Message

From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
Sent: 2017-03-27 6:06:17 AM
Subject: Today's News - Monday, March 27, 2017

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Monday, March 27, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

0

Industry News

News - 16 Results

269794912
Polling shows hydro was No. 1 concern in Ontario long before relief announced; Ontario polling details growing hydro concern

Canadian Press - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario's government learned from its own polling that the rising cost of hydro was people's top concern 10 months before the Liberals publicly acknowledged it and announced an eight-per-cent reduction on electricity bills. The ...

269756632
Earth Hour wasn't as dark in Toronto this year

thestar.com - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline: Emma McIntosh

Fewer Torontonians shut off their lights Saturday night for the 10th anniversary of Earth Hour than last year, according to Toronto Hydro. However, Toronto residents are using less and less power overall, so the drop in participation ...

269810819

Fewer residents turned off the lights; Best Earth Hour year was 2009

Toronto Sun - Mon Mar 27 2017
Byline: Kevin Connor
Page: A10

Fewer Torontonians went to black this year for Earth Hour to help green the planet. Toronto Hydro says that this year's event on Saturday evening saw a drop in electricity use by 2.8%, or 77 megawatts. It is the equivalent to ...

269777153

Toronto marks Earth Hour but more lights on than last year

CBC.CA News - Sun Mar 26 2017, 9:13am ET
Byline:CBC News

Many Toronto residents turned off the lights for Earth Hour on Saturday but fewer homes powered down during the event this year as compared to last year, Toronto Hydro says. Tori Gass, spokesperson for Toronto Hydro, said ...

269786543

Alectra reports 4% drop in electricity usage during Earth Hour

Aurora Banner - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: Lisa Queen

Did you do your part to fight climate change during Earth Hour? Alectra Utilities Corporation, which serves about one million customers in 15 communities, including some in York Region, reported a four-per-cent drop in electricity ...

269701252

Hydro's battle to protect secrets; City-owned utility is paying Bay Street law firm to fight Star's request for information

Toronto Star - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: David Rider Toronto Star Chief
Page: GT1

Toronto Hydro Corp. is spending public money on consultants, including Bay Street lawyers, to help it keep a secret - how much public money it has spent on consultants. David Rider, the Star's city hall bureau chief, has been ...

269702561

Minister visits Orillia to outline hydro plan

Orillia Packet & Times - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Andrew Philips
Page: A1 / Front

It definitely had a pre-election feel, but Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibault said he had been planning to visit Orillia for weeks to discuss his government's plan to tackle escalating electricity prices. "(Orillia) wasn't singled ...

269712004

A lot more to be answered; Ontario Power Generation's latest report on its proposed nuclear waste chamber near Lake Huron focuses on science, which leaves a lot of issues unaddressed

Niagara Falls Review - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Erika Simpson
Page: A7

Should Ontario Power Generation (OPG) be allowed to bury nuclear waste near Lake Huron? The federal government could soon decide whether to give the goahead to the proposal to construct an underground ...

269642006

OPG Investing 141.7 Million Into Darlington Nuclear Unit 1

Targeted News Service - Thu Mar 23 2017 **Page:** n/a

Ontario Power Generation issued the following news release: Ontario Power Generation (OPG) has begun a $141.7 million planned maintenance and inspection outage on ...

269701620

Soaring power bills straining resources of some churches; Congregations have seen increase in requests to assist those in dire straits

Windsor Star - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Page: A8

They've driven people to food banks and even prompted one Ontario woman to tearfully plea for relief to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. It gets worse. Ontario's soaring electricity prices are now zapping churches in some parts of ...

269704870

C-K stands to rake in turbine cash; Not all councillors support investment

Sarnia Observer - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Page: A5

The Municipality of Chatham is doling out nearly $8 million in tax dollars for a chance to get a share of the profits generated from wind turbines. Adding this kind money to municipal coffers would normally be welcomed by any politician, but not ...

269668397

Waterloo Region to save millions by using sewer gas to generate electricity

TheRecord.com - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline:cthompson@therecord.com

WATERLOO REGION - A project to capture waste biogas from treating sewage will cut the Region of Waterloo's electricity bills by millions of dollars and reduce damaging greenhouse gases. The project will use the biogas that's produced at ...

269804212

Cap & trade, hide & seek; Couple went through a 'rat's maze' to find out what Grit scheme really costs them

Toronto Sun - Mon Mar 27 2017
Byline: Antonella Artuso
Page: A4

Ontario residents shouldn't have to work their way through a "rat's maze" to figure out the cap-and-trade charge on their natural gas bills, Mississauga senior Muriel Chudiak says. Since the fee kicked in on Jan. 1, Chudiak has been on a ...

269638995

Try to solve the most difficult problems, OPG CEO advises UOIT students

Oshawa This Week - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline: Reka Szekely

OSHAWA - Students at UOIT heard words of wisdom from a man who may one day employ several of them as Ontario Power Generation (OPG) president and CEO Jeff Lyash delivered a talk as part of the school's ...

269740508

Alberta power grid operator prepares to accept green energy bids

CBC.CA News - Sat Mar 25 2017, 4:21pm ET
Byline:CBC News

The operator of Alberta's electricity grid will start taking bids at the end of this month from companies interested in generating more renewable power. The provincial government wants to add 5,000 megawatts of renewable ...

269794742

Ripples from US nuclear plant closings overwhelm small towns; Ripples from US nuclear plant closings overwhelm small towns

Canadian Press - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: John Seewer

OAK HARBOR, Ohio - Living in the shadows of the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant's cooling tower, which soars above Lake Erie in Ohio like an oversized lighthouse, brings with it some give-and-take. On the plus side, it generates tax money that once ...

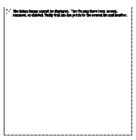
0

0

0

Industry News

Full Articles



269794912

Polling shows hydro was No. 1 concern in Ontario long before relief announced; Ontario polling details growing hydro concern

Canadian Press - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario's government learned from its own polling that the rising cost of hydro was people's top concern 10 months before the Liberals publicly acknowledged it and announced an eight-per-cent reduction on electricity bills.

The government-commissioned polling from 2013 to 2016 - examined by The Canadian Press - tells a tale of increasing distress about hydro rates over months, even years before across-the-board relief was introduced.

Monthly tracking shows that in December 2013, the cost of electricity became the worst-ranked issue based on performance, with 70 per cent of respondents saying the government was on the wrong track.

Specific questions on electricity appear in July 2014 and again in March 2015, when polling found most people had done something in the past year to make their homes more energy efficient, and a majority supported the often-maligned time-of-use pricing.

Then in November 2015, electricity - and the privatization of Hydro One - surged to become a top issue of concern in the province, with 13 per cent of respondents saying it should be the government's top priority, over perennial concerns such as health, jobs, the economy and education.

In just one month, the percentage of respondents who rated the government's performance on controlling electricity prices as poor jumped from 38 per cent in October to 47 per cent in November.

By January 2016, jobs, the economy and health took over as areas of greater concern for the next few months, but the Gandalf Group polling told the government that controlling electricity prices was among its main perceived weaknesses and communications should focus on it.

Government responses to opposition questions about rising hydro bills over much of the 2013 to 2016 time frame focused on defending the cost of hydro as the result of building a clean and reliable system, while highlighting measures the government had already taken to lower consumer costs, such as a low-income support program and removing the debt retirement charge.

It wasn't until a Sept. 1 byelection loss that the government's tune changed.

"We heard at the door that hydro rates are increasingly challenging for people," Premier Kathleen Wynne said in a statement that night. "I understand, as do my ministers, that the government needs to focus on helping people with their everyday expenses."

The inclusion of the eight-per-cent rebate in the government's throne speech less than two weeks later suggests the plan was already well developed by Sept. 1. But the premier has acknowledged she should have acted sooner, a spokeswoman said.

"In saying that, we have been making changes to reduce costs in the electricity system over the past number of years," Jenn Beaudry said in a statement.

Changes she cited that were enacted before that eight-per-cent rebate include removing the debt retirement charge, reducing feed-in-tariff prices, renegotiating a green energy deal with Samsung, deferring new nuclear construction and delaying the start of other nuclear refurbishment, all of which saves the system billions.

While Wynne's eight-per-cent rebate was welcomed - almost 90 per cent of respondents in October supported it - it didn't resonate quite as widely as the government likely hoped. Still only 36 per cent said the government was doing a good job of controlling electricity prices.

"Of utmost importance to Ontarians for government's attention is electricity costs," the polling research said.

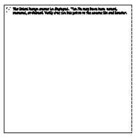
"And, evaluations of the government's performance at controlling electricity prices are worsening. Those who report being more familiar with government's recent eight-per-cent reduction of electricity prices are also more likely to evaluate the government poorly on this issue. Essentially, the solution is not proportionate to the perceived magnitude of the problem."

Fast-forward to March 2017 and the premier announced a further 17-per-cent average reduction on bills, holding increases to the rate of inflation for four years, cuts to delivery charges for some rural customers, eliminating the delivery charge for on-reserve First Nations customers, expanding a low-income support program and establishing a new home energy efficiency improvement fund.

Angus Reid polling conducted after that announcement found that Wynne's popularity continued to plummet to record lows, but 62 per cent of respondents said the reduction in hydro bills would be an important factor in deciding how they'll vote in next year's election.

The polling was conducted until October 2015 by Pollara, and from then on by the Gandalf Group.

Back to Top



269756632

Earth Hour wasn't as dark in Toronto this year

thestar.com - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline: Emma McIntosh

Fewer Torontonians shut off their lights Saturday night for the 10th anniversary of Earth Hour than last year, according to Toronto Hydro.

However, Toronto residents are using less and less power overall, so the drop in participation during this year's event doesn't mean enthusiasm for the movement is waning, said Toronto Hydro spokesperson Tori Glass.

"People are actively saving electricity in their everyday lives, so Earth Hour seems to have done a great job in promoting the message," she said via email.

In the city, electricity demand was 77 megawatts lower than a typical Saturday in March - a 2.8 per cent drop that's equivalent to taking 31,000 homes off the grid, according to Toronto Hydro.

Last year (www.thestar.com) , the drop was 89 megawatts; in 2015 it was 103.

Local revelers celebrated Earth Hour with candelit acoustic performances at bars across the city, guided walks and even a party illuminated with paper lanterns and candles at Kew Gardens in the Beach neighbourhood.

The World Wildlife Fund started Earth Hour in Australia in 2007. The event - running from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. local time across the world - encourages people, businesses and communities to shut off non-essential electricity to show support for environmental sustainability. In the decade since it began, the event has grown into a global movement with millions of participants in 172 countries.

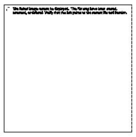
"Earth Hour is a visual signal that ordinary people the world over want to change climate change," said the World Wildlife Fund in an emailed statement Saturday.

"It's a sign we haven't forgotten about the Paris Agreement, and our determination to halt the degradation climate change causes to our environment. When you see a candle in your neighbour's window, when you see your community go dark, when you see that these small, symbolic actions are visible from outer space the world over, you see you're not alone on this issue."

The Toronto skyline was dimmer than usual to mark the occasion as local landmarks like the CN Tower and the famous Toronto sign at Nathan Phillips Square shut off their lights.

Thousands of other landmarks worldwide also went dark for the 10th anniversary of the event, including the Eiffel Tower, the Sydney Opera House, Big Ben, the Empire State Building and the Pyramids of Egypt.

Back to Top



269810819

Fewer residents turned off the lights; Best Earth Hour year was 2009

Toronto Sun - Mon Mar 27 2017
Byline: Kevin Connor
Page: A10

Fewer Torontonians went to black this year for Earth Hour to help green the planet.

Toronto Hydro says that this year's event on Saturday evening saw a drop in electricity use by 2.8%, or 77 megawatts.

It is the equivalent to having 31,000 homes removed from Toronto's hydro grid.

That's down from 2016's Earth Hour - which starts every year at 8:30 p.m. - when electricity use dropped by 3.2%.

Toronto Hydro says the 10th anniversary of the event in the city this year was successful.

"We're happy with the results of this year's Earth Day and want to thank everyone who took part," said spokesman Tori Gass.

"But we also want to recognize everyone out there that makes an effort to reduce their electricity use each and every day of the year."

The city's most successful Earth Hour was in 2009, when electricity use dropped by 15.1% A Toronto Hydro poll shows 54% of customers say they have become smarter about their energy use in the last decade.

In fact, from 2006 to 2015 city residents have achieved energy savings of 1,756 gigawatt hours, which is equal to taking 600 large condo buildings off the grid.

That drop also helped remove 1.1 million tonnes in greenhouse gas emissions and is the same as taking 34,000 cars off the road.

Lower Earth Hour results aren't as important as reducing the consumption rates all year.

"Whether or not you turn your lights off in March for an hour isn't the point. For people to use less is the message," said Franz Hartmann with the Toronto Environmental Alliance.'

"It's when you go to buy a new fridge or TV and get the one that uses less electricity. If that's happening it's a good thing."

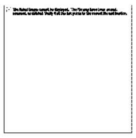
Skyrocketing electricity rates across the province have many families watching their consumption rates.

"You have to be careful, because it costs too much," said Brett Penney, while grocery shopping with his family downtown and admitting he didn't take part in Earth Hour.

"You have to have heat and lights, but you don't keep every light on in the house."

Earth Hour started in 2007 by the World Wildlife Fund and today 172 countries participate for environmentally sustainable action.

Back to Top



269777153

Toronto marks Earth Hour but more lights on than last year

CBC.CA News - Sun Mar 26 2017, 9:13am ET
Byline:CBC News

Many Toronto residents turned off the lights for Earth Hour on Saturday but fewer homes powered down during the event this year as compared to last year, Toronto Hydro says.

Tori Gass, spokesperson for Toronto Hydro, said electricity use in the city dipped by 2.8 per cent, or 77 megawatts.

Gass said the amount is equivalent to removing 31,000 homes from Toronto Hydro's grid.

In 2016, however, electricity use in the city dropped by 3.2 per cent.

"We're happy with the results of this year's Earth Hour and want to thank everyone that took part," Gass said in a news release.

"But we also want to recognize everyone out there that makes an effort to reduce their electricity use each and every day of the year."

The most successful Earth Hour in Toronto took place in 2009, when electricity use in the city dropped 15.1 per cent, according to Toronto Hydro.

On Saturday, Toronto residents took to Twitter to show snapshots of the city during Earth Hour.

Back to Top

269786543

Alectra reports 4% drop in electricity usage during Earth Hour

Aurora Banner - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: Lisa Queen

Did you do your part to fight climate change during Earth Hour?

Alectra Utilities Corporation, which serves about one million customers in 15 communities, including some in York Region, reported a four-per-cent drop in electricity consumption during Earth Hour between 8:30 and 9:30 p.m. March 25.

The drop is in comparison to a typical consumption pattern normally experienced on a similar type of day, taking into consideration hour of the day, time of year and weather, Alectra said in a statement.

That means tens of thousands of people turned off their lights to participate in the annual event.

Residents in the hamlet of Thornton, a small community between Cookstown and Barrie, really threw themselves into the occasion.

Their electricity consumption dropped by 16.2 per cent. By comparison, Barrie's only dipped by 1 per cent.

Meanwhile, Bradford West Gwillimbury's electricity usage went down 7 per cent, while Aurora saw a 4.9 per cent reduction.

Markham's electricity consumption dropped by 4.1 per cent, Richmond Hill's went down 5.4 per cent and Vaughan's declined by 4.5 per cent.

This is the first time Alectra has calculated its Earth Hour results since the company was formed earlier this year.

The reduction in electricity consumption across the company's 15 communities represented a total savings of 112 megawatts in peak demand, or enough electricity to power 3,404 average-size homes over a 24-hour period, the company said.

Back to Top

269701252

Hydro's battle to protect secrets; City-owned utility is paying Bay Street law firm to fight Star's request for information

Toronto Star - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: David Rider Toronto Star Chief
Page: GT1

Toronto Hydro Corp. is spending public money on consultants, including Bay Street lawyers, to help it keep a secret - how much public money it has spent on consultants. David Rider, the Star's city hall bureau chief, has been trying to find out. It's a battle that has now been fought for more than a year - and there is no end in sight.

January 2016 - Using anonymous sources, I revealed behind-the-scenes work to set the stage for a partial privatization of the century-old power distributor of which the city of Toronto is sole shareholder.

Jan. 8, 2016 - My story "Toronto Hydro privatization plan in the works" is published.

Jan. 22, 2016 - I then submitted two applications to hydro under Ontario's freedom of information legislation. I asked for copies of internal hydro communications mentioning any possible privatization, and for the estimated cost of all work done by consultants, including lawyers and pollsters, related to a possible sale.

To me it seemed basic information, albeit potentially controversial for an arm's length agency that had no mandate from city council to explore a possible sale.

I expected a fight, fuelled by institutional aversion to lifting the hood on internal machinations, and maybe the grudging release of some pages mostly or fully blanked out.

That would force me to appeal to Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) in hopes hydro would be ordered to fully live up to its responsibilities under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Feb. 25, 2016 - I was wrong and, after decades of trying to pry information out of government, hopelessly naive. Hydro has refused to even process my request.

Fourteen months later, awaiting a final ruling by IPC, I have received nothing from hydro except, via lawyers the utility is paying to fight me, dozens of pages of arguments about why the utility cannot, and will not, acknowledge that such records do or do not exist. Forget actually looking for them and handing them to a reporter.

April 29, 2016 - The lawyers from Norton Rose Fulbright Canada - hired to work on privatization and now to fight my requests - argue that, based on an argument invoking Ontario securities law, buttressed by an affidavit from a hired U of T law professor, the IPC should "reject my appeal at the intake stage" - kill it before it can take a breath.

Hydro is not publicly traded. Information about consultants could not give me or anyone else inside information that would impact the stock market.

Still, IPC says the utility, which issues bonds that can be resold privately, has raised complex questions over its potentially conflicting duties to the Securities Act and the FOI law.

June 11, 2016 - The Star argues that IPC should reject hydro's argument that "selective disclosure" of information is tantamount to insider trading, and find that Securities Act concerns do not erase a public institution's FOI obligations.

Even if IPC sides with me, hydro could keep the fight alive by going to provincial court seeking judicial review.

That could be a very expensive battle for both sides.

Amid many exchanges for which I had to get my own legal advice, the privatization push died and with it, presumably, the work of consultants whom, as I reported last October, included two key members of Mayor John Tory's 2014 election team.

Yet hydro is fighting me as hard as ever.

Sept. 2, 2016 - IPC announces appeal is in inquiry stage, invites submissions from both sides.

Oct. 17, 2016 - Bay Street lawyers for hydro submit 31-page argument to hydro including affidavit from a U of T professor who is expert on securities.

Nov. 17, 2016 - I make my submission, that the information is in the public interest, that Securities Law doesn't trump hydro's responsibility under MFIPPA, and that IPC should ignore the professor's submission.

Nov. 24, 2016 - Mayor John Tory publicly takes hydro privatization off the table.

Dec. 7, 2016 - IPC invites final rebuttals to each other's submissions.

I'm not the only one puzzled. Paul Ainslie, a city councillor, sits on Toronto Hydro's board of directors.

"There's a city hall culture I'm used to, more open, and then there's private business," and that's the way the hydro chief executive and his senior team see the highly regulated utility, Ainslie says.

"With a Freedom of Information Act request, I think there's a mindset there that more often than not they see themselves as a business … My perspective is Toronto Hydro is a very well-run organization and I understand that there's confidential material that you have to keep private to run a business, but in terms of information like this I don't know why they're going to such an extent to try to hide it."

Ainslie was surprised to learn hydro, which has its own legal department, is using Norton Rose Fulbright Canada to fight an FOI request.

"I know Norton Rose was hired as an outside legal consultant when we were looking at some type of IPO or business model that would see the sale of up to 49 per cent of Toronto Hydro, and my understanding is that is the only reason we hired them, so I'm a little surprised that they're fighting freedom of information requests put forward by a journalist," he says.

The two other councillors on hydro's 13-member board, Stephen Holyday and Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong, declined to comment on the utility's responsibility to respond to FOI requests.

Councillor Gord Perks, a city councillor not on the hydro board, who successfully argued against the merits of privatization, says: "There is no excuse to hide from the public how public money is being spent. Mr. (Anthony) Haines needs to come to the understanding that he works for the people of Toronto and he needs to be accountable to them."

The Star asked to speak to Haines for this story.

Hydro spokesperson Brian Buchan replied on his behalf: "As you are aware, it is Toronto Hydro's policy to not respond to market speculation or rumour.

"As you indicate, you have multiple access to information requests that are either in process, or in respect of which appeals are currently pending before the Information and Privacy Commissioner … We are fulfilling our obligations in respect of your requests and fully participating in the IPC process. As this matter is still before the IPC, we have no further comment."

Recently I made a new FOI request to hydro.

I want to know how much public money the utility has spent on contractors to fight my request for information about how much public money it has spent on contractors.

Jan. 13, 2017 - I submit my two new FOIs.

Feb. 14, 2017 - Hydro denies my request.

March 8, 2017 - I appeal that denial to the IPC.

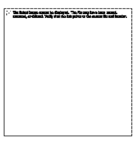
Hydro says it cannot confirm or deny the existence of such records and dismissed my request as "frivolous and/or vexatious."

While refusing my request, hydro executive vice-president Amanda Klein references my request for comment.

"Your express indications to us that you intend to attempt to build a story in the media around your existing appeals lead us to believe that this request amounts to an abuse of the right of access, is made in bad faith and/or is made for a purpose other than to obtain access," she wrote.

"You may appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner …"

Back to Top



269702561

Minister visits Orillia to outline hydro plan

Orillia Packet & Times - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Andrew Philips
Page: A1 / Front

It definitely had a pre-election feel, but Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibault said he had been planning to visit Orillia for weeks to discuss his government's plan to tackle escalating electricity prices.

"(Orillia) wasn't singled out because it's Patrick Brown's riding," Thibault said, referring to the Simcoe North MPP, who leads the provincial Progressive Conservatives.

Thibault and Barrie MPP Ann Hoggarth joined local politicians and social services leaders Friday at Orillia's Housing Resource Centre to outline Ontario's Fair Hydro Plan that he pledged will lower electricity bills by 25% on average for all residential consumers in the province.

"I know affordable access to electricity is a critical issue here in Simcoe County," said Thibault, adding he was charged by Premier Kathleen Wynne with working to lower electricity costs nine months ago.

"By moving ahead with this significant reform we will be providing significant relief by this summer."

Mayor Steve Clarke said electricity prices are always front and centre when it comes to assessing costs.

"I was hearing about energy prices when we were going through the negotiations with Hydro One," Clarke said, referring to last year's sale of Orillia Power Distribution Corporation to Hydro One for $26.35 million.

"Our municipal partners in rural areas certainly have concerns about pricing."

Hoggarth, who is also parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services agreed: "We weren't hearing quite the same concerns in our urban area, but it has been a big issue in rural areas."

But the plan should help them as well, according to Thibault, who noted many small businesses and farms will also benefit from the initiative, with additional relief for people with low incomes and those living in eligible rural communities.

Thibault, who also noted that rate increases over the next four years would be held to the rate of inflation for everyone, said bills have been escalating over the years because the province was working to improve the system.

That became paramount following blackouts experienced across the province in 2003, he said, adding that eliminating the use of coal provincially that has seen the number of "smog days" drop from 53 in 2005 to none reported last year.

Clarke said the province's plan should also help those struggling to make ends meet.

"I see merit to this," he said. "It will really help our most vulnerable citizens."

But Clarke said he was surprised by some of the information Thibault shared, including the reasons behind the higher prices, such as eliminating coal use and moving toward cleaner, renewable energy.

"I think the province has done a poor job of letting people know why the costs have gone up," he said.

Thibault said the billing issue centred around the fact funding towards the system improvements and key financial assistance programs were unfairly falling almost entirely on the shoulders of today's ratepayers. Now, the province plans to refinance those capital investments "to ensure that system costs are more equitably distributed over time."

United Way of Bruce Grey executive director Francesca Dobbyn also attended Friday's announcement and said she was enthused by the various funding initiatives available to help those in need.

"Our organization is very pleased that the province has listened to our concerns and made these concrete changes," said Dobbyn, who noted her organization has operated a utility/poverty program for the past decade.

"We've made this a provincial issue." andrewphilips@live.ca

269712004

A lot more to be answered; Ontario Power Generation's latest report on its proposed nuclear waste chamber near Lake Huron focuses on science, which leaves a lot of issues unaddressed

Niagara Falls Review - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Erika Simpson
Page: A7

Should Ontario Power Generation (OPG) be allowed to bury nuclear waste near Lake Huron? The federal government could soon decide whether to give the goahead to the proposal to construct an underground disposal site at the Bruce nuclear complex - just 1.6km from the lakeshore.

Last fall Environment Minister Catherine McKenna requested more information from OPG, including alternative sites. That report, issued in late December, was available for public input until March 8.

Yet, next year's provincial election and possible federal cabinet changes in the summer mean there could be other opportunities to put nuclear waste back on the public radar.

OPG's plan is to transport intermediate-and low-level nuclear waste (but not fuel waste) from the 20 commercial reactors in the province by truck to the Bruce site and place it in an underground "deep geologic repository", or DGR.

The December report estimates 22,000 to 24,000 road shipments over 30 years at a cost between $400 million and $1.4 billion: "There will be incremental radiological and conventional transportation risks which are estimated to be between three and 69 road collisions," it says.

Presumably transporting nuclear waste on Ontario's highways would need to be kept secret due in part to potential terrorism. Would some roads, like Highway 401, have to be shut down entirely so that there would be no chance of a strike against the trucks? The report does not consider whether roads and the Bruce site can be made invulnerable to attack. Soft targets are called soft for a reason.

But, it's not just terrorists. No mention is made in the report of countries that have encountered strong public opposition to transporting nuclear waste. German television regularly airs scenes of protesters surrounding trains - many Germans are incensed that the use of a mine to store radiological waste backfired when it flooded and the toxic wastes leaked into groundwater.

The OPG report suggests extensive negotiations will be needed with Canada's Indigenous People about hosting the nuclear waste site, but it does not delve into the legal issues related to land ownership and sovereignty.

And there is no mention of the possibility that earthquakes, fires, tornados or human error could limit access to the underground chambers. The Japanese are using robots and drones to access the Fukishima nuclear facility that was damaged in an earthquake six years ago, but have admitted defeat at trying to clean up the site, which is leaking into the Pacific. The Bruce site is located in an area where there is little seismic activity but not infrequent tornados.

OPG's report considers a time frame of a million years. To put that in context, it explains the crystalline rock of the Canadian Shield is more than a billion years old, and the sedimentary rock of southern Ontario is 354 million to 543 million years old. But wasn't it only 10,000 years ago that retreating ice sheets carved the Great Lakes' water basin? The report asserts no less than four times that "the proximity of a water body to the DGR is not relevant because the movement of water or gas, even if it was released from the DGR, would not reach the water body until the radioactivity of such water or gas had diminished to the levels generally found naturally occurring throughout Ontario."

While the radiological depletion rates are fairly certain, how can humans predict what could happen to a shaft hundreds of thousands of years from now - a shaft that OPG plans to abandon 30 years after it's built? Furthermore, no containers have been invented that will with certainty last hundreds of thousands of years. Arguably they might be some time in the future, but that would place an unfair burden on future generations to clean up our generation's mess.

OPG's report seems to conclude the waste site could, technically, be situated anywhere in the province's vast crystalline rock or sedimentary rock formations so long as it is accessible by road. The fact that hundreds of local residents around the Bruce site are supportive of the site locating there is heralded as an important deciding factor.

But what about outside the Kincardine area? By last September, 187 municipal resolutions had passed motions opposing OPG's plans, and hundreds of thousands of people had signed petitions. Twenty-three members of the U.S. Congress wrote Canada's foreign affairs minister urging Canada to explore options outside of the Great Lakes basin. Twelve U.S. representatives sent a bipartisan letter asking the Trump administration to stop OPG's proposal.

While OPG's report focuses on geological and technical matters, it leaves out a lot. It says nothing about the costs of insurance and emergency planning. It doesn't consider the temptation for the debt-ridden Ontario government to agree to take other countries' waste. (The U.S. has no long-term nuclear waste repository since giving up on its Yucca Mountain site in 2011.)

Canada needs a neutral agency that helps citizens both in Canada and the U.S., understandably unfamiliar with the language of nuclear power and the concepts of geology, to analyse the OPG plan. The federal government must ensure fairness, transparency and openness in determining the plan's acceptability. Right now the federal cabinet has too much unilateral power to decide the issue.

Erika Simpson is an associate professor of international relations in the department of political science at Western University and the

Back to Top

269642006

OPG Investing 141.7 Million Into Darlington Nuclear Unit 1

Targeted News Service - Thu Mar 23 2017 **Page:** n/a

Ontario Power Generation issued the following news release:

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) has begun a $141.7 million planned maintenance and inspection outage on Darlington Nuclear Unit 1. More than 15 thousand tasks will be completed in order to ensure that unit 1 is back producing reliable and clean power when electricity demand heats up.

"This spring time work will ensure that our nuclear units are ready to deliver the power the province needs during the summer when electricity demand is high," says Brian Duncan, Senior Vice-President Darlington Nuclear. "The Darlington units produce enough electricity to power about two million homes or a city the size of Toronto every day."

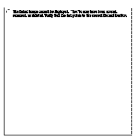
Last October, OPG began a $12.8 billion investment in the Darlington nuclear station. The refurbishment of the first of four units will preserve about 3,000 jobs and provide 30-plus years of safe, reliable power with virtually no smog or greenhouse gas emissions. The Darlington Refurbishment is a made-in-Ontario project. More than 60 companies from over 25 Ontario communities will be directly engaged in the massive undertaking and approximately 96 per cent of the project's suppliers are currently based in Ontario.

In 2016, OPG's average sale price for its generation was 6.9 percents per kilowatt hour, which is considerably less than the 11 percents per kilowatt hour other generators received.

OPG generates safe, clean, reliable, low-cost power for Ontario. More than 99 percent of this power is free of smog and greenhouse gas emissions. OPG's power is priced 40 percent lower than other generators, which helps moderate customer bills.

13SS-Ray-5814365 13SS-Ray

Back to Top



269701620

Soaring power bills straining resources of some churches; Congregations have seen increase in requests to assist those in dire straits

Windsor Star - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Page: A8

They've driven people to food banks and even prompted one Ontario woman to tearfully plea for relief to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. It gets worse. Ontario's soaring electricity prices are now zapping churches in some parts of Southwestern Ontario, hit by consumers unable to shoulder the burden.

The problem is so bad, one cleric in Wallaceburg says his church's benevolent fund has gone into overdraft three times in the last two years - something he hadn't seen before in 24 years on the job - as people come looking for help to cope with their power bills.

"I know on paper, from my own accounting, I've overdrafted it three times" within the last two years, said Pastor Brian Horrobin of First Baptist Church.

"There's definitely been a marked increase in people coming for help," said Horrobin, noting the same has happened at other churches in the area.

Horrobin said his church has either directly helped people pay outstanding hydro bills or given them prepaid grocery cards because they can't afford groceries after paying for electricity.

Ontario electricity rates have doubled over the past decade, with the province's own auditor-general finding ratepayers paid $37 billion more than market prices for power over much of that period and will fork out more than three-and-ahalf times as much in extra costs by 2032 because, she reported, the Liberal government ignored its own energy experts and made political decisions that hiked the cost for consumers.

The fallout has also set the stage for the next election in 2018, with the New Democrats proposing to cut power prices by 30 per cent and the Liberals, their popularity in the polls hard-hit by the energy file, saying they'll cut bills by 17 per cent this summer on top of an eight-per-cent cut that took effect Jan. 1 when they removed the provincial sales tax on hydro bills.

Horrobin raised his concerns during an anti-poverty roundtable held by Progressive Conservative MPP Monte McNaughton, whose Lambton-Kent-Middlesex riding is almost the size of Prince Edward Island and takes in vast rural reaches where electricity delivery rates are higher than in many urban areas.

"A story that hit home for me is that a number of churches in North Kent are now raiding benevolent funds to pay people's hydro bills … because they can't afford to pay those bills (since) the costs have gone up so much," McNaughton said.

Southwestern Ontario's ranking MPP, 22-year veteran Ernie Hardeman in Oxford, said social agencies and churches in his riding are also reporting more people coming to them seeking relief from energy bills.

"Just coming in and getting help with food just doesn't seem to do it anymore, because their hydro bill is a bigger problem than not being able to get their groceries," he said. McNaughton said he plans to share the results of his anti-poverty meetings with Liberal MPP Ted McMeekin, who has struck a rural task force on poverty.

When governments and politicians talk about poverty, Mc-Naughton said, too often they refer to Toronto and urban areas.

"It's time Queen's Park starts thinking outside of Toronto and outside of cities to realize that people are falling behind in small town Ontario," he said. McMeekin said when it comes to the effect of hydro prices on Ontarians, "there's no news there, that's been evident for some time."

Late last year, Wynne called Ontario's high electricity prices her "mistake" and vowed to fix them, paving the way for the new reductions.

But Hardeman, a former agriculture minister, is critical of Wynne's promise, calling it a "Band-Aid" fix that doesn't address structural problems.

"The premier says she's solving the problem, and yet she's done nothing about changing the system," he said.

The Liberals have stood by their handling of the energy file, noting they closed Ontario's dirty coalfired power plants in favour of green energy.

But critics point out the government's plunge into green energy since 2009, which greatly expanded wind-and solar-generated power, included sweetheart longterm contracts that guaranteed energy producers far more than what consumers pay for power, inflating the cost.

McMeekin said he's been saying all along the delivery charges weren't fair, and the government listened.

The Liberals inherited problems with the electricity system from the former PC government, he said, citing the frequent number of smog days Ontario had then - a problem aggravated by coal-fired power - and the 2003 blackout, when power plants across Ontario scrambled to get the province's grid operational after 50 million North Americans were plunged into darkness. He noted a $50-billion investment was made to upgrade the power system, and "somebody's got to pay for that."

The government's plan to lower hydro costs takes the pressure off that bill, essentially spreading the pain over a longer period, like remortgaging a house, at an added cost of $25 billion in interest.

The plan also contains a delivery charge reduction for some rural customers, removing the charge entirely for on-reserve First Nations customers, and expanding a low-income support program.

Deputy premier Deb Matthews of London said the government heard Ontarians "loud and clear" on hydro. "Electricity prices are a big deal for the people of this province," she said, adding "that is why we came out strongly with a significant reduction."

Postmedia News With files by Dale Carruthers and Norman Debono,

Back to Top

269704870

C-K stands to rake in turbine cash; Not all councillors support investment

Sarnia Observer - Sat Mar 25 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Page: A5

The Municipality of Chatham is doling out nearly $8 million in tax dollars for a chance to get a share of the profits generated from wind turbines.

Adding this kind money to municipal coffers would normally be welcomed by any politician, but not when it involves wind turbines.

Chatham-Kent council this week voted to approve spending $7.74 million to have the electrical utility Entegrus - owned 90 per cent by the municipality - exercise its option to buy a 15 per cent equity interest in the North Kent 1 Wind Turbine project, soon to be built north of Chatham.

However, it was not supported by everyone.

Wallaceburg Coun. Jeff Wesley voted against the project due to concerns raised that vibrations from the construction and operation of the wind farm will damage water wells.

"I had a moral dilemma, because I did not feel comfortable that we should be investing in a wind project until we have sorted out what is actually going on with the water wells in Chatham-Kent," he said.

Wesley noted his vote against investing in the project was not a reflection of Entegrus.

There was only a brief discussion on the report when it came before Chatham-Kent council on Monday.

However, Chatham Coun. Michael Bondy was the only councillor who expressed his intention to not support it during the meeting.

Bondy said his decision is "based on the principle that I think we have enough wind turbines in our municipality."

He added the turbines hasn't helped electricity bills.

The report that was in the council package estimates the $7.74-million investment could generate a return of $17 million over 20 years.

South Kent Coun. Trevor Thompson, among the majority of who supported the investment, said the issue wasn't about whether the municipality wants turbines or not.

"That project is going ahead, so the question is: 'How much money do you want to make off them?' he said.

"For me, the answer is: 'As much as we can,'" he added.

Thompson said this isn't spending $8 million in taxpayers' money, "this is investing $8 million and getting a good return on it."

He noted this is money that can be used for such purposes as reducing the tax burden or improving services, adding residents will let council know how they want that money spent.

Thompson said he has heard from a few people opposed to this investment "simply because they don't like turbines."

Entegrus CEO and president Jim Hogan said, "this is the first time we're an actual partner, an investor in the wind project."

He said in 2015 when the North Kent Wind group was seeking support for the project from Chatham-Kent, one of the things the municipality was able to negotiate was the opportunity to have an investment in the wind project.

"It is a good opportunity for us to grow our revenue and to give some money back to the community," Hogan said.

He noted options have also been negotiated to invest in the Otter Creek and Romney wind farm projects currently in the works.

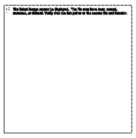
"We haven't started any negotiations, we haven't started looking at any of the returns, so we don't know if we're going to do that," Hogan said.

Jane Wilson, president of Wind Concerns Ontario, a citizen group opposed to industrial wind turbines, said she doesn't know of any other municipality that has invested millions of dollars in wind farm.

She believes it is "short-sighted" for a municipality to look at what financial benefit it can gain from a wind turbine project.

Citing the "mounting energy poverty" related to the cost the province has incurred for its green energy program, she said, "it really seems to be flying in the face of what people are feeling and thinking right now (about wind turbines)."
eshreve@postmedia.com

Back to Top



269668397

Waterloo Region to save millions by using sewer gas to generate electricity

TheRecord.com - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline:cthompson@therecord.com

WATERLOO REGION - A project to capture waste biogas from treating sewage will cut the Region of Waterloo's electricity bills by millions of dollars and reduce damaging greenhouse gases.

The project will use the biogas that's produced at the region's three largest sewage treatment plants to generate electricity and heat the buildings. Some of that gas is now used as part of the sewage treatment process, while the rest is burned off.

"We think it's a fantastic project," said Pam Law, the Region of Waterloo's senior project engineer for the project. "We're taking something, biogas, which is really a renewable resource because we're always producing it, and we can take it and use it more effectively and efficiently. It's better for the environment and it's also more economical."

Once the system is in place, by mid-2020, it will produce about 12,000 megawatt-hours of electricity every year, which is the amount of electricity used by 1,200 houses per year.

The largest plant, at 368 Mill Park Dr. in Kitchener, will see its power bills cut by 60 per cent, while bills at the other two plants, 230 Water St. S. in Cambridge and 340 University Ave. E. in Waterloo are expected to decrease by 40 per cent.

This project is expected to save the region almost $17 million in electricity bills over the next 20 years, and is expected to pay for itself in about nine years, Law said.

There's an environmental benefit, too, since using gas that's now being burned away will reduce the region's emissions of greenhouse gases, which contribute to climate change. The three biogas cogeneration plants combined would reduce emissions by about 550 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, equivalent to taking around 115 cars off the road.

At a series of open houses in November and earlier this month, residents expressed concerns about potential noise and smells from the cogeneration.

"In general, the public was very supportive of the project," Law said. "There were a few concerns raised from residents living adjacent to the wastewater treatment plants. But we were able to tell them that the new cogeneration facilities, located on the plant sites, will not be noisy, will not smell and will be safe."

The buildings will have noise dampening features and silencers in the exhaust stack. The plants are expected to generate about 30 decibels of noise, about the noise level you'd get in a library, according to a report by consultants CH2M.

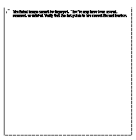
The region operates 13 waste water treatment facilities, but the other plants don't generate biogas in sufficient amounts to make it worthwhile to capture the biogas and generate electricity. The plants separate waste into liquids and solids, treat liquid waste to provincial standards and send it into the Grand River; solid waste is treated and either spread on farm fields as fertilizer or sent to landfill.

Construction on the project is expected to start in a year and wrap up in July 2020.

The region has set aside $24.1 million for the project. Provincial incentives will contribute almost $2.8 million.

More information is available at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/water under "master plans and projects."

Back to Top



269804212

Cap & trade, hide & seek; Couple went through a 'rat's maze' to find out what Grit scheme really costs them

Toronto Sun - Mon Mar 27 2017
Byline: Antonella Artuso
Page: A4

Ontario residents shouldn't have to work their way through a "rat's maze" to figure out the cap-and-trade charge on their natural gas bills, Mississauga senior Muriel Chudiak says.

Since the fee kicked in on Jan. 1, Chudiak has been on a mission to get the Ontario Energy Board and Ontario Liberal government to stop "hiding" it in the delivery charge.

The tenacious 75-year-old wrote to Premier Kathleen Wynne twice, her local MPP Charles Sousa, Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault and the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) demanding to know why consumers can't be told up front how much they're paying.

The OEB directed her to a website where she could calculate her bill that turned out not to work, she said.

With the help of her local natural gas utility, she and her husband, Bill, eventually tracked down the online calculator where she found out her monthly cap-andtrade cost was twice the $5 the Wynne government originally suggested it would be, she said.

They then found an online shortcut to the calculator, added Chudiak.

"My husband and I are quite active and fairly knowledgeable seniors. We couldn't have made it through this exercise without help from Enbridge's customer service," she said. "What about other seniors, people who don't have a computer, busy families? Are they going to have the time and patience and, particularly, the computer savvy to go through this exercise to find out how much we're being charged? "It seems obvious to me and my husband, but I don't think Ms. Wynne or the Ontario Energy Board really want us to know how much we're paying for the cap-andtrade charge each month and they're just making it as difficult as possible for us to get this knowing very well that most people won't even bother," she said.

According to the OEB, an Enbridge customer will see an average monthly bill impact of $6.70 while a Union Gas customer in the southern zone can expect to get hit up for an average monthly increase of $6.16. The actual cap-and-trade fee varies based on usage.

Because the fee does change, Chudiak said it's important that customers know what they're paying. But she can't convince anyone in government or the OEB that transparency is important when it comes to the cap-and-trade charge.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk and - according to a survey she commissioned - 89% of natural gas customers want to see that fee clearly on the bill.

"I got a reply from Kathleen Wynne's office and it was a form letter that didn't even respond to anything I said in my e-mail. So, I wrote back again requesting a proper response and a few weeks later got back the very same form letter," Chudiak said. "I never did hear from Glenn Thibeault's office."

A staff member in Sousa's office did provide a lengthy explanation in writing.

"It's a full page of, in my opinion, nonsense," Chudiak said. "He's a nice young fellow ... I believe he's just spitting out what he was told."

A spokesman from Thibeault's office told the Toronto Sun that decisions on consumer bills are made by the OEB, which is an independent regulator for the province's energy sector, and that the cap-and-trade charge was included in the delivery portion of the natural gas bill after extensive consultations with consumers and stakeholders.

Back to Top

269638995

Try to solve the most difficult problems, OPG CEO advises UOIT students

Oshawa This Week - Fri Mar 24 2017
Byline: Reka Szekely

OSHAWA - Students at UOIT heard words of wisdom from a man who may one day employ several of them as Ontario Power Generation (OPG) president and CEO Jeff Lyash delivered a talk as part of the school's Distinguished Speaker Series.

OPG is Durham Region's largest employer with 6,000 of the company's 10,000 employees based in the region.

In his talk March 16 to roughly 150 students and members of the public at Oshawa's Regent Theatre, Lyash jokingly said that the audience was listening to the musings of a kid from central Pennsylvania who spent a lot of time growing up fishing and fixing cars.

"You could have really saved yourself the money and talked to just about any guy from Oshawa because our backgrounds would be pretty similar," he said of the folks who signed up for the $10 VIP meet-and-greet following the speech.

He added, more seriously, that commonalities is why he feels a kinship for Durham Region and its residents.

Following his formative years, Lyash went on to earn his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Drexel University. He is also a graduate of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management executive training program and Duke University's Fuqua School of Business advanced management program.

Before joining OPG in 2015 as the company's new president and CEO, Lyash was the president of Chicago Bridge and Iron, an engineering and construction conglomerate specializing in the oil and gas industry. Prior to that he held various senior executive roles at American utility Progress Energy and then Duke Energy when the two companies merged. He has also worked for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

When speaking to student groups, Lyash said they're often disappointed to hear he never had a career plan. He did, however, have a consistent objective.

"The objective was to survey the field and find the most important, most difficult problem that needs solving and whatever organization you're working for and whatever you're doing, go for that problem and help solve it and if you do that things generally work out very well."

For the power industry right now that could be looking for the next generation technology, finding a way to deploy bulk energy storage in a way that will help lower costs and improve the system or electrifying the economy, including transportation to reduce greenhouse gases, Lyash said.

In an interview prior to the talk Lyash discussed whether OPG was feeling the pressure from consumer backlash against rising hydro rates in Ontario.

"Everyone should feel pressure about this, it's an important issue," he said. "There's nothing more vital to people's quality of life, security and the economy than reliable, clean, cost-effective electricity. OPG is very proud of the fact that we supply about half of the electricity produced and consumed in Ontario every year and we do it at a price 40 per cent less than the rest of the generators so we are the low-cost provider of electricity in the province and one of the lower-cost providers in Canada."

Lyash said OPG generates nuclear power for 6.6 cent per kilowatt hour which is the lowest rate other than the cheapest hydroelectric power produced in the province.

"It's cheaper than gas, it's cheaper than wind, it's cheaper than solar, it's cheaper than what we pay to import power from Quebec," he said.

In fact, the cost of nuclear production is part of the business case to extend the life of the Pickering reactors to 2024. That issue is currently being considered by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

"We've done extensive technical work so we're very confident that the plants are safe and reliable and actually have life well through 2024 and there's a very strong business case for it," said Lyash. "It will save customers well over $600 million."

Back to Top

269740508

Alberta power grid operator prepares to accept green energy bids

CBC.CA News - Sat Mar 25 2017, 4:21pm ET
Byline:CBC News

The operator of Alberta's electricity grid will start taking bids at the end of this month from companies interested in generating more renewable power.

The provincial government wants to add 5,000 megawatts of renewable electricity by 2030.

The renewables, including wind and solar power, will replace coal-fired power plants, which will be shutting down as part of the province's strategy to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Energy Minister Marg McCuaig-Boyd announced Friday the first competition will be for 400 megawatts, which is enough to power about 170,000 houses.

"We're known as the energy hub of Canada, and make no mistake, green energy is a big part of that," she said.

Mike Deising with the Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) says the new green power has to be developed gradually.

"We don't want to put on too much generation because what we're going to see is, if we have too much generation all at once, we're going to drive down the market price and it's going to distort the electricity market that we have," he said.

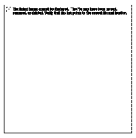
Deising says from their perspective as the grid operator, they want to make sure the addition of new capacity is timed with when they are losing capacity.

AESO wants the 400 megawatts of new green power to go onto the grid by the end of 2019 to replace electricity from coal-fired plants that will start shutting down by late 2020.

- MORE ALBERTA NEWS Alberta premier welcomes Keystone XL pipeline permit

With files from Scott Dippel

Back to Top



269794742

Ripples from US nuclear plant closings overwhelm small towns; Ripples from US nuclear plant closings overwhelm small towns

Canadian Press - Sun Mar 26 2017
Byline: John Seewer

OAK HARBOR, Ohio - Living in the shadows of the Davis-Besse nuclear power plant's cooling tower, which soars above Lake Erie in Ohio like an oversized lighthouse, brings with it some give-and-take.

On the plus side, it generates tax money that once paid for a high school swimming pool and auditorium. Then there are the stockpiles of radiation pills and emergency drills for students in case of a disaster.

For the small, mostly rural towns that are home to 61 U.S. nuclear plants that produce one-fifth of the nation's electricity, each one has been like the golden goose supplying high-paying jobs and money for roads, police and libraries.

But those same places and their residents are bracing for what may come next due to the soaring costs of running aging reactors that have speeded up the closings of a handful of sites and are threatening at least a dozen more. That's because once the power stops flowing, so does the money.

Towns that already have seen nuclear plants shuttered are now dealing with higher property taxes, cuts in services and less school funding - a new reality that may linger for decades.

In Wisconsin, the tiny town of Carlton saw the source of roughly 70 per cent of its yearly budget disappear when the Kewaunee nuclear power plant closed four years ago. That resulted in the first town tax in its history.

"Financially, we benefited, but now we're going to pay the price for the next 40 years," said David Hardtke, the town chairman.

When operations ceased at the Crystal River Nuclear Plant along Florida's Gulf Coast, "it was like something going through and wiping out a third of your county," said Citrus County Administrator Randy Oliver.

To make up the difference, property tax rates went up by 31 per cent and 100 county workers were let go - so many that Oliver worries there won't be enough to evacuate residents and clear roads if a major tropical storm hits.

While the nation's fleet of nuclear power plants wasn't designed to last forever, closures are happening earlier than expected because repair costs are astronomical and it's harder to compete with cheaper natural gas-fired plants and renewable energy sources.

The former head of the nuclear industry's trade group said last year that economic pressures have put 15 to 20 plants at risk of a premature shutdown.

FirstEnergy Corp. will decide by next year whether to close or sell its plant in Pennsylvania and two in Ohio, including Davis-Besse, unless the states change regulations to make them more competitive.

The uncertainty around Davis-Besse and a plan to lower its value caused the local school board to shelve plans to build a new elementary building for the district, which stands to lose $8 million a year without the plant.

New Orleans-based Entergy Corp., owner of the Palisades nuclear plant in Michigan, announced plans late last year to close in 2018 even though it has a license to keep operating another 14 years.

How much the losses will add up to isn't clear yet, said Dennis Palgen, a township supervisor where the plant has operated since 1971.

"We're just in a state of limbo right now," he said, adding that plans to buy a new fire truck are on hold.

The plant and its 600 workers have been good neighbours, he said, buying backpacks for school children and emergency generators for the township. "The list goes on and on," Palgen said.

In some cases, utilities are paying communities and schools during the first few years to help ease the sudden loss of their largest employer and taxpayer.

But what makes recovering tough is that almost all nuclear plants are in out of the way places that have become heavily reliant on them. And they employ specialized workers who are quick to leave for still-operating locations.

To make matters worse, many closed sites can't be redeveloped for new uses because they're still storing radioactive waste.

Some hope the Trump administration's new budget proposal to revive the mothballed disposal site at Nevada's Yucca Mountain will eventually allow for new development at the former plants.

"We have become a de facto nuclear waste dump. It just sits there, and sits there forever," said Al Hill, the mayor in Zion, Illinois, where spent nuclear fuel remains stored on prime property along Lake Michigan even though the plant shut down 20 years ago.

On top of that, the closing took away half of the city's tax base and pushed property taxes to the highest in the state, making it difficult to lure new businesses, Hill said.

Left behind are empty storefronts and little foot traffic, said Chris Daisy, who runs a downtown bicycle shop.

"It's had a devastating effect on this town," he said. "It's terrible. Any town with a nuclear power plant in it or near it is in danger of suffering the same fate."

Follow John Seewer at (twitter.com)

Back to Top