Message

From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
Sent: 2017-06-21 6:02:30 AM
Subject: Today's News - Wednesday, June 21, 2017

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

Industry News

News - 4 Results

Big northern Ontario companies getting hydro break

Bay Today - Wed Jun 21 2017

Ontario is reducing electricity costs by up to 25 per cent for some of the biggest companies in northern Ontario, including mining and forestry companies, to boost their competitiveness and help them continue to grow says a government news ...

Napanee presents concerns; About 50 residents hear presentations from Ontario Energy Board about rate application

The Belleville Intelligencer - Wed Jun 21 2017
Byline: Christine Peets
Page: A3

Approximately 50 Napanee area residents came out to the Strathcona Paper Centre on Monday to hear presentations from the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and Hydro One regarding its 2018-2022 Distribution Rate Application. ...

Crash fuels nuclear waste fears; But Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission describes comparison as 'fear-mongering'

St. Catharines Standard - Tue Jun 20 2017
Byline:Allan Benner
Page: A1 / Front

While groups opposing the shipments of liquid nuclear waste say last week's crash of a truck loaded with a dangerous chemical is an example of the risks posed by the much more dangerous cargo, a Canadian ...

A reactor in Idaho could change the future of nuclear energy - if it survives Trump's budget

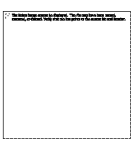
thespec.com - Tue Jun 20 2017

The future of the nuclear energy in the United States may well run through rural Idaho, where the federal Energy Department, a nuclear technology company and a power utility are collaborating on a power plant that nuclear advocates hope will boost ...

Back to Top

Industry News

Full Articles



Big northern Ontario companies getting hydro break

Bay Today - Wed Jun 21 2017

Ontario is reducing electricity costs by up to 25 per cent for some of the biggest companies in northern Ontario, including mining and forestry companies, to boost their competitiveness and help them continue to grow says a government news release.

It's using the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate (NIER) program to try and stabilize electricity costs.

The updated program will make a positive impact on participating companies by:

Extending the NIER program participation term from three to five years, ensuring businesses can count on greater rate stability for longer Accepting more new companies into the program sooner so that more businesses can benefit from more stable rates Connecting the rebate level to current electricity usage more accurately Encouraging participants to report on activities they are undertaking to address climate change within their organizations. "These significant developments to the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program are part of our government's ongoing commitment to reduce electricity costs for businesses in the North," says Glenn Thibeault, Minister of Energy. "Improvements to the program will extend participation periods for businesses, create greater certainty for investment and ensure that industries remain competitive and support jobs in Northern communities."

Not so fast says Nipissing MPP Vic Fedeli.

"It's unfortunate Ontario, once a prosperous province, now needs to pay businesses in order for them to survive," Fedeli told BayToday. "If it wasn't for this government's complete mismanagement of the province's hydro system, we wouldn't be in this mess, nor would businesses even need this program.

"Sadly, this program doesn't do anything to help struggling small and medium-sized businesses; it doesn't help restaurants, retail stores, the hundreds of manufacturing plants all struggling with paying the highest electricity rates in North America. "And even with this re-announcement of the NIER Program, skyrocketing hydro prices make it extremely difficult for a company to operate here, versus an equally sized company in Manitoba or Quebec." Participating companies can get up to $120 million each year to reduce their energy costs.

Currently, there are 19 Northern Ontario industrial companies representing 26 facilities participating in the program.

Back to Top

Napanee presents concerns; About 50 residents hear presentations from Ontario Energy Board about rate application

The Belleville Intelligencer - Wed Jun 21 2017
Byline: Christine Peets
Page: A3

Approximately 50 Napanee area residents came out to the Strathcona Paper Centre on Monday to hear presentations from the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and Hydro One regarding its 2018-2022 Distribution Rate Application.

Napanee was the second of nine community meetings being held in June and July across the province for Hydro One customers to learn more about the utility company's electricity rate application.

All Ontario utilities, including Hydro One, must apply to the OEB to change their distribution rates. These rates are the delivery charges, not the cost of the electricity used by consumers. There were no official representatives from the Town of Greater Napanee, although presenters had met earlier with Greater Napanee mayor Gordon Schermerhorn and councillor Roger Cole. Shaune Lucas, a member of town council attended the evening meeting.

Prior to and following the formal meeting residents had the opportunity to speak with representatives from the OEB and Hydro One. A series of information panels was set up around the banquet hall. During the meeting, there were slide presentations explaining the role of the OEB and how consumers can get involved in the OEB's review of the Hydro One rate application.

"The OEB helps control costs for all consumers," said Kristi Sebalj from the OEB, "by reviewing and testing the requested rate change through an open, robust, and inclusive rate review process. We work hard to keep rates as low as possible while making sure the utilities have what they need to keep the lights on."

The presentation from Hydro One discussed its distribution plans and need to replace aging infrastructure. Both presentations included information about the Fair Hydro Plan, a recent initiative of the Ontario Liberal government, which came into effect on June 1. Some of the people in attendance at the meeting, including Todd Smith, Prince Edward-Hastings MPP, who is the Conservative party's Energy Critic, felt that the inclusion of this information was partisan, and took the opportunity to voice his objections to this legislation. Others expressed similar concerns.

"The Fair Hydro Act (FHA) is a piece of legislation that is in place and there has been some confusion about the impact the FHA has on Hydro One's application to the OEB," said Natalie Poole-Moffatt, vice-president of Corporate Affairs at Hydro One "We are not defending it, or supporting it. We feel we have an obligation to help people understand a bit more about what goes on with the distribution of their electricity; what goes on behind the walls once you flip on that light switch, and how all of that is affected by the FHA."

Following the presentations from the OEB and Hydro One, several residents made presentations discussing the impact they feel a rate increase will have on them and others in the community. One of the presentations came from Shannon Russell, who is working with what she called a "grass-roots" organization, We Own It, that wants to see all public institutions such as Hydro One remain public, and not continue to be privatized.

"I have heard from or personally met with approximately 3,000 people in eastern Ontario who are very much against the privatizing of Hydro One, which they feel is contributing to the higher profits for the corporations, and higher rates for consumers," Russell said.

The community meetings are one stage of the application review process. Hydro One filed its application to the OEB on March 31, and hopes to have a decision by January 2018.

Customer input is welcomed at future meetings in Rockland, Owen Sound, Ancaster, Stoufville, Dryden, Walden/Sudbury and Muskoka. The dates, locations, and times of the meetings are posted on the OEB website, www.oeb.ca/participate/community-meetings. Consumers are also welcome to comment on the Hydro One application by contacting the OEB. The toll-free phone number is 1-877-632-2727. Letters can be sent to the OEB, 2300 Yonge Street, Suite 2701, Toronto, ON M4P 1E4, or contact them online.

Back to Top

Crash fuels nuclear waste fears; But Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission describes comparison as 'fear-mongering'

St. Catharines Standard - Tue Jun 20 2017
Byline:Allan Benner
Page: A1 / Front

While groups opposing the shipments of liquid nuclear waste say last week's crash of a truck loaded with a dangerous chemical is an example of the risks posed by the much more dangerous cargo, a Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC) representative described the comparison as "fear mongering."

CNSC spokesman Aurele Gervais said there is "no comparison between the phosphine incident" and the transport of Highly Enriched Uranyl Nitrate Liquid (HE-UNL.)

"Anyone trying to make that comparison is fear-mongering," Gervais wrote in an email sent Monday morning.

But Gordon Edwards, co-founder and president of the Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility, said collisions "happen all the time."

Edwards, a consultant and expert on nuclear issues, was the guest speaker during a meeting organized by the Niagara District Council of Women to discuss concerns about shipments of liquid highly enriched uranium, possibly travelling through Niagara on its 1,700 km journey from the Canadian Nuclear Laboratories in Chalk River Ontario to a disposal site in South Carolina, costing the Canadian government about US$60-million.

The truck that crashed on the QEW last Tuesday, closing the highway to traffic for nearly 12 hours, was loaded with 45 containers of phosphine - a dangerous chemical used in agriculture as a pesticide.

The containers were not punctured in that crash.

"As bad as the chemicals are … this is another level of magnitude," Edwards told his audience of about 50 people during the meeting held in Beamsville on Friday. "It might be possible that if we make enough of a row about these liquid waste shipments of nuclear material, it will open the door for considering (preventing) other hazardous material transports."

In an interview, Edwards said the impact would have been devastating if that truck had been filled with liquid nuclear waste - the spent uranium remaining after being used in the creation of medical isotopes at the plant located north of Petawawa.

If it didn't leak, he said the impact on the community would have been similar to the crashed truck carrying phosphine. But if it did: "They would have to excavate the highway and bury it as radioactive waste if there was actual leakage," he said.

And the proximity of the highways to the Great Lakes is another concern for Edwards.

"One of the principals of radiation, if you cut the radiation exposure in half but double the number of people exposed, you still get the same number of cancers," he said. "It's the combination of the dose with the population. Because of the large population on the lake, even though it's diluted, that's not a solution in any way."

"Accidents do happen," added Gracia Janes, environment convener for the National Council of Women of Canada.

"You can say it never will, and then when you least expect it…," she said. "For the farmers it would be disastrous, for the people it would be disastrous. It would be for everybody and there's no need for it."

Niagara Centre MPP Cindy Forster also referred to the truck rollover in letters she wrote on Thursday to the Minister of Health and Long Term Care, Minister of Community Safety and Corrections, and Minister of Environment and Climate Change regarding concerns about the nuclear waste shipments.

"People in Niagara are worried for their safety. The unrelated rollover of a tractor trailer carrying hazardous chemicals through the region this week has only added fuel to the fire," she wrote.

"It is imperative that our first responders and community safety workers are provided with accurate information about the hazardous material being shipped out of Chalk River. It's equally imperative that they are given proper training on how to best protect themselves and the citizens they serve in the event of a spill."

Gervais said the containers carrying the liquid nuclear waste are thoroughly tested before they're approved, and require certification by both U.S. and Canadian authorities.

In Canada, that certification includes "stringent testing, which simulates both normal and hypothetical accident conditions of transport, including free-drop testing, puncture testing and thermal testing."

Testing the containers includes dropping them from a height of nine metres, crushing them with a 500-kilogram mass, burning them for 30 minutes in an 800?C fire, and submerging them under up to 200 metres of water for an hour.

The design of the containers must comply with CNSC regulations, which are based on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) regulations for transporting radioactive material.

Those regulations, he added, "establish strict standards of safety which provide an internationally acceptable level of control of the radiation, nuclear criticality and thermal hazards to persons, property and the environment."

Gervais said workers involved in the shipments must also have necessary training before receiving CNSC approval.

He said more information about the shipments is available on the CNSC website: nuclearsafety.gc.ca.

Edwards, however, said the containers being used were designed for shipping nuclear waste in its solid form, not liquid.

"Unfortunately, it's the same thing with all this technology. When it's good, it's very good and when it's bad it's horrid," Edwards said. "Everything can fail. We know that."

Even with shielding, he said gamma radiation can penetrate the walls of the container.

"If someone was stuck in a traffic jam for example beside one of those trucks, they would be irradiated - not to a high degree that would kill them or anything, but never the less the longer they're close to it the more radiation they're going to get."

Edwards said neutron radiation can also escape the containment, which is "particularly biologically damaging."

And there will be far more trips along the highways than originally anticipated.

Edwards said the DoE initially estimated that up to about 150 shipments would take place over the next four years. The U.S. agency, however, recently increased that estimate to as many as 250 shipments.

A U.S. nuclear watchdog group called Savannah River Site Watch believes the first shipment of 232 litres of nuclear waste took place between April 17 and 22.

Although the route the trucks are taking has not been publicly released, Edwards said the Peace Bridge is one potential border crossing the shipments could take.

"It could come through here, it could go through the Thousand Island Bridge, it could go through Sarnia," Edwards said. "They are leaving all their options open and they will not exclude any particular route as being off limits."

He said the shipments shouldn't be "on the roads, period."

"We don't want it in anybody else's backyard either," he added.
ABenner@postmedia.com

Back to Top

A reactor in Idaho could change the future of nuclear energy - if it survives Trump's budget

thespec.com - Tue Jun 20 2017

The future of the nuclear energy in the United States may well run through rural Idaho, where the federal Energy Department, a nuclear technology company and a power utility are collaborating on a power plant that nuclear advocates hope will boost the industry's flagging fortunes.

While the rest of the industry has struggled - with old plants shuttering and the first new reactors built in decades labour through massive delays and cost overruns - advocates are promising the Idaho project will be different. There, the companies and federal government are collaborating on what's known as a small "modular" nuclear reactor. Unlike their larger relatives, modular reactors are to be factory-built, eliminating the safety and installation issues that often bloat construction costs, and they come with fewer nuclear waste concerns. Much smaller than the behemoths of midcentury, installers can adjust them to fill different electricity needs. Some could be small enough to power a single manufacturing facility. Advocates say small modular reactors will be safer, cheaper and more nimble than the older reactors utilities are fighting to preserve.

But the still-nascent technology faces a threat: President Donald Trump's budget would not renew the expiring grant that the Energy Department is using to help fund the project as it goes through a lengthy and expensive development phase. So far NuScale, the technology company after whom the project is named, has spent more than $400 million designing its reactor and still has about $600 million more spend through the final push. But even if everything proceeds on schedule, the plant won't produce any power or draw any revenue until 2025.

Even members of the president's party have taken him to task on the issue, urging him to plus up funding in a May 2 letter. Lawmakers may yet have another way to weigh in - on top of federal spending levels, the industry says the project's survival also depends on Congress adjusting a tax incentive to allow next generation reactors to qualify. The provision requires reactors to operate by 2020, which won't be the case for NuScale. RELATED:

Researchers discover power grid-wrecking software that 'could affect hundreds of thousands of people'

Three Mile Island nuclear plant to shut down in 2019

Lake Huron site best suited for nuclear-waste bunker: OPG report

Project backers are banking on federal support to help bridge the gap until completion, and they say that if the Energy Department's funding vanishes it could not only stall the NuScale project, but sink prospects for modular reactors across the country, forfeiting the race for a greenhouse gas-free energy source to foreign countries such as Russia and China.

"This is the one biggest hope that we have over the next six to eight years," said Spencer Nelson, policy analyst with ClearPath, a conservative clean energy group. "Everyone in the nuclear industry cares about NuScale."

The debate over NuScale underscores the broader dilemma of nuclear energy, a power source of near-limitless potential that is nonetheless perpetually controversial due in part to the tremendous cost and complication of getting plants off the ground.

On one side, nuclear skeptics in the environmental community argue the funding being devoted to these projects would be better spent on developing other climate-friendly energy sources, such and wind and solar power that don't face the same upfront development hurdles or have the same waste and safety concerns. On the other side, free-market purists balk at the federal funding's interference in the market.

And like every other energy source, nuclear power has had to compete with the resurgence of natural gas, which has gotten cheaper and more plentiful thanks to new extraction technologies.

That threat is particularly salient for NuScale. The power company investing in the project, Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems (UAMPS), is looking to the plant to replace coal-fired power plants slated to go offline by 2025. The utility can pull out of NuScale any time before 2021, but if it goes forward after that, it'll be on the hook financially for billions of dollars even if NuScale never produces a watt of its envisioned 600 megawatts.

Nuclear isn't the only option, as the area is home to the natural gas-rich Uinta Basin. Installing natural gas is "the nine ball sitting on the edge of the corner pocket. I can knock that in any time I want to," said Doug Hunter, chief executive officer with UAMPS.

"The biggest concern we have is do we need to have this type of generation in the future?" Hunter said. "Or are we able to handle our energy needs through energy efficiency and distributed generation and batteries? We are debating that.

"We are not going to walk into a blind take-or-pay product," he added.

The Energy Department funding, aimed at helping the project move through the regulatory phase, is what nuclear advocates are hoping will give UAMPS the confidence to proceed with the new technology, and so they're counting on Congress to renew the nuclear grant.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry will be tasked with defending the budget at a Tuesday House hearing, and the cuts he'll be proposing.

But the cuts go deeper. Overall, the White House would slash DOE's nuclear office by 31 per cent to $703 million, halve a program dedicated to extending the operating life of existing reactors, strip $38 million from an advanced reactor research effort, reduce research for recycling spent nuclear fuel by $150 million and kill a loan program designed to get innovative technology off the ground.

Nuclear backers say the proposal would hinder research and development for emerging nuclear technologies, such as molten salt reactors instead of traditional light-water models, as well as small modular reactors such as NuScale.

"Even if you think it wasn't necessary or Congress was going to save it, it's a very important question to ask what are the priorities of the administration, and are they going to do what's necessary to step out and try to bolster or save emerging technologies?" said Josh Freed, clean energy vice president with think tank Third Way, which supports the new tech.

Not everyone sees the cuts as bad. Some think there's limited interest in the advanced nuclear technology and that funding research wastes taxpayer dollars. Promised for decades, companies have struggled to bring down small modular reactor costs. And nuclear's share of world electricity has been shrinking since it accounted for 18 per cent in the mid 1990s - it now stands at 11 per cent - and is expected to keep slipping, said M.V. Ramana, a physicist at University of British Columbia.

"The prognosis for [small modular reactors] is just not bright enough to warrant continued support for this," said Ramana, who until recently worked at Princeton University's Nuclear Futures Laboratory.

While proponents say Perry has spoken glowingly of these technologies and ultimately think he'll right the budget ship, they still worry action won't match rhetoric. It wouldn't be the first time Perry said something to one forum and did something completely different. In China earlier this month, Perry touted continuing clean energy work with other nations despite the United States' exit from the Paris climate accord; the next week, DOE shuttered its climate change office that does exactly that. (The Energy Department did not return a request for comment.)

Hunter, the UAMPS chief, projects NuScale's power will be cost-competitive with natural gas in 2025, but predicting fuel prices that far out is complicated. Gas prices could stay low, solar power is getting less expensive and energy efficiency may improve.

That small modular reactors have never been approved for U.S. use adds to the complexity. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission doesn't even have the architecture in place to approve the NuScale license, noted Christopher Guith, a former Energy Department deputy assistant secretary for nuclear who now is senior vice president for policy at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Institute for 21{+s}t Century Energy.

"And then you get to the point of whether anybody is going to pull the trigger," Guith said. "NuScale is a unique beast. They're (UAMPS) not on the hook for anything because there's no there there."

Guith called it the "first inning of a nine inning game," where the conversation "ultimately it goes back to the budget request."

That's because federal research has often catalyzed new energy technology - think fracking. Private companies margins are too thin to conduct massive research programs. Venture capital is scarce because the return on investment is lengthy. Meanwhile, rival firms outside the United States are often state-subsidized or -owned.

That's why NuScale, UAMPS and everyone else involved is watching the budget process and Congress closely.

"It does make it difficult to compete when the programs are being funded substantially by their governments," said Tom Mundy, chief commercial officer with NuScale. "We've been very fortunate to date to have been supported by our government. We would hope that the government would continue to provide that support."

Back to Top