Message

From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
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Today's News

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Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Industry News

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Toronto Star - Wed May 31 2017
Byline: Rob Ferguson Toronto Star
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Canadian Press - Tue May 30 2017
Byline: Colin Perkel

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Windsor Star - Tue May 30 2017
Byline: Tamar Harris

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Ontario needs more "poo" power, says Environmental Commissioner Dianne Saxe.

The province's municipal water systems, for both drinking and sewage, are energy-hogs, but can turn the tables with some smart investments to reduce consumption, improve conservation and make bio-gas from human and food waste, Saxe wrote in a new report Tuesday.

"Many can become renewable energy centres that capture the hidden energy in sewage, and put it to productive use," Saxe said of waste-water treatment plants.

"Bio-gas from sewage can offer renewable, low-carbon energy, replacing fossil fuels for heating, for electricity generation and for transportation," she added after publishing "Every Drop Counts," her annual report on energy conservation.

"To create even more bio-gas, waste-water plants could process food-type wastes along with the sewage. This would also keep food-type wastes out of landfills, where they release methane, a powerful greenhouse gas."

About 30 waste-water plants in the province are large enough to make bio-gas production viable through anaerobic digestion, Saxe told a news conference.

Toronto, London and Simcoe County are considering such systems, while Hamilton now fuels some buses with bio-gas from human sewage and Waterloo is making bio-gas from dog feces.

In response to the report from Saxe, Glen Murray's Ministry of Environment and Climate Change said extreme weather patterns, population growth and future development will put "increased pressure" on water sources.

"Her advice is clear: We will need to do a better job of managing what resources we have. We agree and will be looking at new ways to improve Ontario's already robust water conservation and environmental protection policies."

On average, drinking water and waste-water treatment plants account for 38 per cent of a municipality's energy use - a huge proportion, Saxe said. Most were designed in an era when energy costs were not a consideration, but should now be redesigned with full "life-cycle" costs in mind as governments upgrade infrastructure, she added.

"This gives Ontario municipalities a once-in-a-generation opportunity to cut the energy and environmental footprints of their water and wastewater systems."

Energy could also be saved by reducing leaks in municipal water systems - as much as 30 to 40 per cent in some areas - and by shifting electricity use away from peak periods when it is most costly, she said.

As the need for water conservation becomes more prevalent, municipalities should find smarter ways to deliver water for different purposes, noting that pure drinking water isn't needed to water lawns, for example, Saxe said.

"As you saw from last year's drought, we have to get serious about water conservation," Saxe said. "Little of the treated water is used for purposes that require potable water."

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Lake Huron site best suited for nuclear-waste bunker, OPG report affirms; New study affirms proposed nuclear-waste site

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TORONTO - A new report from Ontario Power Generation overwhelmingly affirms the utility's long-held position that the best place for a nuclear-waste bunker is on the Lake Huron shoreline.

One of the biggest problems with burying the hazardous waste somewhere else would come from having to truck it up to 2,000 kilometres, increasing the risk of radiological accidents and pollution, the 143-page analysis concludes.

The only minor advantage - amid a sea of disadvantages - to locating a bunker elsewhere might be less disturbance of indigenous heritage sites, such as burial grounds, the report finds.

Even so, the overall impact on Aboriginal Peoples is likely to be lower if the deep geologic repository is built, as proposed, at the Bruce nuclear plant near Kincardine, Ont., the report states.

"There is the potential that the total risk may be increased on Indigenous peoples if the (facility) is constructed at an alternate location," the report states. "This (is) due to the introduction of a new facility in an area previously without a nuclear facility, as well as the transportation of wastes to that facility."

Alternative nuclear burial sites would be cost-prohibitive, adding anywhere from $381 million to more than $2 billion to the current cost projection of $2.4 billion, the report states.

The new study comes in response to a request from the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, which has yet to make a final recommendation to Environment Minister Catherine McKenna on whether to approve the project. The agency, along with critics of the proposal, had slammed OPG's previous report on feasible alternative locations as superficial and inadequate.

The new study did not actually pinpoint any specific alternate sites. Instead, the analysis takes in large areas of the province that meet the minimal requirements for rock that would be geologically stable for centuries.

Scores of groups and communities in both Canada and the U.S., have decried the current plan to store the waste underground about 1.2 kilometres from Lake Huron. OPG's new report did little to assuage their concerns about the potential for catastrophic pollution of a major drinking-water source.

"OPG has not changed its position: proximity of the nuclear waste burial site to a Great Lake is not relevant, there is no need to investigate any other actual sites and OPG has a social licence to proceed," the group Stop The Great Lakes Nuclear Dump said in a statement.

By almost every measure, however, the new OPG report counters that concern, maintaining the stable bedrock at the Bruce plant would be the perfect storage site.

"Ideal geology exists for safely isolating nuclear waste 680 metres below ground in stable, dry rock," OPG said in a statement accompanying the report. "Alternate locations in the Canadian Shield or southwest Ontario, while technically feasible, would result in greater environmental effects and higher costs, as well as a project delay of 15 years or more, while offering no additional benefits in safety."

The utility does admit in the report to facing ongoing pushback to the plan from area First Nations, particularly the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, which has long complained about the presence of the nuclear plant. The report says OPG has promised it would not move ahead with the project without their support.

"For clarity and to avoid any confusion, OPG acknowledges that the affected Indigenous peoples have not accepted (the repository)," the report states. "OPG anticipates that through a respectful joint process and through accommodation, an acceptable outcome may be achieved."

The environmental assessment agency said it was reviewing the new information as it gets set to prepare a draft report, along with any conditions that OPG would have to meet if the project proceeds. The public will get a chance to comment on that report and conditions, the agency said.

In May 2015, an environmental review panel approved the repository but the federal government has since delayed its decision several times.

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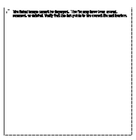

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Hydro One CEO says company undergoing 'intense transformation'

Windsor Star - Tue May 30 2017
Byline: Tamar Harris

Hydro One is embarking on a new era for its nearly 1.5 million customers and 8,000 employees, the company president and CEO said Tuesday.

In remarks to the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, Mayo Schmidt said the last year and a half has been "a time of intense transformation of an organization that has 100 years of history as a Crown corporation."

Privatization has created a greater sense of accountability to the customer, Schmidt said.

Ontario now holds only 49.9 per cent of Hydro One's common shares. The province plans to sell 2.5 per cent of its shares to First Nations, bringing the province's total ownership of Hydro One to 47.4 per cent.

In opening up Hydro One ownership, but remaining the largest shareholder, the government announced $9 billion in gross proceeds. The government said the extra revenue will be invested into infrastructure.

Schmidt said the move to privatization has been positive.

"Let's keep in mind that the customers in the province are also shareholders," he said. "The largest shareholder base we have is in the province of Ontario.

"So it's simply the structure that's changed, but not really the ownership. It's the citizens'. It continues to be 49 per cent owned by the province; but it gives us a commercial license to be more effective and more commercially sensitive by reducing our costs."

Some Ontario residents have been battered by rising electricity prices.

Premier Kathleen Wynne said in a statement announcing cost reduction measures that: "For some families, it's gotten to the point where they must choose between keeping the lights on and keeping food in the fridge. That's unacceptable."

Schmidt said that lowering costs is one of Hydro One's main areas of focus.

"We as an organization are responsible for 30 per cent of the cost of running this complex system across the province, with the OEB (Ontario Energy Board) responsible for setting the cost of power across the province," he said.

"Since the move towards privatization, Hydro One has reduced our cost by tens of millions of dollars."

Schmidt said "a number of conversations with the province" resulted in the Fair Hydro Act. The legislation would reduce electricity bills by 25 per cent on average for residential customers.

Matt Marchand, president and CEO of Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said that electricity prices are "a huge factor" for businesses.

"If we want to have a business attraction strategy, part of the attraction strategy is that we may be a little bit more expensive than other jurisdictions - you don't necessarily have to be the cheapest, you don't have to be the lowest - but we need to be competitive," Marchand said. "Right now we're sort of getting into that out-of-bounds range."

Schmidt said Hydro One is not naive about the challenges it faces.

"We know the relationship between Hydro One and its customers has been strained in the past, and our relationships need to be rebuilt," he said.

"That can only be achieved with meaningful action and advocacy for our customers at Hydro One."

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New legislation caps electricity prices; Alberta moving towards 'capacity market'system over next four years

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New legislation introduced May 23 will ensure that residents of the Town & Country region will not pay more than 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour on their electricity bills over the next four years, though the Wildrose Official Opposition claims this is an admission power prices will "more than double" before 2021.

Bill 18, which has since passed first and second reading, will cap the Regulated Rate Option (RRO) at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour between June 1, 2017 and May 31, 2021.

The RRO is the default electricity contract for the majority of Alberta residents, farms and small businesses. During the four-year period, consumers on the RRO will pay the lower of the two: the market rate or the 6.8 cent cap.

In a news conference, energy minister Margaret Mc-Cuaig-Boyd said there have been a number of times over the last six years where electricity prices have well exceeded the 6.8 cent cap.

She said the previous government conducted an experiment with a "risky and volatile form of electricity de-regulation" and it left Albertans at the mercy of the market.

"Right now, the market is in a trough. Prices are at the lowest they've been in almost a decade," McCuaig-Boyd said. "But the current market, which is an outlier in almost all of North America, is designed to be volatile."

She added that much of Alberta's coal fleet was scheduled to come offline prior to the NDP's election, and they've committed to moving towards 30 per cent renewable energy by 2030 in order to replace it.

"It's not the fault of Alberta families that the former government failed to position us for the future. Consumers shouldn't be on the hook for their lack of oversight. So our government is stepping in to protect consumers."

She said the province will use a number of tools identified through their consultations to keep electricity prices below the 6.8 cent cap, which is well above the current price of power.

Based on the forecasts for the next four years, prices are not going anywhere significant in the next while, she indicated.

But should there be a major unforeseen spike, McCuaig-Boyd said they will use funds collected through the carbon levy to pay for any costs above the cap.

She said this would be an appropriate use of carbon levy funds because it supports the transition to greener and healthier power sources.

Regulations that will be introduced following the legislation's passage will spell out how these payments will be made if electricity rates exceed 6.8 cents.

When asked why the cap would last four years, McCuaig-Boyd said that would be the time necessary to bring Alberta to a "capacity market," which would be less prone to price swings and more friendly to investors.

In a capacity market, private power generators are paid through a mix of competitively auctioned contracts that fund their fixed capital costs and revenue from the spot market.

It is the system currently utilized in the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Opposition response Wildrose shadow energy minister Don MacIntyre said the bill was effectively an admission that the retail rates will more than double due to reckless NDP policy.

The Innisfail-Sylvan Lake MLA added that large industrial operators - Alberta's main job creators - are not protected from electricity rates, giving them one more reason to relocate elsewhere.

MacIntyre said that in a capacity market, the manipulation of billing would result in an "awful lot of the cost of electricity" being shifted to the taxpayer instead of the ratepayer, even though they are the same person.

He added that it would cost an additional $20 to $30 billion to transition to 30 per cent renewable energy sources by 2030.

That's not taking into account the hidden costs of things like the costs of retraining the workforce that previously worked in Alberta's coal mines.

"It appears to me that the only thing the NDP have learned from the disaster in Ontario is how to hide the cost of this irresponsible transition to renewables that they're doing," he said.

"This government has gone from one crisis to another ever since they failed to understand the terms of the Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)."

When asked if the NDP was admitting electricity prices were set to double, McCuaig-Boyd said that was "not at all" the case.

Mike McKinnon, press secretary for the minister of energy, indicated in an e-mail that electricity prices are dictated by market forces, not any action of government.

In the past six years, the RRO has been as high as 15.3 cents per kilowatt hour and as low as 2.7 cents. Depending on the month, residential consumers could pay as little as $20 for electricity or as much as $90.

"Albertans shouldn't have to choose between paying the power bill and paying the rent or mortgage, but that was the option some people faced when prices spiked month-to-month," he said.

Regarding the comparison between Alberta's energy plan and Ontario's current electricity market, McKinnon said Ontario chose a much different path, with a fixed price for renewable power that resulted in prices skyrocketing.

"Alberta will use a competitive auction to ensure the lowest cost option for renewables," he said, noting Ontario is also considering moving to a capacity market now.

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