Message

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

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Friday, March 17, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Solar energy projects worse than 'toothaches and hemorrhoids,' says Port Hope farmer

Northumberland News - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Todd McEwen

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Financial Post - Thu Mar 16 2017
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Updated: Despite rebates, industry says hydro still too costly

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Byline: Doug Schmidt, Windsor Star

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Too many risks with hydro merger, Oshawa PUC officials say after talks with Veridian, Whitby Hydro fail

Oshawa This Week - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Reka Szekely

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Sens. Stabenow, Peters, Kildee Introduce Resolution Opposing Nuclear Waste Storage Site in Great Lakes Basin

Targeted News Service - Wed Mar 15 2017 **Page:** n/a

The office of Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., issued the following news release: U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Gary Peters (D-MI) and Congressman Dan

Kildee (MI-05) today introduced resolutions, in both the House and Senate, expressing ...

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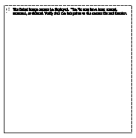

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Solar energy projects worse than 'toothaches and hemorrhoids,' says Port Hope farmer

Northumberland News - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Todd McEwen

NORTHUMBERLAND - As a lifelong farmer, John Kordas has become all too familiar with the view from his Campbellcroft property on Ganaraska Road.

The soft-spoken crop farmer leaned over his kitchen sink, pulled a steaming mug of coffee below his chin and released a gentle, but irritated sigh, as his eyes fixated on the blanket of Mother Nature outside his window.

"This is one of the prettiest flat lands in the municipality," he lamented. "It has been choice property for potato farming."

The Kordas family has operated its farm for nearly 50 years split across multiple lots - 650 acres in total.

"We're deep rooted. We're bona fide farmers," he said.

"I can tell you, from the day I can remember latching onto the back end of at tractor, this municipality always purported to preserve prime agricultural farm land."

In mid-February, Kordas received a letter from a company indicating his familiar views and sightlines are slated for serious change.

"It looked like junk mail," he said. "Fortunately, I opened it."

The top of the four-page letter read: Environmental Activity and Sector Registry (EASR); below that, it read: Solar Facility Notification Form.

At first, Kordas didn't understand the "significance" of the letter, he said, but learned the neighbouring property at 6330 Ganaraska Rd. is slated to see a 500-kilowatt ground-mounted solar project installed on two hectares of land.

"This project has been apparently green lighted by the province of Ontario," he said. "And it's nearly in construction mode."

Kordas has never contacted the media to discuss a concern or issue affecting his community, he said - he's not the type to draw attention to himself.

But when he received the letter on Feb. 16, he was aghast and left with a flurry of questions: why did he receive a letter with only 30 days left to respond? Why was it coming from a private company? Why didn't Port Hope Town Hall notify residents? And did they know the type of soil on the land?

"They have no business being on prime agricultural land," said Kordas, who also said he's familiar with the soil class on the property.

"I had two options: Doing nothing or doing something. Doing nothing is not an option."

The letter indicated the project was called GreenLife Solar 19, one of 42 projects from GreenLife Solar Projects Inc. currently taking advantage of a program called the Feed-in-Tarriff (FIT) within the province's Green Energy and Green Economy Act that essentially allows developers to fast track a broad range of renewable energy facilities, such as solar projects or wind turbines, while bypassing the municipal planning application process.

GreenLife Solar later sold the contract to an installer known as ReneSola. According to Port Hope's planning chair, the company also has three rural solar projects in the community.

"They don't know the kind of soil these projects are put onto," Coun. Louise Ferrie-Blecher said at a recent committee of the whole meeting on March 7.

According to ReneSola, of the seven different classes of soil, ranging from prime agricultural land (Class 1) to essentially rock land (Class 7), the project is slated for construction on suitable Class 6 land.

According to the local branch of the provincial government, the land at 6330 Ganaraska Rd. went through evolution studies and is "required to be prepared by a qualified soil scientist/pedologist according to standardized methodology," Travis Hoover, parliamentary assistant for the office Northumberland Quinte West MPP Lou Rinaldi, said in an email.

"Information from the Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs indicates that the land in question has Class 6 soils," he said, "making it unsuitable for cultivation."

ReneSola is hosting a public meeting on March 30 at the Canton Municipal Office from 6 to 8 p.m. to answer public questions regarding the project.

With the application in the province's hands, Coun. Ferrie-Blecher noted the municipality can become involved if "there's going to be minor permits," such as entrance permits or a if the grounds require a shed, or similar structure, to be constructed.

Otherwise, the project is in the hands of the province.

"To clarify, applications for solar and other renewable projects under the Province's FIT program are administered by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), not local municipalities," Cobourg's director of planning and development, Glenn McGlashon, told Northumberland News.

Port Hope's planning director echoed similar sentiments, saying the municipality is bound and tied to due process - and the Green Energy and Green Economy Act essentially trumps the municipality's role.

"We have little input," Theodhora Merepeza, Port Hope's planning manager, said, adding solar projects are not included in the province's Planning Act, which governs the municipal planning process in Ontario.

"That's how the province designed it."

Typically, ISEO, a Crown corporation responsible for operating the electricity market and directing the operation of the bulk electrical system in Ontario, opens an application window for a prescribed time period and reviews FIT applications.

The latest FIT 5.0 application intake period was from Nov. 7 to 25.

In order to have a better chance of success, developers can hold a meeting with municipal council to request what's known as a "municipal council support resolution." The support resolution doesn't give power for the municipal council to either approve or deny the project altogether, but to simply say they support or deny the project in order for developers to obtain what's called "priority points." The more points a developer has during the application window, the better chance they have at approval.

According to Merepeza, the applicants for the project at 6330 Ganarasaka Rd. initially contacted the municipality seeking priority points. Town hall didn't hear about the project again until they received a similar letter notification as Kordas in mid-February.

According to provincial regulation, developers are required to notify every owner or occupant of a property adjacent to the proposed project; the municipal clerk and upper-tier clerk; the secretary of each local services board; the secretary treasurer of a planning board that has jurisdiction in the area; the chair of Niagara Escarpment Commission (if located in the Niagara Escarpment Planning Area) and the secretary of every company operating an oil or natural gas pipeline at least 30 days before the project is registered or if the project would result in an increase in the name plate capacity.

Kordas is concerned with the increase of projects approved under the Green Energy and Green Economy Act, warning residents and weary neighbours not to be "hoodwinked" by the province or developers.

"It's between big business and the provincial Liberal government. The property owner is not informed, and apparently the municipality is not part of the process," he said. "We need to make this public.

"This is far worse than toothaches and hemorrhoids."

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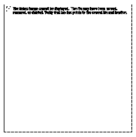

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Ontario manufacturers eye greener pastures stateside as hydro rates go through the roof

Financial Post - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Peter Kuitenbrouwer

Jocelyn Bamford, a white hard hat perched over red hair that curls down around her shoulders, has her hands on her hips. Behind safety glasses, her eyes flash. On the shop floor in the bustling Automatic Coating Inc. plant owned by her family, she has to shout to be heard above the squirt of compressed air nozzles, honks from forklifts, the clang of steel as it's dipped in baths, and the hum of exhaust fans.

Bamford might be shouting regardless of the noise since the hydro bill for her Toronto-based company has her mad as hell. Once boasting one of the continent's lowest electricity rates, Ontario today has some of the highest and that has many industrial companies planning to move at least some operations to the United States.

"The government treats us like bourgeois sweatshop operators who have to be stopped," said Bamford, who has organized dozens of medium-sized companies into the Coalition of Concerned Manufacturers of Ontario. "All the businesses are terrified of the government. My husband said, 'Well, do you just want to pick up and go?' And I said, 'Well, I guess I gotta just stay and fight.' I feel like I'm the Norma Rae of manufacturing."

Automatic Coating's electricity bill has more than doubled in the past decade. Its bill for last November was $49,209.68. The first line is for electricity: $6,577.93. The second line is much harder to explain: it is the euphemistic Global Adjustment charge: 217,165 kWh at 11.6 cents each for a total of $25,223.73.

The Global Adjustment contains many different costs, including Ontario's payments to solar and wind energy makers at far more than the market rate, the cost to sell excess power to U.S. states at a loss, and even the cost of replacing light bulbs with LED bulbs.

The government treats us like bourgeois sweatshop operators who have to be stopped

Stan Behal/Toronto Sun/Postmedia NetworkJocelyn and Brad Bamford of Automatic Coating Inc. in Toronto. Jocelyn is organizing companies to fight back after their company's electricity bill more than doubled in the past decade.

For manufacturers, the Global Adjustment fee symbolizes all the excesses of Ontario energy policy, including headline-grabbing salaries at state-owned utilities and the wages for the armies of bureaucrats who manage what plant owners describe as the province's Byzantine array of energy cost-abatement programs.

"They have an open invitation to take whatever they want," said Jerrod Rowntree, manager of a unionized, Korean-owned plant in Simcoe, Ont., that employs 110 people to make magnet wire for Tesla Inc., the Chevy Volt and transformers. "What's their rhyme or reason to put their hand in our pocket whenever they want?"

Case in point, Ontario on Jan. 1 brought in cap and trade, a measure the province said "is designed to help fight climate change, and reward businesses that reduce their greenhouse gas emissions." The program further hikes energy costs for businesses that burn natural gas or fuel their cars and trucks with gas or diesel.

The costs and rules mean a move out of Ontario can sound mighty tempting and U.S. states have come knocking.

Automatic Coating has an offer to move to Mississippi. Plasticap Inc. of Richmond Hill, Ont., more than 50 years old and a maker of plastic lids using injection moulding, plans to expand in Ohio or Virginia rather than Ontario. Surati Sweet Mart Ltd., a busy Indian baked goods manufacturer in Toronto, has visited New Jersey, Georgia and Texas.

City of Toronto statistics show the city has lost 20 per cent of its manufacturing jobs in the past decade

Tyler Anderson / National PostBrad Duguid, Ontario's minister of economic development and growth, doesn't fear a manufacturer exodus.

There are many others, but Brad Duguid, Ontario's minister of economic development and growth, doesn't fear a manufacturer exodus.

"For every business that's leaving, there are probably three or four that are coming," said Duguid, sitting in his spacious office on Bay Street, decorated with big paintings and photographs of his hero, former U.S. President John F. Kennedy. "We're leading the G7 in growth right now in Ontario."

Duguid's office later sends data that boast of the jobs Ontario has recently created in information and computer technology, fintech, life sciences and cleantech. The note does not mention manufacturing, though Ontario historically is Canada's manufacturing heartland.

Harold Bamford, Jocelyn's father-in-law, started Automatic Coating in Toronto in the 1950s, where he powder-coated the armatures of washing machines. His son Brad eventually took over, expanded the company, patented several coating techniques and married Jocelyn.

Tyler Anderson / National PostFifty-five employees work at Automatic Coating Limited factory in Scarborough, Ont.

Today, the family employs 55 people on two shifts, from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., and 3 p.m. to midnight, and 20 people in the field. The company paints everything from fences to pipelines to ship parts.

One of the company's biggest clients is the U.S. Navy. One current job is painting 48 louvres - car-sized, 700-kilogram intake vents for gas turbine engines - that were pried off the USS Gridley, currently in dry dock in San Diego, and hauled by truck to Automatic Coating.

At the plant, production manager Donna White bends over a louvre. She has worked here since 1978, put her kids through school on her wages and now has grandchildren. She guides staff in white overalls, dust masks and blue Nitrile gloves to apply a powder coating to protect the louvres from salt and extend their life by 10 years.

"If anything did happen to Automatic Coating, I don't know what I would do," she said. "I have a lot of employees under me who have younger families. A lot of big companies are closing down."

Hydro rate hikes and cap and trade make the idea of relocating this business - at least for the navy contract - very attractive. Mississippi's hydro rates are about one-third those of Ontario.

"The U.S. Navy has been after us for years to move our plant down to the States," Bamford says. "It's like you're with the bad boyfriend, and you say, 'There's a guy down the street and he's bringing me candy and flowers,' and your boyfriend has been drinking all the time."

Related

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Parker Gallant: Hiring less and raising prices - what Ontario business is doing to survive soaring power costs (business.financialpost.com)

The day Ontario's wind-power tyranny ends there will be dancing in the streets (business.financialpost.com)

Bamford wants to stay in Ontario. She sits on her local hospital foundation board, her three kids, aged 14, 12 and 10, all play hockey and husband Brad coaches two of the three. Even so, the U.S. looks pretty good.

"We could sell our house and buy a 4,000-square-foot house in Long Beach, Mississippi, with a gourmet kitchen for $350,000," she said. "And 20 minutes down the road at Gulf Shores, there is an amateur hockey association."

If Automatic Coating does move its louvre division to the U.S., it will retain the jobs in Toronto, but any future growth will be stateside, Bamford said.

Other businesses are making similar calculations. City of Toronto statistics show the city has lost 20 per cent of its manufacturing jobs in the past decade.

Peter J. Thompson/National PostPlasticap owner Peter Gossman holds his companies hydro bill at his Richmand Hill plant. The company is considering opening another location south of the border in part due to high hydro rates.

North of the city, three steel silos loom on an outside wall of Plasticap's factory, which opened in 1963. The silos contain millions of plastic pellets known as raw resin.

Pipes in the factory ceiling blow pellets to injection moulding machines. The newest of these machines is a Japan Steel Works 1400H, a fast-moving collection of hydraulics, motors, pipes and conveyors.

"Whirr! Puff!" sings the machine, and it injects molten white plastic into 24 cavities. Every 14.3 seconds, 24 warm caps for fabric softener bottles fall, each with a little "pop!" onto a conveyor belt.

"Our volumes have increased so we have to run 24/7," said plant manager Daniel Palka, 29, whom Plasticap hired in 2010 straight out of mechanical engineering school at the University of Toronto. "We get calls in the middle of the night."

Business may be booming, but Plasticap has a problem: it cannot afford Ontario hydro.

Peter Gossmann and Tom Lato, Plasticap's co-owners, in February drove to Virginia and Ohio, seeking a spot to expand. The pair left icy Ontario and arrived in southwest Virginia at night. Lato recalls, "I said to Peter, 'I think the grass is green down here.'" In the morning they looked out their hotel windows and, sure enough, the grass was green.

"Absolutely, we are going," said Gossmann, though he adds that Plasticap will retain existing Ontario operations. "In Virginia, they are really quite well-equipped for our industry. And 70 per cent of what we make goes to the United States already."

Duguid, Ontario's economic development minister, acknowledges that manufacturers struggle to pay their hydro bills. But he said Ontario offers plenty of other positives to attract and retain business.

"We have the lowest effective tax rate in North America, we provide the best talent anywhere in North America in terms of workers, we have a health-care system that's second to none on the continent, and we have a quality of life that is superior to anywhere else on the continent as well," he said.

Duguid also cautions business against moving to states such as Virginia, which burn coal for power. "Ultimately, the global economy is going low-carbon," he said. "There will come a time when your business will pay a price if you use dirty energy."

Ernest Doroszuk/Toronto Sun/Postmedia NetworkKathleen Wynne, Ontario's Liberal premier, enraged manufacturers when she said Ontarians were 'very bad actors' in creation of emissions.

Ontario wants to help manufacturers, he adds. Recent policy changes mean Automatic Coating and Plasticap now qualify for Ontario's Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI).

Duguid said ICI "is not an easy program to explain," which is why the province pays the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to do it. Even with that help, Tim Clutterbuck, who runs U.S.-owned ASW Steel Inc. in Welland, Ont., says ICI is "very complicated."

ASW now operates nights, 7 p.m. to 7 a.m., to avoid high-cost power, but under ICI, he said, his factory also has to completely shut down when Ontario hits peak hydro use.

"The best way to avoid high Global Adjustment charges is to avoid the five highest hours of electricity consumption," Clutterbuck said. "But they don't tell you that until six weeks after the fact. It cost me 50 hours of production to make sure I don't hit them."

Government officials have suggested that companies could, alternatively, buy natural-gas-powered generators to switch on during consumption peaks.

Rowntree, the wire-maker in Simcoe, calls that suggestion ridiculous. "This initiative is encouraging manufacturers to burn fossil fuels," he said. "From a moral standpoint, I won't burn fossil fuels."

I feel like I'm the Norma Rae of manufacturing

Last October, Kathleen Wynne, Ontario's Liberal premier, told the Niagara Chamber of Commerce that Ontarians are "very bad actors in terms of our per-capital creation of emissions" in explaining her push for a cap-and-trade system.

The comment enraged Bamford. Her plant switched its curing ovens to electricity from natural gas to reduce emissions, "but now electricity is so outrageous that we are wondering whether it was the right thing to do," she said.

"When the premier said, 'You're all bad actors,' I threw the gloves down. I was ready to go. We have to now band together and stand up for our rights. It's time for us to get the attention we deserve."

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Report from North America's electricity system operators examines impact of emerging technologies

Marketwired - Thu Mar 16 2017

WASHINGTON, DC—(Marketwired - March 16, 2017) - A report from an affiliation of independent electric grid operators concludes that the future of the North American power grid depends on effectively adding renewables to the grid, the accuracy and availability of data from "behind-the-meter" resources and coordinating these distributed energy resources at the grid operator level to preserve reliability.

The report, "Emerging Technologies: How ISOs and RTOs can create a more nimble, robust electricity system," was published today by an affiliation of nine non-profit Independent System Operators (ISO) and Regional Transmission Organizations (RTO) known collectively as the ISO/RTO Council (IRC). IRC members serve two-thirds of electricity consumers in the United States and more than half in Canada.

The IRC report posits that a reliable and economically efficient power grid depends on cohesive, innovative integration of renewables; greater situational awareness among grid operators, enabled by access to dependable data; and operators' ability to control an electricity system that is becoming increasingly decentralized through the proliferation of distributed energy resources (DER).

The report is the result of more than a year's worth of research and collaboration by representatives of North America's ISOs/RTOs. It is notable that its findings and implications represent consensus among all nine organizations.

"It can't be overstated how remarkable it is that so diverse a group of organizations — serving in vastly different geographic regions and operating in varied regulatory and operational circumstances — overlap so much in their thinking on the role of emerging technologies in reliably and economically operating the North American bulk electricity system," said Nick Brown, current chair of the IRC and president and chief executive officer of one of its member organizations, Southwest Power Pool. "Any time the IRC speaks with strong consensus on a matter like it has done here, I hope our industry takes notice."

The IRC's Operations Committee formed a task force in summer 2015 to examine the deployment of particular emerging technologies across the regions served by IRC members. The Emerging Technologies Task Force (ETTF) specifically sought to identify where technological deployment intersects with operational and policy considerations.

"Each of the IRC member organizations is unique," said Edward Arlitt of Ontario's IESO, who served as chair of the ETTF. "One ISO/RTO may have greater solar capacity in their region, another may be farther along in their handling of DERs, and all of us have regulatory and operational constraints unique to the provinces, states and regions in which we serve. No matter our specific circumstances, though, we all have to keep the lights on and can agree on issues of common importance to that goal."

The IRC defines in its report a number of positions regarding policies, strategic approaches, worthy goals and critical success factors its members feel will either enable or hinder them in the near future. While it is agnostic to specific technologies that may be applied to the challenge of integrated renewable power sources, for example, the IRC recommends approaches that avoid too-early technological "lock-in" and equip grid operators to remain nimble in their assessment of new technologies.

The full report and supplemental materials are available at www.iso-rto.org/Reports/default.

About the IRC

The IRC comprises nine ISOs and RTOs in North America and serves two-thirds of electricity consumers in the United States and more than half in Canada. By sharing innovative ideas and real-world best practices, IRC members work together to build a smarter and more efficient electric grid that's well prepared to serve the North American power market and its consumers, today and tomorrow.

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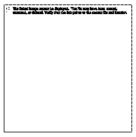

269114995

Updated: Despite rebates, industry says hydro still too costly

Windsor Star - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Doug Schmidt, Windsor Star

Blame Essex County's sticky humid climate, and not just high hydro rates, for local greenhouse growers fleeing Ontario for more southerly climes like Ohio, the province's parliamentary assistant to the minister of energy told reporters Thursday.

Bob Delaney (L - Mississauga-Streetsville) said he had met earlier in the day with local greenhouse growers and "they said part of what caused them to move were the high levels of humidity."

Asked to clarify, Delaney added that "electricity costs are (also) a factor."

Delaney and other government members, including Premier Kathleen Wynne, have been fanning out across the province to trumpet their new Fair Hydro Plan. It was implemented, after withering public complaints over skyrocketing electricity prices, to give average Ontario household and small-business customers a 25 per cent break on their hydro bills by the summer.

In introducing Delaney at a media event hosted by Enwin Utilities, CEO Helga Reidel made a point of explaining that only 20 per cent of a Windsor household's monthly bill relates to the local utility's operations and costs.

Reidel said almost half of the more than 122,000 queries handled last year by Enwin Utilities' call centre dealt with anger and fear over customers' high monthly hydro bills. More than 2,000 of Enwin's nearly 76,000 customers had to be provided some form of payment plan in 2016 to assist them with those costs, she added.

Participants at the earlier business session were surprised to learn Delaney was explaining humidity as a cause for local industry investing across the border.

"That's a misunderstanding," said Jim DiMenna, president and CEO of Red Sun Farms. "Humidity, that's not a deal breaker - the cost of energy is a deal breaker," he told the Star. Ohio is as humid as Essex County, he added.

Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said local business and industry is still waiting for answers from the province about what, if any, relief they can expect on their hydro bills. He said there's still been "no clarity" provided, for example, on whether greenhouse operations would be eligible for the rate relief currently being touted for Ontarians.

"We need help - this is scary for us," said DiMenna.

Marchand estimates that hydro bills in Ontario have gone up at least 350 per cent over the past 10 to 15 years for business and industry.

Standing in front of some Enwin Utilities trucks and speaking before an audience of Enwin employees, Delaney said high electricity costs are due to two key reasons:

The need to invest more than $50 billion in generation, transmission and distribution improvements after "decades of under-investment" by governments of all stripes.

Elimination of Ontario's coal-generated electricity and a switch to cleaner, renewable power.

Delaney said the $50-billion deficit remains, but that the 25 per cent rebate is paid for in part by extending the repayment period for the hydro debt.

"The immediate relief is obviously welcome," said Tecumseh Mayor Gary McNamara, who attended the announcement. "The last three or four years, all we've seen are increases, increases, increases," he added.

Delaney said residential and small-business hydro consumers will start seeing the savings when their air-conditioning bills get delivered in the summer. As part of the plan, he added, rate increases from the province would be held to the rate of inflation over the next four years.

High power prices aside, Essex Powerlines CEO Ray Tracey advised Delaney that investment opportunities were being threatened due to the length of time it's taking to increase the power supply to Kingsville and Leamington.

"We need to move at a faster pace, if we don't, they (industrial customers) move," he said.

Delaney said Ontario's economy will benefit with a power grid that's more reliable than that found in parts of the United States suffering occasional brownouts and blackouts because similar infrastructure upgrade investments aren't being made.

But Marchand said Ontario businesses are making decisions to move now. "Once we lose an investment, it's gone - we have to deal with the reality now," he said.

Delaney said he "heard a lot about agricultural potential in Essex County" on his trip. Referring to the area's opposition-party representation, but insisting he wasn't being partisan, he said it was "the kind of feedback we have not been getting the last few years from this area."

Delaney wasn't able to answer some questions:

Enwin bills have a separate line advising customers how much they're saving through a recently enacted eight per cent provincial rebate. Asked why there's no separate line for the new carbon tax the province began charging in January, Delaney said the Ontario Energy Board doesn't make that a requirement.

Asked why the next Sunshine List (publishing the names of all Ontario civil servants earning over $100,000) won't include Ontario Hydro employees (always the largest number with the highest-paid executives), Delaney said that's a question for the finance ministry.

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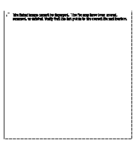

269107284

Too many risks with hydro merger, Oshawa PUC officials say after talks with Veridian, Whitby Hydro fail

Oshawa This Week - Thu Mar 16 2017
Byline: Reka Szekely

OSHAWA - Oshawa's utility, the OPUC, dropped out of merger talks with Veridian and Whitby Hydro after determining that the risks outweighed the benefits of joining to become one of the largest utilities in the province.

The OPUC announced at the beginning of March that its board opted not to move forward with the merger. Whitby Hydro and Veridian said they would continue talks that were announced in April 2016.

Ivano Labricciosa, president and CEO of OPUC, said the merger didn't work for his utility after the numbers were crunched. Simply, it wouldn't generate the value required for ratepayers or its sole shareholder, the City of Oshawa.

"When it came right down to it, we knew the risks outweighed the benefits going forward, so we knew to say time to stop at this point," he said. He declined to state specific numbers related to the merger such as the valuation of each company, pointing out the parties were negotiating under a nondisclosure agreement.

Still, of the three utilities, the OPUC had the lowest rates.

"You don't want to dilute by averaging out and saying the average would be OK," said Labricciosa, adding that merging the three utilities would have meant harmonizing rates. "If you put everyone on a common rate, what happens from where they were to where they go?"

The idea behind the proposed merger was that one larger utility - it would have been the fourth largest in Ontario - would have economies of scale and result in savings. But Labricciosa said the savings were based on projections and it wasn't guaranteed they would materialize.

"There's risks associated with making sure those synergies materialize," he said.

Before heading into the merger, Oshawa PUC operations were already ranked as more cost-efficient by the Ontario Energy Board.

The OEB benchmarks utility performance and assigns each utility to one of five cohorts with utilities ranked in the first cohort deemed the most cost efficient, while those in the fifth are the least. OPUC is ranked in the second cohort while Whitby Hydro and Veridian were ranked in the third. By comparison, Hydro One was ranked in the fifth cohort.

Gord Vickers is the municipal affairs chair for Unifor Local 222 Retirees, an organization that had campaigned against the merger and held pickets outside the OPUC offices last summer.

Vickers applauded Oshawa's decision to drop out of merger talks.

"Basically, it just wasn't a good business case for Oshawa, that's what it came down to ... they did the right thing, I'm happy with what they did and I think the City of Oshawa is better off doing what they did."

Labricciosa, a firm believer in public input, was happy Oshawa residents were engaged.

"The two themes were service and rates. If they were going to go for anything it would have to be improvements in services and rates," he said.

Oshawa Mayor John Henry said Oshawa's council trusted the utility's board to make the best decision for ratepayers, and he believes they have.

The final decision to merge would have been left to council as the city is the utility's sole shareholder.

"We had always said if this deal didn't work to benefit the City of Oshawa, then it wasn't a good deal," said the mayor. "We have a pretty amazing utility here that generates a pretty good dividend for our residents, our taxpayers, so we'll go forward on continuing on the path that we are on now."

In 2015, the city received a $1.9-million dividend from the utility. While the 2016 dividend has not yet been announced, Labricciosa expects it to be in the same range, perhaps slightly higher.

He didn't rule out future merger talks with other utilities, but said that practically it made sense to consider the utilities in the same geographic area as Oshawa.

"If we were going to make a go, this is probably a really good shot, but I wouldn't close the door on any improvements," said the utility CEO.

Although the province has supported a reduction in the number of utilities in the market, which at one point was as high as 300, Labricciosa doesn't believe Oshawa will be forced to merge with another utility.

"Quite frankly, the energy file in general is a hot topic so I don't think anyone is going to force anyone to do anything radical," he said.

Moving forward, there's opportunity for growth, especially in the north end of the city and along the Hwy. 407 corridor.

"That's just going to add to opportunity for us to keep rates in check, keep services high and costs low," he said.

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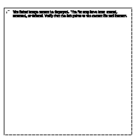

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Sens. Stabenow, Peters, Kildee Introduce Resolution Opposing Nuclear Waste Storage Site in Great Lakes Basin

Targeted News Service - Wed Mar 15 2017 **Page:** n/a

The office of Sen. Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., issued the following news release:

U.S. Senators Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Gary Peters (D-MI) and Congressman Dan Kildee (MI-05) today introduced resolutions, in both the House and Senate, expressing opposition to construction of a nuclear waste repository less than a mile from Lake Huron in Ontario.

"Canada is facing a critical decision that will impact generations in both our countries," said Senator Stabenow. "A nuclear waste spill near the Great Lakes could have a devastating impact on our health and environment and threaten our Michigan way of life. Given what is at stake, I urge our Canadian neighbors to make the right choice and shelve plans for this site once and for all."

"The Canadian proposal to build a permanent nuclear waste repository less than a mile from Lake Huron could cause significant, lasting damage to the Great Lakes and undermine the progress we have made cleaning up the water quality in the Great Lakes Basin," said Senator Peters. "President Trump and Secretary of State Tillerson should make every effort to prevent the Canadian government from moving forward with this proposal and work to find an alternative solution that does not jeopardize the health of the Great Lakes."

"Permanently storing nuclear waste less than a mile from Lake Huron just doesn't make sense and poses a great risk to our Great Lakes," said Congressman Kildee. "From Detroit to Toronto, a growing number of people - in both the U.S. and Canada - have voiced opposition to this dangerous plan. Surely in the vast land mass that comprises Canada, there must be a better place to permanently store nuclear waste than on the shores of Lake Huron."

U.S. Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Al Franken (D-MN), and Dick Durbin (D-IL) are also original co-sponsors of the Senate resolution. Mike Bishop (MI-08), Debbie Dingell (MI-12), David Joyce (OH-14), Marcy Kaptur (OH-09), Louise Slaughter (NY-25), Mark Pocan (WI-02), David Trott (MI-11), Jackie Walorski (IN-02), Luis Gutierrez (IL-04), Sander Levin (MI-09), Paul Mitchell (MI-10), Brian Higgins (NY-26), Jan Schakowsky (IL-09), and John Moolenaar (MI-04) are also original co-sponsors of the House resolution.

Over 40 million people in Canada and the United States get their drinking water from the Great Lakes and the highly toxic waste could take tens of thousands of years to decompose to safe levels. Ontario Power Generation is currently seeking approval from the Canadian Ministry of Environment to build a deep geologic repository to permanently store 7 million cubic feet of low- and intermediate-level radioactive waste. The facility would be located less than 1 mile from Lake Huron in Kincardine, Ontario.

The resolution urges the President and Secretary of State to work with their counterparts to prevent a permanent nuclear waste repository from being built within the Great Lakes Basin. It further states that the U.S. and Canada should develop a safe and responsible solution for the long-term storage of nuclear waste.

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