Message

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: Friday, December 1, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Changes paying off

The Timmins Daily Press - Fri Dec 1 2017
Byline: Len Gillis
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National Post - Thu Nov 30 2017
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MCT Regional News - Thu Nov 30 2017
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Byline: Chris Mooney
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The Belridge oilfield near Bakersfield, Calif., is one of the largest in the United States. It has been producing oil for more than a century and last year produced around 76,000 barrels a day, according to operator Aera Energy. Now the oilfield is ...

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307607391
Changes paying off

The Timmins Daily Press - Fri Dec 1 2017
Byline: Len Gillis
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The City of Timmins is gradually reducing its overall energy costs and in some instances the change is beginning to pay off.

That was part of the message this week from Steven Schmidt, a consultant with VIP Energy Services, an energy management firm that is working to bring down energy costs for the city. As mandated by Ontario's Green Energy Act, the city must produce an annual report to show that active steps are underway to conserve energy.

Schmidt is the same consultant who told city council last year that Timmins was indeed bringing down the amount of energy it was using, but because of rate increases for hydro and natural gas, there were no actual money savings.

This week Schmidt told council there have been money savings in part because his company has been monitoring the city's energy bills each month as well as applying for rebate programs.

"By doing that, we've been able to find some areas where we've been able to recover some costs for the city," said Schmidt.

By example, Schmidt mentioned the Global Adjustment Rebate (IESO Ontario) and the PST rebates (Ontario Electricity Consumers Act) that are available for small residential and business users. He said the PST rebate is 8% savings, while the Global Adjustment Rebate savings are 17% "We found part of the statute that allowed us to get the Golden Manor included in that, even though they're a user much larger than what is typically stipulated," he said.

Schmidt said the rate correction for the Golden Manor resulted in a credit adjustment of $140,000.

"We also found through working with Hydro One there is some rate correction that needed to take place, which also recovered some funds for the city," said Schmidt.

"There was a couple of other areas where the utility was looking at pushing some rate increases from the delivery point of view that we were able to avoid through some analysis and negotiations."

He outlined that Timmins has a set a goal to reduce energy intensity by 2019. Energy intensity is a measure of energy efficiency as related to GDP, or gross domestic product. A high energy intensity would mean too much energy is being used to create a product or service.

Schmidt said Timmins is gradually moving to have a lower energy intensity.

"From an overall energy performance point of view when we first did the energy conservation and management plan for the city, which was mandated by the Ontario government in 2014, we set a goal of five per cent by 2019, for energy intensity, which is a measure of equivalent kilowatt hours per square metre," Schmidt explained.

"We are well ahead of that at this point. Up to 2016 and it looks like 2017 numbers are coming in fairly similar so, we're on our way to meeting that goal," he said.

Schmidt also revealed that Timmins, and other Ontario communities, will have to begin concentrating on reducing its carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions

(GHG) with goals that have been set for 2020, 2030 and 2050.

Schmidt said this will not happen so much with electricity usage but more with finding ways to reduce the usage of natural gas for heating and fossil fuels for running the city's fleet of vehicles.

Schmidt said funding could be available to offset costs, especially if the city's effort is combined with a community energy plan.

In his energy report to council in 2016, Schmidt explained the cap and trade system and how it could affect Timmins. He said it means the city would eventually be paying more for carbon-based energy because of the provincial cap-andtrade energy program.

The "cap" is a limit, or a cap on the amount of greenhouse gas that can be produced by a factory for example. A factory that produces less greenhouse gas pollution gets credits for that.

The "trade" is the system that lets one factory trade or sell their credits to another factory or business that cannot reduce pollution so easily. The provincial target is to reduce carbon emissions by more than 4% per year.

The hope is that the system will encourage more big factories and refineries to innovate and reduce their carbon pollution in the long run.

Schmidt said the cap-and-trade program would not be a benefit for Timmins.

"In order to directly participate, you have be a very large user, in terms of per facility, far beyond any facility the city has," said Schmidt. In fact, it would cost the city money.

"The fuel distributors are required to purchase credits on behalf of their clients and then pass the costs of those down to the city," Schmidt explained.

It means Timmins will likely have to pay a share of the cost of carbonbased pollution based on the rate of $17 per tonne of carbon. In real terms that means Timmins might be expected to pay 3.2-cents extra per cubic metre of natural gas and 4 to 6 cents more per litre on gasoline and diesel fuel.

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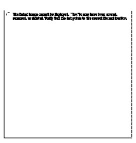

307458246

New Hydro One bills give Liberals unfair advantage: opposition parties

thestar.com - Thu Nov 30 2017
Byline: Rob Ferguson

New and simplified Hydro One bills (www.thestar.com) , which highlight savings from the government's 25-per-cent-rate cut, are giving Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals an unfair edge as an election looms, rivals say.

"It's not appropriate," NDP Leader Andrea Horwath (www.thestar.com) said Thursday.

"The only reason that information is on the bills is to provide a political advantage for the Liberals."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault denied the accusation, saying it was Hydro One's choice to put that information on the bills, which also highlight the money owed and when it is due.

"It's clarity," Thibeault told reporters. "We get questions in my office all the time saying 'I don't see the fair hydro plan on my bill."

The information about the rate cut (www.thestar.com) is under the headline: "what do I need to know?"

Progressive Conservative MPP Lisa MacLeod (Nepean-Carleton) called the inclusion of the savings "a ploy" and "cynical," although her party (www.thestar.com) would continue with the 25-per-cent-off plan if elected next June 7 and add a further reduction of 12 per cent.

The new bills were unveiled Wednesday following in-depth research into customer preferences, said Hydro One officials, who noted that 35 per cent of customer queries to the utility's call centres were to have bills explained.

"This was a wide open process that Hydro One did," Thibeault said. "It was an opportunity for them to do what they thought was best."

It's too early to say if a ministry committee studying bill redesigns, which could result in other utilities, such as Toronto Hydro, simplifying their bills, could include the government rate-cut information, the minister added.

The rate cut was passed last March (www.thestar.com) , but was widely criticized by opposition parties because ratepayers will face an extra $25 billion in interest charges over the next 30 years as costs of upgrading the electricity system are spread out over decades.

Liberals have portrayed that extra cost as a trade-off for easing prices now and compared it to a homeowner extending a mortgage term to get lower monthly payments.

Under the plan, hydro bills will increase no more than the rate of inflation, which is roughly two per cent now, over the next four years.

Horwath has said her hydro plan unveiled last February (www.thestar.com) , which includes buying back shares in Hydro One, could save ratepayers up to 30 per cent by getting the federal government to cut its 5 per cent HST on bills and by capping profits for private power-producers.

The Wynne government has sold roughly half the shares in Hydro One to raise $9 billion for debt repayment and infrastructure projects, including public transit.

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Canadian, American civic leaders urge feds to reject nuclear-waste proposal

National Post - Thu Nov 30 2017
Byline: The Canadian Press

TORONTO - More than 100 mayors and other elected officials on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border are urging Environment Minister Catherine McKenna to put the kibosh on a proposed nuclear-waste bunker near Lake Huron.

In an open letter to McKenna on Thursday, the officials say they speak for 16 million people who want the Ontario Power Generation proposal shelved as a potential eco hazard.

"We are deeply concerned that Ontario Power Generation (OPG) is proposing to bury nuclear waste in close proximity to the Great Lakes," the letter states. "We find it irresponsible and deeply troubling that OPG failed, and continues to refuse, to investigate any other actual sites."

The 104 signatories include mayors, wardens and reeves in Ontario, among them Keith Hobbs, of Thunder Bay, Maureen Cole, of South Huron, Heather Jackson, of St. Thomas, and Pat Darte, from Niagara-on-the-Lake. American signatories include mayors Ron Meer, of Michigan City, Ind., Stephen Hagerty of Evanston, Ill., and Mike Vandersteen, of Sheboygan, Wisc.

A covering note from Mayor Mike Bradley of Sarnia, Ont., says the message in the letter is clear.

"We oppose the risk to our precious fresh water," Bradley writes.

The Ontario Power Generation project, estimated to cost $2.4 billion and growing, would see a bunker built at the Bruce nuclear power plant near Kincardine, Ont., close to the Lake Huron shoreline. Hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of low and intermediate radioactive waste - stored for years at the site above ground - would be buried 680 metres deep.

The proposed storage, which OPG argues is the safest and most effective way to deal with the waste, won tentative approval from an environmental review panel in May 2015. Since then, both the previous Conservative and current Liberal governments have repeatedly delayed making the politically fraught final decision and OPG has warned the cost of the project could rise by billions if delayed significantly.

Earlier this year, OPG offered more information at McKenna's request on alternative sites - although critics decried the analysis. In August, the minister asked for more information on the impact of the proposed bunker on the area's Indigenous people whose support is critical as to whether the project proceeds.

The Saugeen Ojibway Nation said last week that they are deliberating - a process likely to take at least a year to play out. If they approve, the federal government will make a final decision on whether to allow OPG to proceed and under what conditions - but the critics want an end to the process now.

The letter to McKenna takes issue with an OPG assertion that people are generally untroubled by the idea of burying waste that remains radioactive for centuries near Lake Huron.

It notes that local, county and state governments representing 23 million people have passed 230 resolutions in opposition to burying nuclear waste anywhere in the Great Lakes basin.

"We the undersigned request that you act to protect North America's most precious resource and the health and safety of the millions of people who rely on your leadership by rejecting OPG's application," the letter says.

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104 elected officials sign letter against nuclear waste burial site by Lake Huron

CBC.CA News - Thu Nov 30 2017, 6:05pm ET
Byline:CBC News

A "mammoth" list of 104 elected officials from cities and municipalities surrounding the Great Lakes have signed an open letter to Canada's Minister of Environment condemning a plan to bury nuclear waste near Kincardine, Ont.

In the open letter addressed to Catherin McKenna, the officials state their signatures speak for millions of people living around the lakes who feel the project could present a threat to the "life-blood" and economy of the Great Lakes region.

Gathering all of those signatures from both sides of the border took months of hard work, but Beverly Fernandez, spokesperson for Stop The Great Lakes Nuclear Dump, said it was worth it.

"This is a very, very significant effort," she said. "Putting a nuclear waste dump beside the Great Lakes is more than risky it's a knowing disregard for the health of millions of people."

Reports prepared by Ontario Power Generation (OPG) describe the location as the "safest and most appropriate site" for a Deep Geological Repository or DRG.

The site would see 200,000 cubic metres of radioactive waste products buried 680 metres underground just over a kilometre from the shores of Lake Huron.

Waste would range from low-level radioactive material such as mops, rags, protective clothing and floor sweepings to intermediate-level radioactive material like used reactor core components, filters and refurbishment waste.

Sarnia Mayor Mike Bradley's signature graces the long list at the bottom of the letter. He said three other DRG sites exist in the world and all have had problems.

"When you have the largest body of fresh water in the world, over 40 million people take their drinking water from the lakes, it's just wrong to even consider there might be something that could happen there to pollute and damage our environment," he explained. "It's Russian roulette because … we try to protect the Great Lakes and this is a huge step backwards if this proceeds."

Bradley also maintains the OPG didn't "actively search" for another site further from the Great Lakes.

In a statement, OPG said other locations are technically feasible, but "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."

Fernandez refuses to accept that and stated she and her organization plans to continue fighting the site. She's hoping the letter and signatures will make the government listen.

"The Canadian government needs to stand up for all citizen's rights to clean water and they need to clearly state that no Deep Geological Repository for radio-active nuclear waste should be buried anywhere in the Great Lakes Basin."

with files from Chris Ensing

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Employees raise concerns over Guelph Hydro, Alectra merger

GuelphMercury.com - Thu Nov 30 2017

You may have heard in the news, on Facebook, Twitter, via the mayor's blog or have seen an insert with your hydro bill that the City of Guelph is proposing to merge with a newly formed and very large company called Alectra.

We are a group of Guelph Hydro employees who are very concerned with how this proposed merger is being marketed to you, the rate payers and tax payers of the City of Guelph and Village of Rockwood.

Here are some points to consider:

The city claims that a merger will enable your hydro provider to be more efficient and you will have better customer service. The fact is that Guelph Hydro's customer service rating is currently higher than any of the four former hydro companies that make up Alectra. Guelph Hydro has exceeded provincially-set conservation targets in the past, outperforming the four former companies that make up Alectra, and is already at 70 per cent of its conservation target that needs to be met by 2020. Also, if the proposed merger is approved, customer service and conservation staff will no most likely longer work in Guelph, along with many other staff currently located at 395 Southgate Dr. When it comes to customer service and billing efficiencies, we need look no further than Hydro One to demonstrate that bigger is definitely not better.

The city claims that this proposed merger makes sense due to similar employee cultures. The fact is that Alectra was just formed this year. There is no established culture at this time, the bargaining unit employees don't have a contract and there is still a lot of movement within the company as existing employees apply for jobs and must move locations.

The city claims that a merger would ensure a higher dividend payment each year. The fact is the mayor of Hamilton has stated in the news that Hamilton is to receive a $6-million dividend payment this year (up from a predicted $4 million). Hamilton has an 18.5-per-cent share in Alectra. Guelph is purported to be on deck to receive about a four-per-cent share of Alectra. Doing the math, this translates to $1.32 million, or about $200,000 less than was paid to the city last year by Guelph Hydro.

The city claims that the Green Energy and Technology Centre (GETC) will bring local jobs to Guelph. The fact is that at least 38 jobs that currently exist in Guelph will be moved to other locations or will be lost. These are good-paying jobs with benefits and pensions. It is reported that there will be five or six jobs added for the GETC and there are no details on the types of jobs these may be.

The city claims that the GETC will be used to develop residential conservation and green energy programs and will encourage entrepreneurs through the use of the centre's "incubation" and "acceleration" programs. The fact is that groups like this already exist in the community, such as eMerge and Innovation Guelph. Additionally, "incubation" labs are in place in several universities throughout southern Ontario, including Waterloo and Toronto. Also, no definitive plans have been made about funding for this GETC, with recent outreach sessions suggesting to attendees to "assume funding isn't a problem."

The city claims that Guelph will be in a better position when further mergers occur, if Guelph is the first in the "southwestern hub." The fact is that it has been reported in the news that Alectra is not planning any further mergers after Guelph.

The city claims rates will be lower over the next 10 years than they are now. The fact is our residential rates are about the same as other similar utilities in Ontario and our general service rates are 37-per-cent lower than Alectra's existing commercial rates. Rates will factor into any merger deal that it put on the table. We are already seeing downward pressure on rates through provincial government mandates with more to come in the upcoming June 2018 election.

The mayor is using the phrase "we're listening." The fact is the mayor is not hearing. The comments on the Energizing Tomorrow website, letters to the editors in papers and comments on the city's Facebook pages for merger information are overwhelmingly not in favour of this merger. Additionally, we are hearing first-hand the disapproval from our residential and commercial customers when we communicate with them on a day-to-day basis.

The fact is that Guelph Hydro is a well-run, highly-performing local utility that the City of Guelph has never had to invest a cent into yet is gifted millions of dollars in dividends to each and every year. This is a decision that the mayor is rushing to under the guise of not wanting to stress Guelph Hydro employees, yet appears to be intended to be pushed through before the municipal election next year.

Guelph Hydro is a $230-million local asset. All of the rate payers of Guelph and Rockwood deserve to have a say in its future.

Guelph city council will vote on this proposed merger on Dec. 13. We encourage everyone to get involved. Email and call your council members and demand the facts behind this proposed merger.

Don't let speculation drive this bus. Once your local hydro is gone, it will be gone forever.

Jane Woolven

Tiny, Ont.

On behalf of a group of concerned Guelph Hydro employees

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Hydro rates hurting hospitals

Welland Tribune - Fri Dec 1 2017
Byline: Grant Lafleche
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If Jane Rufrano can count on anything, it's that her hydro bill will rise each year like clockwork.

Many Ontario residents know the pocketbook pain of paying more for electricity, but for the chief executive officer of Hotel Dieu Shaver Rehabilitation Centre in St. Catharines the issue is more complicated than it can be for homeowners.

It's the math that becomes a problem.

The rehab centre has an annual budget of about $32 million. Of that, some $21 million is consumed by salaries and benefits, In the past several years, hydro costs are eating an increasingly larger part of that $11 million.

In 2011, Hotel Dieu Shaver paid $296,240 for hydro. By 2016, that bill was $497,803.

"It is an issue because we don't have a lot of flexibility in our budget," Rufrano said recently.

To cope with the rising cost of power, Hotel Dieu Shaver had to be creative, Rufrano said.

In 2015-16, she said, Horizon Utilities said it had under-billed Hotel Dieu Shaver in the past and so the rehab centre owed the utility $240,000.

"I told them we couldn't afford that, so they reduced it to a $150,000 payment, which I told them was still too much," Rufrano said.

She eventually negotiated the utility down to $76,000 which is being paid in $25,000 instalments over three years on top of annual per kilowatt-hour rate increases.

The rehab centre is doing what it can to make its facility more energyefficient, Rufrano said, including by installing LED lights and other measures. But ultimately, rising rates continue to take a bite out of operational costs that would otherwise go toward patient care.

The situation is similar, albeit less dire, at Niagara Health, which has seen hydro bills rise from $3 million in 2011 to $6.4 million in 2016.

Angela Zangari, Niagara Health executive vice-president, finance and operations, said the increase is due in part to rising rates - she said the hospital system had faced a 26 per cent increase in hydro rates from an average of $0.12 to $0.16 per kWh across all their sites - but also because of energy-intensive equipment.

The St. Catharines hospital's radiation machines for cancer treatment use an enormous amount of power, which will naturally drive up the institution's bills.

Zangari said a large hospital system will feel the sting of rising hydro rates less than a smaller institution such as Hotel Dieu Shaver simply because of its scale. Niagara Health's annual budget is about $500 million, with some 62 per cent going to salaries and benefits.

"We face several inflationary costs each year, and hydro is one of them. But is it the largest or most important? No," said Zangari, noting the increases in the costs of drugs, equipment and supplies can outpace hydro rate increases.

It's why hospitals co-operate via bulk purchasing agreements that can reduce some costs, she said.

The hospital system also benefits from having the relatively new St. Catharine site, which despite being significantly larger than the older Garden City hospitals it replaced, is a more modern, energy-efficient building. Niagara Health has also upgraded its older facilities.

The impact of Ontario's rising hydro rates has become part of the Canadian Taxpayer Federation's campaign against high energy costs. Last week the organization issued a news release about Hotel Dieu Shaver's costs as part of a series of freedom of information requests on hospital budgets it made this year, said spokesperson Christine Van Geyn.

Rufrano said the federation's release is accurate save for how many beds the rehab centre could buy. The release said the rehab centre could buy 156 patient beds for the difference in its 2011 and 2016 bills. Rufrano said in reality Hotel Dieu Shaver could buy 40 beds for the more than $200,000 difference.
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BRIEF: NYISO expecting a more typical winter season

MCT Regional News - Thu Nov 30 2017
Byline: By Larry Rulison, Times Union, Albany, N.Y.

Nov. 30—NORTH GREENBUSH — The New York Independent System Operator, the entity that oversees the state's high-voltage electrical grid, is anticipating a more typical winter this season.

The NYISO anticipates that peak electrical demand will reach 24,365 megawatts this winter, compared to a peak of 24,164 megawatts last year during a mild winter.

A megawatt powers 800 to 1,000 homes. The winter record was set in 2014 when a polar vortex pushed peak demand to 25,738 megawatts.

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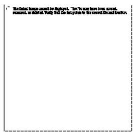

307592935

Going Solar; Why one of the biggest oilfields in the United States has turned to an unexpected power source

Windsor Star - Fri Dec 1 2017
Byline: Chris Mooney
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The Belridge oilfield near Bakersfield, Calif., is one of the largest in the United States. It has been producing oil for more than a century and last year produced around 76,000 barrels a day, according to operator Aera Energy.

Now the oilfield is about to become even more remarkable. Its future production will be powered partly by a massive solar-energy project to make the extraction process more environmentally friendly, according to Aera and GlassPoint Solar, the firm that will create the solar project.

The Belridge field was discovered in 1911. Oil from the field flowed out of the ground because of natural pressure in the geologic reservoirs. Later, as the pressure declined, many companies said the field was exhausted. The field gained new life in the 1960s through a process known as enhanced oil recovery. But squeezing more crude oil from the Belridge requires large amounts of steam to loosen the heavy crude, which in turn requires energy.

Traditionally, Aera used natural gas to heat water to create steam. Now Aera and GlassPoint will use a large, 850-megawatt solar thermal array to evaporate the water that's pumped into the ground to liberate more oil. The companies say this will offset 4.87 billion cubic feet of natural gas per year and avoid the emission of 376,000 tons of carbon. The water used emerges from the process of oil extraction itself and will be recycled and pumped back into the ground.

The project was made possible by the recent extension of California's cap-and-trade system for carbon-dioxide emissions to 2030, said Christina Sistrunk, chief executive of Aera Energy, a company jointly controlled by Shell and ExxonMobil.

"We need some level of what I would call regulatory and legislative stability to be able to fund projects that really need a couple of decades worth of certainty to be economic," Sistrunk said. "The extension of that program really underpinned our ability to make this long-term commitment."

The solar thermal array will capture the sun's energy using curving mirrors that are enclosed in a greenhouse, then use that energy to heat water. A smaller, 26.5-

megawatt solar photovoltaic installation will help power oilfield operations. The project should start operations by 2020, the participating companies said.

This is the second such megascale solar-oil project for GlassPoint, which is building the massive, 1-gigawatt Miraah project in Oman, on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula. (A gigawatt refers to the capacity to instantaneously generate 1 billion watts of electricity; a megawatt refers to the capacity to generate 1 million watts.) The Belridge project will be California's largest solar project, the company said.

"From the day we start operating, Aera will see an enormous reduction in the amount of gas they consume in a given day," said Ben Bierman, chief operating officer and acting CEO of GlassPoint Solar.

The combination of massive solar and massive oil is not what comes to mind when it comes to the global expansion of renewables, which generally has been led by wind and solar installations. But joint projects of various types between major oil producers and renewable energy players are growing, too. The Norwegian oil giant Statoil has announced plans to build solar arrays in Brazil with a clean-energy industry partner and made a major push into offshore wind energy; Shell is exploring a large solar project in Australia.

What's different about the Belridge project is the use of renewables, which don't emit greenhouse gases, to produce more fuel that will emit those gases. That could leave environmentalists feeling rather ambiguous. But this, too, has parallels - a recent major carbon-capture and storage project in Texas will capture most of the carbon dioxide emitted by a major coal facility, then pipe the gas in a liquid form to an oilfield where it will, once again, be used in enhanced oil recovery.

What these examples show perhaps most of all is that as renewable energy becomes more and more a part of our lives, it will also become increasingly integrated into more traditional energy systems.

From an environmental perspective, Aera-GlassPoint project is a "good step," said Simon Mui, director of California vehicles and fuels for the Natural Resources Defense Council, an environmental advocacy non-profit. But Mui, who said his group had not yet fully evaluated that project, noted a distinction between reducing emissions from "fossil fuel infrastructure," which the current project would do, and a more long-term project of reducing the emissions from transportation as a whole by substituting battery-powered vehicles or other technologies for cars that run on oil.

"I think it's a false solution to think you can only do one or the other," Mui said. "And I think the state policies are looking to do two things: one is accelerate the transition to electric-drive technologies and other alternative sources, as well as to clean up the existing fossil-fuel infrastructure. You kind of have to do both to meet both state and global air-quality and greenhouse-gas targets."

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