will be more discussion on a proposed merger of Goderich Hydro with Erie Thames Powerlines at Goderich Council's next regular meeting on July 17th.

Council decided to table the proposal, at a special meeting on Monday.

Goderich Hydro board member Duncan Jewell told Council that the utility has no room to grow as a business entity, and that a merger is in the municipality's best interest.

Jewell points out that Goderich is surrounded by Hydro One operations and that another merger partner may be difficult to find, if the proposal is turned down.

Under the proposed deal, the Erie Thames customer service centre in Mitchell would move to Goderich, and local hydro operations would stay at their present Huckins Street location.

Chief Administrative Officer Larry McCabe tells The Beach News that several alternatives were examined, but most involved an outright sale to either Festival Power of Stratford, London Hydro or Hydro One.

A merger with Westario Power was ruled out, because 10 per-cent of Westario is privately owned.

McCabe notes that a merger with Erie Thames would save \$375,000 in annual payments Goderich makes for outside services Erie Thames already provides.

He says there would be a smooth transition for workers in both utilities, who are currently represented by two different unions.

The merger idea comes as the number of electricity distributors in Ontario continues to drop.

Erie Thames Powerlines is headquartered in Ingersoll with operations in Mitchell and Dublin, and 10 communities in Oxford and Elgin Counties.