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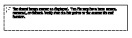
Today's News

powered by: 

Date: Wednesday, July 12, 2017
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Contact Editor

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Byline: The Canadian Press

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Europe has become a continent where families are often asked to pay exorbitant amounts for basic needs, including energy. That has led to what is known as "energy poverty." Many are not able to afford household power bills, especially in winter but ...

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Practice paying off at OPG Darlington refurb

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BOWMANVILLE - The Darlington Nuclear Refurbishment project is 30 days ahead of schedule and $40 million under budget so far on the work on unit two, according to the project manager at Ontario Power Generation's Darlington plant.

"To date, we've had excellent project performance, ahead of schedule and under budget," said Garry Rose, VP Planning for Darlington Refurbishment.

OPG began the first steps in the refurbishment of its four reactors at the Darlington Nuclear Generating Station in October 2016, beginning with unit two.

OPG's Darlington station has been in operation since the early 1990s and is approaching the midpoint of its operating life. Replacing critical components of the CANDU reactors will extend Darlington's operating life by 30 years or more.

OPG has spent years planning the Darlington refurbishment project and built a full-scale mock-up of a reactor so workers could practice prior to doing the actual work.

"The refurb. itself is something that's been done. It's been done elsewhere. You can practice it … It's like anything you do, the first time may not go as well as the fifth or sixth," said Rose.

The areas where the Darlington project has hit troubles are those outside the refurbishment of the reactor, which therefore couldn't be practised on the mock-up. There are several modification projects being done at the station in conjunction with refurbishment - including safety improvements such as installing a third emergency power generator and a containment filtered venting system. Those projects have been done, although there were some delays and cost impacts.

Work to build a heavy water storage facility has been put on hold while some more engineering work is done. Rose said the remaining mechanical and electrical work will likely restart in the fall, once all the necessary materials are on site and ready to go.

"That is a huge civil project, down to bedrock," said Rose.

He added managing the large-scale projects at Darlington involves moving thousands of pieces of heavy equipment and co-ordinating all of the people so they are trained and ready to go.

Darlington's workforce has grown by almost 5,000 people since the refurbishment work began and there have been no loss-time workplace accidents related to the project. There have been some medical incidents for workers dealing with high temperatures in the reactor vault when heating blankets were being used to help drain the water out of the vault. Now, that work is done and the vault air conditioners are on, said Rose. Workers outside may still be dealing with heat during the summer months, and when temperatures rise there will be increased breaks and hydration centres for workers, he explained.

Refurbishment workers are now installing special platforms to hold the specialized tools needed for the next step, which is cutting and removing the feeder pipes to get to the reactor face.

"The critical part of this job is really about removing all those components and then reinstalling the new," said Rose.

The refurbishment of unit two was originally scheduled to take until February 2020. Then workers will move on to refurbish unit three, unit one, and finally unit four - scheduled to be completed in February 2026.

The province has built potential "off-ramps" into the refurbishment plans. Work on the first reactor at Darlington has to come in on time and on budget before the government will approve going ahead with refurbishment of each of the remaining three units.

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Have your say on a Hydro One rate application in Bracebridge, Muskoka

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BRACEBRIDGE - Members of the public will have a chance to weigh in on a Hydro One rate application at a meeting in Bracebridge.

The Ontario Energy Board, the province's energy regulator, is bringing its rate review process to the Bracebridge Sportsplex auditorium on July 13. Doors open at 6 p.m., the meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. The board received a rate application from Hydro One to increase its distribution rates over five years beginning January 1, 2018.

This meeting in Bracebridge is the ninth the board has held across the province since June 15.

According to an Ontario Energy Board press release, the amounts requested by Hydro One in its application relate to its distribution business and do not reflect any credits or other changes resulting from the Fair Hydro Act, 2017.

"Any amounts approved by the OEB will not impact the distribution line of the bill of most Hydro One customers, after the Fair Hydro Act credits and changes are applied," states the release.

The community meetings are intended to help consumers learn more about Hydro One's costs as described in the rate application, how they can get involved in the board's processes, and allow them to provide comments about Hydro One's application.

Consumers are invited to make a five-minute presentation at the meeting by first contacting the OEB at registrar@oeb.ca or by calling 416-440-7605 or 1-877-632-2727 and quoting file number EB-2017-0049.

Customers unable to attend the meetings can attend a provincewide telemeeting on Wednesday, July 12 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Customers can call in toll-free 1-800-806-5484 using the passcode 8940608# or send an email to ConsumerVoice@oeb.ca for more information.

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Soaring temperatures push power use in Saskatchewan to new record

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REGINA - SaskPower says soaring temperatures on Monday pushed power use in Saskatchewan to a summer record.

The company says the Saskatchewan power grid registered a peak demand of 3,360 megawatts, which beat the previous summer record set July 10, 2015, by 29 megawatts.

SaskPower says the increase represents power use in about 29,000 homes.

Temperatures in Regina hit 35 C and Saskatoon reached 30 C on Monday.

SaskPower's vice-president of transmission, Kory Hayko, says more records are being set as power demand continues to rise in the province.

The winter peak record is still the highest at 3,747 megawatts, but Hayko said the gap between summer and winter records is closing.

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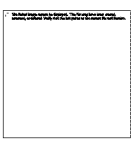

It's time for a western Canadian electricity grid; Energy transmission is cheaper than generation, explains Dennis Woodford

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Trading in electricity between the western provinces - is it effective? The 2017 Canadian Free Trade Agreement does not do much to encourage provinces to trade electric energy east and west. Would a western Canada electric grid help electricity consumers in the western provinces? Some Alberta officials feel that their electric utilities are investor owned and they perceive the Crown corporations of BC Hydro, SaskPower and Manitoba Hydro to be subsidized by their provincial governments, so an interprovincial electric energy trade would not be on a level playing field.

Because of the limited trade of electric energy between the western provinces, each utility maintains an excessive reserve of thermal and hydroelectric generation greater than their peak loads, to provide a reliable supply during peak load days. This excess does not include variable wind and solar generation, which within a province can't be guaranteed to be available when needed most.

This attitude must change.

Transmission is cheaper than generation. By constructing a substantial grid with low profile and aesthetically designed overhead transmission lines, the excess reserve of thermal and hydroelectric generation above the peak electric load can be reduced in each province over time. Detailed assessments will ensure each province retains its required reliability of electric supply.

As the provinces retire aging thermal and coal-fired generators, they only need to replace them to a much lower level, by just enough to meet their future electric loads. Some of the money not spent in replacing retired generation can be profitably invested in the transmission grid across the four western provinces.

But what about Alberta, which does not want to trade electric energy with the other western provinces? It can carry on as usual within the Alberta Electric System Operator's (AESO) market and will save money by keeping the installed reserve of thermal and hydroelectric generation to a minimum. When Alberta experiences a peak electric load day and some generators are out of service due to unplanned maintenance, it can obtain the needed power from the interprovincial electric grid. None of the other three western provinces will peak at the same time, because of different weather and time zones, so they will have spare capacity to help Alberta over its peak. The peak load in a province only lasts for a few hours, so Alberta will get by with a little help from its friends if needed.

The grid will have no energy flowing on it for this purpose except to assist a province from time to time when it's unable to meet its peak load. The grid may only carry load five per cent of the time in a year for this purpose. Under such circumstances, the empty grid can then be used for other profitable markets in electric energy. This includes more effective use of variable wind and solar energy, by enabling a province to better balance such intermittent power as well as allowing increased installation of it in every province. This is a challenge for AESO which the grid would substantially ease.

Natural Resources Canada promoted the "Regional Electricity Co-Operative and Strategic Infrastructure" initiative for completion this year and contracted through AESO. This is a first step, but more is needed to achieve the full benefit of a western grid.

In 1970 a study was undertaken to electrically interconnect Britain with France, which was justified based on the ability to reduce reserve generation in both countries. Initially Britain rejected it, but France was partially supportive. In time, a substantial interconnection was built, and being a profitable venture, they are contemplating increasing the grid connections between them.

For the sake of the western consumers of electricity and to keep electricity rates from rising too quickly, as well as allowing productive expansion of wind and solar energy, an electric grid is essential across western Canada. Dennis Woodford is president of Electranix Corporation in Winnipeg, which studies electric transmission problems, particularly involving renewable energy generators requiring firm connection to the grid.

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Energy poverty explodes in Europe

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Europe has become a continent where families are often asked to pay exorbitant amounts for basic needs, including energy. That has led to what is known as "energy poverty." Many are not able to afford household power bills, especially in winter but also during summer heat waves.

The number of Europeans affected by this problem is high. According to the European Union in its 2015 report on rising energy costs, fully 11 per cent of its member states'population - that's 54 million people - already cannot afford their energy bills. The EU further estimates that fully one-quarter of residents, or 128 million people (and that includes the existing 54 million), are at risk of being energy poor.

Romania's energy poverty, for example, clocks in at between 40 and 50 per cent of the population. Spain, Portugal, Estonia, Belgium, Malta, Slovakia, Italy, Ireland and even the United Kingdom record energy-poverty rates of between 20 and 30 per cent of their populations.

Such energy-poverty rates have led to what the EU references as "excessive mortality rates" in some of the same countries during winter, when some consumers cannot afford to properly heat their homes. Seventeen of 26 EU member states find the problem so prevalent that they even have energy poverty defined as an explicit concept in law.

The EU blames energy poverty on three factors: the effect of recessions on incomes (it references the 2008/09 recession though some EU states have been in a recessionary "funk" long past that year); energy-inefficient homes; and rising energy prices.

Of the three, one is less amenable to further change: energy efficiency. That's because European homes, apartments and townhouses are already very energy efficient vis-à-vis North American housing.

As for recessions and incomes, higher energy prices prevent European economies from achieving higher economic growth given that expensive energy restricts the money available for business investment. That slows overall economic growth, which exacerbates existing sluggish economies and lower incomes.

Oddly, in its 2015 study, the EU ignored one major factor in energy poverty: Its own role in killing off affordable power in attempts to meet ambitious carbon dioxide reduction goals in the 1992 Kyoto Protocol. Such objectives have been a staple of both EU and memberstate policies'ever since.

For a good example of how government policy led to the creation of energy poverty and then subsequent policy attempts to deal with the governmentcreated problem, consider the United Kingdom.

In the U.K., energy poverty is defined as a household where more than 10 per cent of income must be spent to heat the home to maintain an acceptable temperature. One-quarter of British households fit that definition.

Who's to blame? In Britain, successive governments pushed out cheaper energy sources such as coal. The country was the first to commit to phasing out coal-fired electricity. Also, as of 2015, Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Amber Rudd made it clear that push would continue with plans to end all coal-fired power production by 2025.

Problem: As of 2015, coalfired electricity in the U.K. still accounted for 20 per cent of all power. Also, the 2025 plan is not realistic without large costs. The Institution of Mechanical Engineers estimated that the country lacks the time, resources and

enough people with the right skills to build enough replacement natural gas and nuclear plants by 2025. In any event, these touted replacements and the others, such as wind and solar, are more expensive. So is imported power from the continent. U.K. energy poverty is set to rise without a government U-turn.

Canada has its own examples of how forced transitions from cheaper energy sources to costly renewables sent power prices soaring - Ontario, where power rates have doubled in the past decade, being the most notable example. If Canadian governments adopt EU-style policies, Canadians can expect an increase in homegrown energy poverty.

Mark Milke is an author, policy analyst and writer for Canadians for Affordable Energy.

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