Message

From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
Sent: 2017-04-04 6:15:14 AM
Subject: Today's News - Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Tuesday, April 4, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

IESO Mentions

News - 1 Results

Letter: Pickering is a boon to Ontario, says Ontario Power Generation CEO

Financial Post - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Jeffrey Lyash, Special to Financial Post

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Back to Top

Industry News

News - 9 Results

Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction sells out current allowances; Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction sells out

Canadian Press - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

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Cap-and-trade auction in Ontario yields $472-million; Provincial government sells 100% of its 2017 permit offering

theglobeandmail.com - Mon Apr 3 2017, 6:15pm ET
Byline: SHAWN McCARTHY

Ontario's first auction under its controversial cap-and-trade system sold all its offering of 2017 permits, yielding the province more than $472-million that will be used to finance programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to ...

Either way, we're all going to pay; Auction of carbon credits means higher prices for consumers

Toronto Sun - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Lorrie Goldstein
Page: A7

What does Climate Change Minister Glen Murray's announcement Monday that Ontario sold out its first cap-and-trade auction of carbon credits mean to you? It means Ontario businesses have just paid a new charge of $472 million to ...

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The Timmins Daily Press - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Glenn Thibeault,
Page: A4

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's hydro scheme is short on details and long on hollow promises. Many of their proposals rely on a vague and yet-to-be-determined "expert panel" that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky negotiations ...

Brown nixes plan for Tory hydro policy on rates this year

thestar.com - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Robert BenzieRob Ferguson

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Byline: Elliot Ferguson
Page: A2

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CBC.CA News - Mon Apr 3 2017, 5:00am ET
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Mount Dennis is striving to become carbon neutral as Toronto's first "Net Zero" neighbourhood and its community association is hosting a public meeting Monday night to discuss.how residents can use less non-renewable energy. ...

How Alberta is trying to avoid Ontario's green energy boondoggle

Cold Lake Sun - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Stuart Thomson
Page: A27

In a debate in the legislature last fall on the government's plans to phase out coal plants and shift to renewable energy, Wildrose MLA Derek Fildebrandt recalled a friend from high school who jumped in a shopping cart and went careening ...

$1.83 Hydro bill: Manitoban shines light on solar energy

CBC.CA News - Mon Apr 3 2017, 10:41am ET
Byline:CBC News

When Heather Bishop looks at the long row of solar panels installed in the yard of her rural southern Manitoba home, she sees not only an impressive setup, but an investment in the future. "Every time I drive into the yard, it catches me again, and ...

Back to Top

IESO Mentions

Full Articles

Letter: Pickering is a boon to Ontario, says Ontario Power Generation CEO

Financial Post - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Jeffrey Lyash, Special to Financial Post

I read with interest the Consumer Policy Institute op-ed "Pickering picks pocketbooks" by Brady Yauch that appeared March 28 in the Financial Post. Yauch criticizes the province's proposed continued operations of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station.

Today, Ontario relies on nuclear power to provide 60 per cent of its electricity generation. The plants at Darlington, Pickering and Bruce have excellent performance and safety records. Nuclear is Ontario's best option for cost-effective, greenhouse gas emissions-free, reliable baseload generation and has been a critical resource in ensuring clean air for Ontarians. In addition, nuclear power provides a valuable boost to the Ontario economy.

OPG is committed to ensuring public safety and makes every decision with this commitment in the forefront. Our nuclear operations are independently evaluated by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC). Pickering operations received the highest possible rating of "Fully Satisfactory" from the CNSC in 2016. This demonstrates Pickering's high level of station operating performance.

Related

Looking to lower Ontario power rates? Start with Pickering, where $550 million will be wastefully spent (business.financialpost.com)

The six operating nuclear units at Pickering meet about 14 per cent of Ontario's annual electricity demand. Pickering generation comes at a cost lower than almost all other sources of energy. Continued operations will save Ontario customers $600 million and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 17 million tonnes over the period from 2020 to 2024. Its value has been affirmed numerous times by the Ontario government. Continued operations of Pickering will support the refurbishment of the Ontario nuclear fleet.

Yauch argues that Pickering's historic performance has lagged other nuclear plants in Ontario and the U.S. The evidence on comparable performance is currently being reviewed through the open and transparent Ontario Energy Board hearing process. However, it is important to point out that the case for continued operations at Pickering is based on comparing the nuclear plant to the realistic alternative of natural gas fired generation rather than an arguably higher performing nuclear plant elsewhere.

Yauch cites a report submitted to the OEB hearing by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) which found that Pickering continued operations would have an expected net benefit to Ontario ratepayers. Yauch argues that the analysis relies on too high an assumption for natural gas prices and indicates that there is a 70 per cent probability that Pickering continued operations could result in a net cost to ratepayers. However, as Yauch notes in his article but then ignores, the IESO analysis does not incorporate a price of carbon. Based on recent government initiatives, $20-$50 a tonne would be a conservative range of carbon prices over the period to 2024. Incorporating a realistic carbon price in the analysis would add one to two cents per kWh to the cost of natural-gas-fired generation, further improving expected ratepayer benefits of continued operations at Pickering.

It would be almost impossible to replace the 3,000 megawatts of capacity and 14 per cent of annual generation provided by Pickering before 2024 with new natural gas plants and hydro imports from Quebec. Natural gas produces significant carbon emissions and new plants are difficult to site. Assuming they had enough power to send us, hydro from Quebec would require large, long lead-time investments in transmission, generation and interconnection investments that would make purchases from Quebec more expensive than Pickering's continued operations.

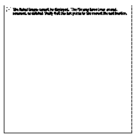
OPG continues to invest in and improve Pickering Nuclear's performance to ensure this important source of baseload electricity is available for Ontario during the nuclear refurbishments.

Jeffrey Lyash is president and CEO, Ontario Power Generation.

Back to Top

Industry News

Full Articles



Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction sells out current allowances; Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction sells out

Canadian Press - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario's first cap-and-trade auction sold out all current allowances, giving the new market a strong start, but the province's environment minister warned the real test of the system will be in the emission reductions it brings about.

The March 22 auction brought in $472 million, the government said Monday.

But over the next 15 auctions, to the end of the compliance period in 2020, the market can probably expect "a reasonable amount of volatility and unpredictability," said Environment Minister Glen Murray.

"The participation rate, whether it's 100 per cent or 20 per cent or 50 per cent or 60 per cent or 13 per cent, is not the success of the market," he said. "The success of the market is really based on our ability to reduce (greenhouse gases). We will not expect to get 100 per cent all the time."

The system aimed at lowering greenhouse gas emissions puts caps on the amount of pollution companies in certain industries can emit. If they exceed those limits, they must buy an equal number of allowances at auction or from other companies that come in under their limits.

Most large emitters in Ontario are receiving allowances for free until 2020, which the government says is meant to prevent them from moving to jurisdictions without carbon pricing. But for now certain electricity importers, natural gas distributors and fuel suppliers are among those required to participate.

Bidders in the first auction included Union Gas, Enbridge Gas, Imperial Oil, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, the city of Kingston, Ont., the University of Guelph, Ontario Power Generation, Apotex, Labatt, BP Canada Energy Group, Shell Energy North America and Suncor Energy Products Partnership.

The provincial Liberal government hopes the quarterly auctions will bring in $1.9 billion a year, to be invested in programs that reduce emissions and help businesses and consumers adapt to a low-carbon economy.

The auction floor price was $18.07 and the actual settlement price was $18.08. Murray said he was pleased about that because he wanted the actual price to be as low as possible.

"One of the objectives of cap and trade is to manage the transition to a low carbon economy at the lowest-possible prices to Ontarians and Ontario businesses," he said. "So we didn't want to see early upward movement on that."

The successful first auction is a great start for the new market, but it's good to avoid reading too much into it, said Erica Morehouse, senior attorney with the Environmental Defense Fund.

"It is just one auction and I think the overall success of a program should be judged on the strength of its design and whether it's able to work to keep carbon pollution in check," she said.

About one quarter of the future vintages on offer were also sold and while the number may seem low, Murray said it was more than they were expecting. The result shows confidence in the longevity of the market, he said.

Ontario plans to link its cap-and-trade system with a joint Quebec-California market next year, and Murray said he will be in California soon for negotiations.

But when linked, an estimated $466 million will leave the Ontario economy over three years, because it will be cheaper to buy allowances in those jurisdictions, the auditor general has said. Both the environmental commissioner and the auditor have said that means greenhouse gas emissions won't actually be cut in Ontario.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown - whose party is ahead in the polls and could form government in 2018 - has said he would dismantle the cap-and-trade system in favour of a carbon tax, with the cost to consumers and business offset through other tax cuts.

Brown was undeterred by the first auction's success.

"The Wynne Liberals want us to believe they are protecting the environment, but it's a smokescreen," he said in a statement. "Their plan sends millions of dollars to one of the richest jurisdictions on earth for emission reductions there, which means failing to cut emissions here at home. This does not make sense."

NDP critic Peter Tabuns said he is still concerned that revenue could be used to finance projects that are already underway, which wouldn't help fight climate change.

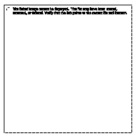
"We still have our concerns about effectiveness, transparency, fairness, but we do believe the cap-and-trade system is something Ontario needs," he said.

Since Jan. 1, cap and trade has added 4.3 cents per litre to the price of gasoline and about $80 a year to natural gas home heating costs, in addition to indirect costs that will be passed onto consumers.

The next auction is on June 6.

The report summarizing the results of the auction can be found at: (bit.ly)

Back to Top



Cap-and-trade auction in Ontario yields $472-million; Provincial government sells 100% of its 2017 permit offering

theglobeandmail.com - Mon Apr 3 2017, 6:15pm ET
Byline:SHAWN McCARTHY

Ontario's first auction under its controversial cap-and-trade system sold all its offering of 2017 permits, yielding the province more than $472-million that will be used to finance programs aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change, Environment Minister Glen Murray announced Monday.

The province's largest energy distributors and industrial consumers participated in the auction of greenhouse-gas emission allowances, which they need in order to comply with the provincial climate regulations. They include Suncor Energy Corp. and Imperial Oil Ltd., which market gasoline under the PetroCanada and Esso brands, respectively, and the province's biggest natural gas distributors, Enbridge Gas Distribution Inc. and Union Gas.

"Today's results demonstrate that our market system here in Ontario is functioning as intended, and that businesses across the province are engaged in the market," Mr. Murray said.

In an interview, the minister said he does not expect a 100-per-cent result in every emission-allowance auction the province holds over the next four years, but that results will vary according to circumstances at the time.

"I'm sure we'll see 100 again, but I'm sure we'll see much lower numbers and we'll see it move around a lot," Mr. Murray said.

"What's important to us is that the market is working well, is getting participation from across the economy, and is contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, which is the important part of it," the minister said.

Under the plan, the large industrial operations, gasoline marketers and natural gas distributors face emission caps that will be reduced by 4 per cent per year. The energy suppliers must purchase allowances covering all the fuel and natural gas they sell in the province, while industrial emitters get free allowances up to their caps but must purchase permits in the market if they exceed those GHG limits.

Gasoline retailers are adding 4.3 cents per litre to the pump price to cover the cost of emission permits, while the gas distributors estimate it will add $80 annually to the average homeowner's gas bill.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown raised concerns just prior to the March 22 auction when he said he would end the cap-and-trade system if his party wins power in the election scheduled for 2018. There was some concern Mr. Brown's comment would put a damper on the bidding.

"It think this is a really good result; people were scared it would not be that good," said Nicolas Girod, head of trading and research for Toronto-based advisory firm ClearBlue Markets.

The province sold 25.3 million tonnes of 2017 vintage permits and three million tonnes for the 2020 period. The amount of bids was 16 per cent higher than the supply of allowances, Mr. Girod noted. The settlement price for 2017 permits was $18.08 per tonne.

The provincial government will auction off allowances on a quarterly basis, and expects to reap between $5-billion and $9-billion over the next four years. By law, that money is directed into climate-change related programs across the province.

However, it is not clear that the revenue target will be met. Similar auctions in the joint California-Quebec carbon market have been dramatically under-subscribed, with revenue well below what had been forecast. Ontario is expected to link with California and Quebec markets under the Western Climate Initiative in 2018.

California faces a number of uncertainties with its pioneering cap-and-trade program, including a court challenge from business groups that argue it is an illegal tax. The state won in the lower court, and a Court of Appeal decision is expected this spring.

As well, Governor Jerry Brown is trying to win enough support in the legislature to extend the program beyond 2020, but needs two-thirds approval as a result of a proposition approved by voters that now make it more difficult to establish fees to pay for programs such as cap-and-trade.

Mr. Murray said the provincial government is negotiating with Quebec and California over its plan to join the Western Climate Initiative but must work out some matters of concern.

The minister defended the provincial government's GHG plan, which will add to energy prices at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump is reversing course on climate change and environmental regulations. He said many states are "doubling down" on carbon-pricing systems, while public and private investments in efficiency measures and new technology will lower energy costs over the medium to long term.

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Back to Top

Either way, we're all going to pay; Auction of carbon credits means higher prices for consumers

Toronto Sun - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Lorrie Goldstein
Page: A7

What does Climate Change Minister Glen Murray's announcement Monday that Ontario sold out its first cap-and-trade auction of carbon credits mean to you? It means Ontario businesses have just paid a new charge of $472 million to the Wynne government in a government-run quarterly auction of carbon permits to industry, through which the government hopes to raise $1.9 billion annually in new revenue.

That $1.9 billion annually will be paid for by all Ontarians, in the form of higher retail prices for most goods and services.

Simply put, Premier Kathleen Wynne has imposed a new $1.9 billion annual tax on all Ontarians.

That's because cap and trade is a carbon tax by another name.

The only difference is cap and trade raises the retail prices of goods and services, while a carbon tax raises the taxes on them.

Either way, there is no free lunch.

As of Jan. 1, the Wynne government imposed a new charge on Ontario businesses they have never had to pay before - the cost of emitting greenhouse gases when they burn fossil fuels (oil, coal, natural gas) for energy.

Given that virtually all goods and services consume fossil fuel energy, someone has to pay this new charge.

That will be us, as businesses pass along their new cost to consumers.

It's unsurprising the government sold out its allotment of carbon permits in its first auction - each allows the bearer to emit one tonne of industrial carbon dioxide or its equivalent - at its set price of $18.07 per permit.

That's because cap and trade is essentially a stock market trading in emissions and in this first auction on March 22, the Ontario government made up and controlled all the rules.

It won't next year when Ontario joins the highly speculative California/Quebec cap-and-trade market, where the price of carbon credits has crashed in three of the last four quarterly auctions.

Ontario Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk has expressed major reservations about Ontario joining the California/Quebec market, noting it could result in Ontario businesses spending hundreds of millions of dollars annually buying carbon credits in California, without lowering emissions in Ontario.

That's because there has been no protocol developed for how these so-called emission reductions will be recorded.

Lysyk said this could result in Ontario and California double-counting the same claimed emission reductions.

Wynne's government is giving away free carbon permits to 102 major Ontario emitters for at least four years - essentially free money paid for by all Ontario taxpayers.

This to encourage them to stay in Ontario, instead of leaving for countries that don't have a national carbon price, such as the U.S., our largest trading partner.

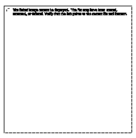
In other words, after imposing a new cost on our industries that their American competitors don't face, the government is now giving them more of our money not to move to the U.S.

The government says it will invest cap-and-trade profits in lowering emissions and helping Ontarians cope with the increased cost of living cap and trade imposes on us.

But if the government's projections of its profits are overly optimistic, then it will have to raise taxes if it wants to pay for its climate change plan.

Either way, we're all going to pay. lgoldstein@postmedia.com @sunlorrie

Back to Top



Minister claim's NDP's hydro promise 'hollow'

The Timmins Daily Press - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Glenn Thibeault,
Page: A4

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's hydro scheme is short on details and long on hollow promises.

Many of their proposals rely on a vague and yet-to-be-determined "expert panel" that will be convened in the future, as well as pie-in-the-sky negotiations with the federal government.

These offer little to Northern Ontarians in the short-term, compared to the real and meaningful relief our government's Fair Hydro Plan will provide to everyone starting this summer.

The NDP's most expensive idea - buying back more than $4-billion in shares of Hydro One - will not take one cent off electricity bills.

What it will do is send billions to the stock market instead of making much needed infrastructure investments here in across Ontario.

And as if the NDP proposal wasn't damaging enough, their scheme would scrap Time of Use pricing, which would dial back conservation savings, and potentially lead to supply gaps.

Time of Use has been a success, reducing our peak demand by up to 5%, which means we don't need to build costly new generation.

However, it may not be the best model for everyone in the province.

That's exactly why we are already piloting different models that can give electricity customers choice in how they're billed. But this needs to be implemented responsibly, not through a short-sighted system like the NDP has proposed.

Through Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan, our government is cutting electricity bills by 25% on average for all families starting this summer, along with as many as half a million farms and small businesses.

It is the single largest rate reduction in the province's history, with rates also held to inflation for the next four years.

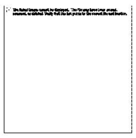
Our plan is about real relief for Ontarians and a way to ensure greater fairness in our electricity system.

Patrick Brown and the PCs have no plan and the NDP hydro proposal offers nothing practical or substantial when it comes to reduced electricity costs for families and small businesses.

Glenn Thibeault,

Ontario Energy Minister

Back to Top



Brown nixes plan for Tory hydro policy on rates this year

thestar.com - Mon Apr 3 2017
Byline: Robert BenzieRob Ferguson

Patrick Brown has zapped plans for his Progressive Conservatives to reveal their policy on reducing hydro rates.

While Brown promised last month that the Tories would reveal their proposal to lower electricity by spring, he confirmed Monday that it is now on the backburner for this year.

"We will certainly have our hydro plan out before the next election," the PC leader said, referring to the June 7, 2018 vote.

"It'll be in our platform. We don't want to simply borrow money for temporary solutions. We want the government to fix the structural mess they've created," he said.

"(When) we release policy will not be on the NDP's timeline or the Liberal timeline; it'll be based on collecting good ideas, good evidence, analyzing some of the real structural challenges."

Brown's comments come after the Liberals (www.thestar.com) last month promised an additional 17 per cent relief, beyond the eight-per-cent cut that took effect Jan. 1, for a 25-per-cent reduction this year.

The rate decrease will be financed by amortizing the costs of new hydro system investments over 30 years, at an annual cost to the treasury of $1.83 billion.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault charged that Brown's Tories are keeping voters in the dark on what their party would do about hydro rates as part of a strategy to "hide for as long as you can" in advance of next year's election.

"Being a good opposition is having a proposition as well . . . talking about what you would do differently, rather than constantly shake your fist and complain.

"To me, it just shows a lack of courage on his part," said Thibeault.

"He doesn't want to do anything other than just ride into winning government in 2018. Government takes a lot of hard work. You've got to make tough decisions. He's continuing to take the easy way out on this," he said, adding the Liberal plan offers "tangible ideas on the way we're going to help people."

The New Democrats have also pledged (www.thestar.com) to slash rates by as much as 30 per cent with a slew of measures, including stopping the privatization of the Hydro One transmission utility.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said it's "disappointing" that Brown is avoiding entry to the policy fray.

"I believe our plan is what gave the Liberals an impetus to get moving on this issue," said Horwath, blasting the PC chief.

"That's the thing with this particular leader. I mean, he's been around for 17 years in politics, but nobody really knows what he believes or what his plans are," she said.

"This is a huge issue for the people of Ontario, and we need to see what the various parties' plans are."

The Tories, who enjoy a large lead over the Liberals and New Democrats in public-opinion polls, have scheduled a policy conference for November in Toronto.

Back to Top

Barge incident fuels call to halt turbine project

Kingston Whig-Standard - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Elliot Ferguson
Page: A2

The partial sinking of a barge that was to be used in the construction of the Amherst Island wind energy project is reason enough to stop the project, a Prince Edward County environmental group says.

In a letter to Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Anne Dumbrille, president of the County Coalition for Safe and Appropriate Green Energy, wrote that the partial sinking of the barge on March 24 threatened the drinking water supply.

"The recent sinking of a barge leased in order to ship aggregate to Amherst Island for the wind turbine project, with the associated drinking water emergency in Prince Edward County, was the first that we citizens, as well as the councillors of Prince Edward County, have been made aware that the Picton Terminals were involved in this activity," Dumbrille wrote.

The barge's partial sinking prompted a state of water emergency in PEC, including a cautionary boil water advisory for residents using the Picton-Bloomfield drinking water system, the establishment of a bulk water dispensing station in Wellington for residents and a temporary shutdown of the Picton-Bloomfield drinking water plant.

The Canadian Coast Guard stated that less than 30 litres of residual oil were spilled from the barge, which was empty at the time of the incident.

The Coast Guard also said a sheen, believed to be diesel fuel and hydraulic fluid, could been seen on the water and ice near the barge.

The barge was refloated on the weekend, and municipal officials said no contaminants entered the drinking water system.

Dumbrille wrote that the use of the Picton Terminals and adjacent roads were not outlined in the Amherst project renewable energy agreement, nor is there any description of material being moved by barge from Picton to the island.

"None of the barge traffic of aggregate from the county to Amherst Island is mentioned or contemplated in the permit for the wind factory on Amherst Island," she wrote.

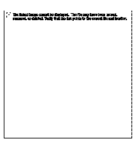
Dumbrille noted that the route from Picton to Amherst Island passes the Glenora ferry crossing.

"There is no mention of driving materials/components related to the turbine project to or through Prince Edward County, or shipping from Picton Terminals," Dumbrille wrote. "There was no description of use of an 'Aggregate Transfer Vessel.'No environmental studies have been undertaken. There was no Marine Logistics Plan as required by the REA until rushed efforts after the spill."

On Friday evening, the company building the wind energy project, Windlectric Inc., tweeted a statement about the sinking.

"The recent sinking of the Pitts Carillon barge at Picton Terminals is very unfortunate. The barge was being prepared for use at the Amherst Island Wind Project, but was outside the project's boundary at the time of the event," the statement read. It then directed readers to the Canadian Coast Guard website.
elferguson@postmedia.com

Back to Top



Mount Dennis wants to be Toronto's first 'Net Zero' community

CBC.CA News - Mon Apr 3 2017, 5:00am ET
Byline:CBC News

Mount Dennis is striving to become carbon neutral as Toronto's first "Net Zero" neighbourhood and its community association is hosting a public meeting Monday night to discuss.how residents can use less non-renewable energy.

"The fundamental ingredient that we need is community engagement and as you can see in Mount Dennis, residents are extremely engaged and they are active towards the transition to a low-carbon future," said Fernando Carou, who leads the community energy planning program at the city of Toronto in the Environment and Energy Division.

The Mount Dennis Community Association (MDCA) is working on developing an action plan that will detail how the community can become carbon neutral as well as become a more sustainable neighbourhood overall.

Save energy, pay lower bills

Among the possibilities are retrofitting homes for energy efficiency, providing incentives for electric vehicles, encouraging active transportation and further down the line, even adopting solar panels or wind turbines as energy sources in Mount Dennis.

"The big thing about Net Zero is everyone wants to pay lower bills for water and electricity. So if somebody comes to you and says, 'Would you like your house insulated? You'll save energy,' it's pretty hard for them to turn it down," said Mike Mattos, president of the MDCA.

"When we come up with the concept that Net Zero means lower utility bills, people agree that's a good idea."

Rick Ciccarelli, the MDCA lead on the project, says the aim is to improve energy efficiency in both homes and businesses but also to reconnect the community of Mount Dennis into the city's economy.

"If there's going to be intensification in this area, [we need to] make it the best development possible in terms of energy efficiency but also accommodate that development," he says.

With the arrival of the Eglinton Crosstown light-rail project, which the Ontario government says will be finished by 2021, the community is expecting to be more integrated with the city's economy, according to Ciccarelli.

The 19-kilometre system will connect Mount Dennis in the west with Kennedy Station in the east.

Carou says there are a number of neighbourhoods in Toronto that are interested in becoming carbon neutral but the community interest from Mount Dennis is what makes it the first to really tackle it.

"We knew the next round of large-scale [carbon] reductions had to come from communities. We just didn't know which community was going to actually self-identify first. We're very pleased Mount Dennis is the one doing this at this time," he said.

Open House

The open house on Monday evening will update residents on how sustainable the neighbourhood is right now and what the next steps will be.

Carou says he will provide information on how much energy the community is using right now and review the work already underway to "quantify energy use in Mount Dennis."

A survey will also be launched for residents to collect more energy data, transportation patterns and where the community best thinks change can take place.

Ciccarrelli describes it as "the beginning of an engagement process."

"The idea is to start to map out the various parts of what sustainability means to a neighbourhood. Let's start to identify who is active in these areas, where the opportunities and the challenges are," he said. "Let's get people organized and resource groups aligned to have a dialogue about what can happen."

At the meeting, Metrolinx officials are also expected to provide more detail on their plan for an alternative to the proposed gas power plant.

The open house takes place at the Mount Dennis Public Library at 7 p.m.

"They're going to be a really strong community going forward just by having this conversation," said Carou.

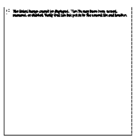
Celebrating a 'green' win

The community recently celebrated a big win after Metrolinx and the provincial government cancelled plans for a gas-powered backup facility in their neighbourhood.

The gas plant was supposed to provide backup power to the Eglinton Crosstown LRT, which is currently under construction.

Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca said last week that the community wanted a greener option and that the new battery-powered system will decrease emissions, reduce costs and increase the line's reliability.

Back to Top



How Alberta is trying to avoid Ontario's green energy boondoggle

Cold Lake Sun - Tue Apr 4 2017
Byline: Stuart Thomson
Page: A27

In a debate in the legislature last fall on the government's plans to phase out coal plants and shift to renewable energy, Wildrose MLA Derek Fildebrandt recalled a friend from high school who jumped in a shopping cart and went careening down a hill.

It didn't end well for the friend who, unsurprisingly, was hurt.

That was enough to teach Fildebrandt that careening down hills in shopping carts is a bad idea. On green energy, he said, Alberta should learn a similar lesson.

"Right now, Ontario is our friend, and Ontario just went down a hill," Fildebrandt said. "We should not follow the example of Ontario."

Fildebrandt's metaphor isn't too off-base. A 2015 report from the Ontario auditor general about the green energy program does resemble something like a grisly shopping cart crash.

According to the auditor general, consumers have paid $37 billion in extra costs since the program started in 2006. Ontario residents can expect to pay another $133 billion in extra costs between 2015 and 2032.

Alberta's climate leadership plan is an ambitious program that, among other things, will phase out coal power by 2030 and replace it with a mix of renewables and natural gas. Since its inception, critics like Fildebrandt have pointed to the troubles in Ontario as a scary portent of what Alberta can expect in the next dozen years.

But in one crucial way, the Alberta plan is almost the direct opposite of the Ontario one. With renewables, Ontario put a price on power and then guaranteed it to producers. For example, in the early days, the Ontario government was offering 80 cents per kilowatt hour of solar power, which it then sold at market prices, eating the loss. That was quickly brought down, but the numbers never bore any relation to markets; they simply represented bureaucrats'best guess about what would lure renewable energy into the province. If the government bought power for 80 cents and sold it to the United States for three cents, the ratepayers wound up paying for it.

The Ontario Power Authority urged the government to switch to a competitive procurement system, but it initially declined. That decision, along with a catalogue of other mistakes, cost Ontario consumers billions, according to the auditor general.

From the beginning, Alberta will use an auction system for renewables that asks producers to submit bids representing the lowest price the company can afford. The province then makes up the difference.

That still ties the government to the market, but the bad scenario, where the government is paying a big difference, also means low prices for consumers and there's a natural cap on bids due to the auction. Companies know that to win the contract, they have to bid competitively.

Andrew Leach, the University of Alberta economist who chaired the NDP's climate leadership panel, said the government didn't take his panel's recommendation on procurement and that their preferred methods "are closer to the Ontario system than what we recommended."

Leach prefers a system where producers compete in an auction for a fixed topup on prices, which means companies are still responsive to market prices and the government isn't at the market's mercy.

Blake Shaffer, an economics PhD candidate at the University of Calgary, said the government's approach should be fine, especially in the early years, and that it only moves slightly toward the Ontario model.

"How far towards Ontario's mistakes are you headed? I would argue not very far," said Shaffer.

Shaffer said Alberta is dodging two bullets that hit Ontario through the eyes. Alberta is not signing longterm contracts with producers and it's allowing the market to determine the price.

Shaffer said the perk of the government's approach is that it gives the producers price certainty, which lowers the cost of capital. That's a big deal in the renewables market, where most of the costs are in capital. The downside is that producers have no incentive to care about the value of the energy

. For example, it could mean wind power producers flock to high-wind areas like Pincher Creek and would all be generating at the same time. That pushes prices down whenever the turbines are generating, lowering the value and creating a bigger spread for the government to cover.

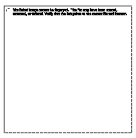
"I would argue that for one or two auctions here, this is totally fine. What we don't want is 14 years of auctions that all deliver us low-value energy," said Shaffer.

Also working in Alberta's favour is the plummeting price of renewables. Environment Minister Shannon Phillips said the price of wind power has fallen 50 per cent and the price of solar power has fallen 80 per cent since 2006, when Ontario entered the market.

Phillips noted that, to get costs under control, Ontario has switched to the auctionstyle procurement Alberta will be using.

"At its essence, it is competitive, rather than government deciding what the price is, which is what prevailed in Ontario. And that was a mistake," said Phillips.

Back to Top



$1.83 Hydro bill: Manitoban shines light on solar energy

CBC.CA News - Mon Apr 3 2017, 10:41am ET
Byline:CBC News

When Heather Bishop looks at the long row of solar panels installed in the yard of her rural southern Manitoba home, she sees not only an impressive setup, but an investment in the future.

"Every time I drive into the yard, it catches me again, and it's like, 'Wow! That's impressive,'" Bishop said.

The 64 solar panels are about 34 metres long and four metres high. On a really sunny day, they make a light buzzing sound and you can feel their vibrations if you put your hand on them, she said.

Walking through the melting snow on her property, the folk singer and artist said when a Manitoba Hydro program made solar panels affordable, she knew she wanted to jump on it right away.

"It's a renewable energy source ? no harm to the environment while it's producing it ? and if I can be part of that, I want to be part of it," Bishop said.

Power Smart

Last April, Manitoba Hydro launched the Power Smart Solar Energy Program to help Manitobans harness the power of the sun.

It offers incentives and financial support for people to adopt solar power to generate their own electricity and sell the excess energy back to Manitoba Hydro. The program provides solar photovoltaic installations at $1 per watt installed, which covers about 25 per cent of the costs of a new installation.

Hydro spokesperson Bruce Owen confirmed 38 of 180 applications to the program have been approved so far. Most have been from residential customers, with an even split coming from urban and rural property owners.

"Approximately half of the customers who've applied are also applying for financing of their system through Manitoba Hydro's convenient residential earth power loan program, which provides up to $30,000 for solar photovoltaic panels," Owen said in a statement, adding financing is calculated based on $3,000 per kilowatt of panels installed.

The average seven-kilowatt systems being installed contain 28 solar panels, take up more than 400 square feet of roof space and generate roughly 75 per cent of a home's annual electricity, Owen added.

Forward-looking

When Bishop built her house more than 40 years ago, she had alternative energy in the plans. It operated on passive solar energy, which means the way the house is built actually helps heat the home.

"At that time, I could heat my house with the sun, but I'm still using electricity from Manitoba Hydro," she said.

"I'm watching for the cost of panels and inverters to come down and then a year ago, Manitoba Hydro came up with this program where they would pay for basically almost a third of the cost of the install. As soon as I saw that, I contacted them right away."

The whole setup cost about $58,000, which meant Bishop's part of the bill was about $40,000, she said. She figures her annual hydro cost was $2,000, so it will be paid back in 20 years, but "as soon as hydro goes up, that figure drops and drops."

The solar panels were ready to go in January and, even though it was winter, Bishop said she produced more electricity than she needed.

"I just got my last Hydro bill for January and it was $1.83. The only reason I had to pay anything was because I have to pay the taxes on what I use but I don't get paid taxes on what I sent them," she said.

"So I actually sent them more power than I used, but I got dinged for taxes, so I owed them $1.83 and I can live with that."

Bishop understands it's a big investment for people in Manitoba, but when they look at their own energy bills and the cost to the planet, it's worth it, she said.

"I'm hugely connected to the earth and I feel a great responsibility to take care of her as much as I'm able," she said.

With files from Samantha Samson

Back to Top