Message

From: John Cannella [/O=POWER AUTHORITY/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JOHN CANNELLA1A9]
Sent: 2016-10-20 6:12:18 AM
Subject: Today's News - Thursday, October 20, 2016

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Thursday, October 20, 2016
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Wynne ready to make play for more Quebec power?

Toronto Star - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Martin Regg Cohn
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Soaring electricity rates are sending Liberal support tumbling. Wind and solar are down and out. Carbon pricing is looming. Nuclear power remains radioactive. Is there a silver bullet to rescue the Ontario government from its energy ...

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Smiths Falls Record News - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Evelyn Harford
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Ontario Energy Board: No Change to Electricity Prices for Households and Small Businesses

Canada Newswire - Wed Oct 19 2016, 3:08pm ET

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Ontario Energy Board holds the line on electricity rates until May 2017; Ontario holds line on winter hydro rates

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016

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Ontario electricity rates will remain unchanged, first time in nearly a decade

globalnews.ca - Wed Oct 19 2016

For the first time since 2008, hydro rates for residential customers in Ontario are not going up. Ontario's energy regulator, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) conducts a price review twice a year. In a statement released earlier this afternoon, ...

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SNC-Lavalin fined $75,000 for generating electricity without a licence; SNC-Lavalin generated electricity without a licence

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Keith Leslie

TORONTO - SNC-Lavalin has been fined $75,000 for operating a gas-fired electrical generating plant at Toronto's Pearson International Airport without a licence for the past 10 years. The Ontario Energy Board says it inspected ...

258711580

Power companies told to bill customers monthly, a $10-million cost that will likely end up on bills

Financial Post - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Peter Kuitenbrouwer

A government board has told power companies across the province that by year-end they must send customers a hydro bill every month - a change that could cost up to $10-million, and will likely show up on the bills of consumers. The ...

258744274

Shuffled lives to pay bills; Sky-high hydro rates are hitting Canadians in the wallet

Toronto Sun - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Anthony Furey
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"I'm a single mother of two and we literally live in the dark," writes Ontario resident Grace Dadone. "I do my laundry between 10 and midnight. I try to save on energy costs by going to my mom's once a week - and still my bill is sky ...

258738135

Home builders push for slow energy plan

The Globe and Mail - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: SHAWN McCARTHY
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Builders who have constructed "net-zero" houses are urging Ottawa to go slow with any proposal to change the building code to require super-energy-efficient buildings to ensure the rising costs don't add to Canada's housing affordability problems. ...

258668180

Business owners stagnated by energy costs, red tape, report says

Windsor Star - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Dave Battagello, Windsor Star

Small business owners being choked by red tape and high energy costs need the Ontario government to lend a helping hand, said a joint report by the Windsor-Essex and Ontario chambers being released on Wednesday. The 30-page "Obstacles and ...

258748779

World Energy Day

Sudbury Star - Thu Oct 20 2016 **Page:** A3

Working people and small business owners from Sudbury and the surrounding area will gather on Saturday to mark World Energy Day, protest rising hydro rates, and to raise food bank donations for those who can no longer afford their bills. "Every day, ...

258713805
Ottawa politicians ask province for lower rural hydro rates

metronews.ca - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Haley Ritchie - Metro

Signed, sealed and delivered: Osgoode ward Coun. George Darouze said residents will be making election decisions based on a petition he delivered to Queen's Park on Wednesday. Darouze joined MPP Lisa MacLeod in Toronto on Wednesday to present a ...

258745089
Big PDI questions still have to be answered

Peterborough Examiner - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Peter Morgan
Page: A4

It's great that city council is taking steps to educate us about the potential sale of PDI. I hope they do this properly by not only promoting the benefits, but also by looking at the downside, including the long term consequences of a sale. Some ...

258739796
Charging stations a step closer

The Barrie Examiner - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Bob Bruton
Page: A3

The switch could be flicked on new vehicle charging stations in Barrie's 2017 budget. Councillors have approved staff looking into the feasibility of installing level 2 EV (electric vehicle) charging stations for both Barrie residents ...

258721082
Chalk River opens new lab, focus not on 'basic' research

ottawacitizen.com - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Tom Spears, Ottawa Citizen

A shiny new lab building at Chalk River Laboratories is the first of a wave of new construction that will gradually replace infrastructure that dates in many cases to the mid-1900s. The Harriet Brooks Building - named for Canada's first female ...

258717773
Alberta's Notley promises details of coal phase-out plan coming this fall; Notley promises coal phase-out plan this fall

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Dean Bennett

EDMONTON - Premier Rachel Notley says Alberta will roll out specifics this fall of its plan to phase out coal-fired electricity and promote renewable energy. Notley, in a state-of-the-province speech Wednesday, said ...

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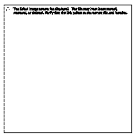

258737562

Wynne ready to make play for more Quebec power?

Toronto Star - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Martin Regg Cohn
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Soaring electricity rates are sending Liberal support tumbling.

Wind and solar are down and out. Carbon pricing is looming. Nuclear power remains radioactive.

Is there a silver bullet to rescue the Ontario government from its energy morass?

Here's a hint: Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard is in town Friday with his top ministers for a joint meeting with Kathleen Wynne's cabinet.

On the agenda: electricity sharing between the two neighbouring provinces.

Quebec comes to the table with a seeming abundance of low-cost, low-carbon hydroelectricity available for export.

Ontario has its back to the wall, weighed down by rising prices and an electricity system that seems out of sync with the times.

The wind blows hard when we don't need it (at night), and doesn't when we desperately want it. Our gas-fired power plants generate unwanted carbon, and they're not cheap. Our nuclear reactors cost a bomb - going billions over budget time after time, and imposing radioactive half-life problems for all time.

Why not string a few more wires across the invisible frontier between Quebec and Ontario? Isn't it time to end decades of de facto electricity separatism here in Ontario that placed a premium on self-sufficiency - in case of Quebec independence - but left us overly dependent on nuclear?

A political rapprochement with Quebec has opened the door to new thinking in Ontario. At a 2014 summit, the two provinces signed an innovative bartering deal to backstop one another during peak periods, allocating a hefty 500-megawatt chunk of capacity as needed (Ontario made it available to Quebec last year for its winter peak, and the roles are reversed for our summer peak).

The two premiers promised to find more synergy on energy in future, and we can expect more progress this week. How much further can they go?

Critics argue that Ontario could easily pull the plug on nuclear power by shifting to long-term imports from Quebec. It sounds like a perfect fit - possibly too perfect to be true.

First, a caveat: One of the biggest complaints about electricity in Ontario is the cost of getting it, not generating it. Transmission costs are skyrocketing as Ontario rebuilds a long-neglected network of infrastructure, forcing the government into a high-wire act to defend itself against charges of incompetence by Hydro One - privatized or pre-privatized.

The question of transmission is key if we are to get more Quebec power to where it's most needed, mostly in the GTA. A 2014 study by the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) for the government concluded that there was "limited opportunity for reliance on significant quantities of long-term firm import arrangements."

Ontario can't just flip a switch. Existing connections between Ontario and Quebec were designed for flexible responses to short-term disruptions, leaving "only a portion" available for long-term imports. The alternative is to build new transmission infrastructure, but making that cost-effective requires an attractive export price and enough capacity to displace the 50 to 60 per cent of Ontario's consumption now supplied by nuclear.

That led the IESO to caution against "paying significantly more for firm imports than could be achieved through addressing supply needs with internal resources." In other words, not so cheap.

Another problem: Quebec has a handy surplus of power now, but may not have as much excess capacity as demand rises in future.

"Forecasts indicate that there will be insufficient low carbon energy sources in both provinces to meet demand beginning in the mid-2020s," argues a recent report by Strategic Policy Economics (funded, it must be said, by the pro-nuclear Power Workers Union).

Much of the low-hanging electricity capacity was harvested long ago in Quebec, making the more recent and future hydro projects more expensive than those "heritage" properties. The report concludes that "future imports from Quebec can be expected to be at higher prices."

Those caveats explain the long-standing disconnect between "environmentalists" on the one hand, and "engineers" on the other: The green camp dreams of "problematic" nuclear being replaced by "perfect" hydroelectricity; the engineering camp counters with a wake-up call that securing a cheap long-term supply is a pipe dream.

It's a perennial debate, but possibly a sterile one. The Liberal government, like others before it, hews to the Ontario orthodoxy of nuclear as the most reliable and affordable supply of baseload power, despite recurring cost overruns.

It has moved ahead with the Darlington refurbishment and is poised to proceed with Bruce, leaving less room for massive Quebec imports.

Can the two provinces still conjure up future deals that are firm and affordable, allowing Ontario to take a last-minute off-ramp from its nuclear refurbishments down the road?

The only certainty is that electricity complexity always intrudes on interprovincial energy synergy: Not just unpredictability but affordability, proximity and capacity.

Martin Regg Cohn's political column appears Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. mcohn@thestar.ca, Twitter: @reggcohn

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Town council considers $10 million hydro project for Rideau Canal

Smiths Falls Record News - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Evelyn Harford
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Council was presented with information about a potential hydro power generation project at two lock stations along the Rideau Canal in Smiths Falls Oct. 17.

Potential locations include, the Smiths Falls Old Lock, the Smiths Falls Combined Dam and Old Slys Weir - places Coun. Lorraine Allen described as the town's "three most

beautiful sites on the river."

The project was presented by Cyril Cooper, the town's manager of economic development, at the town's special committee of the whole meeting held at Smiths Falls District Collegiate Institute (SFDCI) on Monday, Oct 17.

Cooper highlighted a money-making opportunity for the town and urged council to consider the hydro project with Natel Energy Inc., a hydro power generation company based out of California.

If the town decides to move forward, a funding application would be submitted for all three sites through the Feed-in-Tariff (FIT5) program, a provincial program, run under the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), that helps encourage and facilitate the development of renewable, clean energy sources. However, because water capacity is limited at the Smiths Falls Old Lock and the Smiths Falls Combined Dam, only two of the three proposed locks would be chosen.

"The intent here is a business opportunity," said Cooper, who along with mayor Shawn Pankow, recommended that council push forward so long as the town maintains 51 per cent ownership over the project, which would ensure that the town could maintain control over the revenue stream, expenses and outcomes that would benefit the taxpayers of Smiths Falls directly.

According to figures presented by Cooper at committee, if the town owned 50 per cent of the hydro project, Smiths Falls would see a net profit of approximately $465,735 per year and approximately $18,629,400 over 40 years.

Pankow called this a "potentially lucrative move." Though curious about the project, town councillors such as John Maloney, Allen and Jay Brennan had some serious reservations.

Maloney wanted more notice to consider and come up with questions surrounding such a big project and, like Brennan, was concerned that a change in government would impact funding models now available through the FIT5 program. Allen worried that the project, which would include a visible hydro station, could reduce the enjoyment for residents and tourists around the proposed locations on the water.

The total project would cost $10 million, half of which would be covered by Natel Energy.

The project would cost the town, according to Cooper's approximated numbers based on 50 per cent ownership, $5 million - $3 million of which would be covered by FIT5 if awarded. Maintenance would run the town $75,000 per year and leave them to come up with the remaining $2 million.

Upfront costs for the project include an environmental assessment, which could cost around $500,000 and application fee, running some $30,000.

The town would likely access funds through Infrastructure Ontario, which lends money to municipalities at a lower interest rate.

Pankow called this "good debt" and an opportunity for the town to invest in a project that will last 100-plus years.

Coun. Dawn Quinn said if the town has the opportunity to invest in Smiths Falls it should do it.

Malcolm Morris, the town's chief administrative officer noted the town doesn't want to rush such an important project but does want to try and leverage the town's water rights to make a good deal with Natel Energy Inc. - which means council needs to make swift decisions.

The application for the FIT5 program is due on Oct. 31 and council will discuss further at their next meeting on Oct. 24.

Public consultations on the project have already begun.

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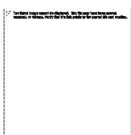

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Ontario Energy Board: No Change to Electricity Prices for Households and Small Businesses

Canada Newswire - Wed Oct 19 2016, 3:08pm ET

TORONTO, Oct. 19, 2016 /CNW/ - The Ontario Energy Board (OEB) announced today it is holding the line on the prices most Ontario households and small business customers pay for electricity.

The decision means that commodity prices, shown in the electricity line of your bill as Time-of-Use (TOU) pricing, will remain unchanged for residential and small business customers on the Regulated Price Plan (RPP) through April 30, 2017.

The OEB reviews these prices every six months - on May 1 and Nov. 1 - and forecasts how much it will cost to supply consumers with electricity. Based on the forecast, prices are established to recover actual costs over time.

In this case, the OEB's review determined the prices that customers have been paying since May 1, 2016 will be effective at recovering forecast costs for at least the next six months. Prices for customers who pay RPP tiered prices will likewise stay the same.

About Time-of-Use Rates

Nearly all of Ontario's five million residential and small business customers pay electricity prices established through the Regulated Price Plan (RPP). Reviewing and setting prices every six months protects consumers from fluctuating commodity prices and provides stability and predictability on the electricity line of their bills. It also ensures supply costs are fully recovered so that the system continues to operate effectively.

While the OEB is holding the line on TOU prices until at least April 30, 2017, consumers are reminded that on-peak times are changing and they can realize savings by adjusting their conservation habits accordingly. Winter TOU hours, shown in the chart below, come into effect on Nov. 1, 2016. For customers who still pay tiered RPP prices, the Tier 1 threshold increases from 600 kWh to 1,000 kWh for the winter. The threshold for small businesses stays at 750 kWh/month all year.

Category

New Times - Winter

(Nov 1-Apr 30)

Price

Change

Off-peak

Weekdays 7 p.m.-7 a.m.

All day weekends and holidays

8.7 ¢/kWh

No Change

Mid-peak

Weekdays 11 a.m.-5 p.m.

13.2 ¢/kWh

No Change

On-Peak

Weekdays 7-11 a.m. and 5-7 p.m.

18.0 ¢/kWh

No Change

Off-peak pricing is less than half the cost of on-peak, providing consumers an opportunity to save by shifting their usage to off-peak periods.

TOU prices are based on a 12-month forecast and are set to recover the costs of supplying electricity to consumers. This includes Ontario Power Generation costs regulated by the OEB, which represent about one-third of the cost of electricity supply. It also includes the cost of clean and renewable energy contracts and conservation programs, which are not regulated by the OEB but are required to be recovered through the TOU prices that the OEB sets.

Quote

"The prices set last May are still in line with the updated forecast cost of supply, enabling us to keep time-of-use prices level for the next six months," says Ceiran Bishop, OEB Manager, Supply and Infrastructure.

About the Ontario Energy Board:

The Ontario Energy Board is an independent and impartial public agency. We make decisions that serve the public interest. Our goal is to promote a sustainable and efficient energy sector that provides consumers with reliable energy services at a reasonable cost.

For more information, please refer to the attached backgrounder, visit the OEB website at OntarioEnergyBoard.ca (www.ontarioenergyboard.ca) or contact us directly.

@OntEnergyBoard (twitter.com)

www.ontarioenergyboard.ca (www.ontarioenergyboard.ca)

Ce document est aussi disponible en français.

Backgrounder - November 1 electricity price change

About Electricity Prices

The OEB reviews commodity prices for Ontario's residential and small business customers on the Regulated Price Plan (RPP) twice each year on May 1 and Nov. 1. These prices are shown in the electricity line of the bill as Time-of-Use pricing.

The electricity prices the OEB sets are only paid by households and small businesses who buy their electricity from their local utility.

Electricity costs make up more than half the total of a typical household bill. Electricity prices are shown on one of the four line items on bills - the Electricity line. The other lines of the bill are Delivery, Regulatory Charges and the Debt Retirement Charge (for businesses).

What will electricity prices be on Nov. 1?

Time-of-Use (TOU) prices established through the Regulated Price Plan (RPP) and reflected in the "Electricity" line of utility bills will remain unchanged from the current price, which has been in effect since May 1, 2016.

After reviewing a forecast of all the factors that determine electricity costs, the OEB determined the prices it set for May 1, 2016 will still be effective in recovering forecast costs. Prices for customers who pay RPP tiered prices will likewise stay the same.

What is the Regulated Price Plan?

The Regulated Price Plan (RPP) was developed by the Ontario Energy Board to provide stable and predictable electricity pricing, encourage conservation and ensure the price paid by consumers for electricity better reflects the price paid to generators.

Nearly all of Ontario's almost 5 million residential and small business customers pay electricity prices established through the RPP.

How does the RPP work?

The OEB reviews these prices every six months - on May 1 and Nov. 1 - and forecasts how much it will cost to supply consumers with electricity. Based on the forecast, prices are established to recover actual costs over time.

Our forecast takes into account:

Historic usage patterns for RPP customers (or how and when RPP customers use electricity);

How much electricity we expect will be used for the next 12 months; and

How much we expect to pay for electricity from all energy suppliers.

While the forecast is reliable, it's an approximation based on the best information we have available. Actual revenues collected typically turn out to be somewhat higher or lower than the amount forecasted, depending on factors such as how much electricity customers ultimately use.

We review the differences between actual costs and forecasts and adjust prices accordingly so we can be sure to recover actual costs over time. That's been a feature since this rate review came into place a decade ago.

What influences electricity usage?

The single largest influence on household electricity usage is weather. Our usage forecasts are based on average weather patterns. When the summer is hotter than usual consumers rely more heavily on electricity for cooling and when the winter is colder usual consumers rely more heavily indoor heating, some of which is fuelled by electricity.

Typical changes in the weather from year to year mean the price we forecast never recovers the exact cost of the electricity RPP customers use; this effect is magnified when weather is extreme. Our price reviews always include an adjustment factor to make up for any difference. Sometimes the adjustment can be bigger when recent weather has been atypical.

Time-of-use Pricing

Customers pay different prices depending on what time of day they use electricity.

There are three time-of-use periods - on-peak (the most costly), mid-peak (the middle range of the three prices) and off-peak (the least costly).

While TOU prices won't change, times for on-peak and mid-peak prices will change on Nov. 1, 2016 to reflect the change to the winter season.

Time-of-use prices are designed to encourage households and small businesses to use electricity during lower-cost time periods. This can in turn ease pressure on the provincial power system. It can also benefit the environment.

Ninety-seven per cent of customers on the Regulated Price Plan pay time-of-use prices.

Price difference between on/off peak

The TOU prices in each period are set in combination to recover the actual costs of electricity.

The off-peak price is a little less than half the cost of the on-peak price. This encourages consumers to conserve power when it costs most.

Summer & Winter Time-of-Use Hours

(See image above)

The difference between the summer and winter periods reflects differences in consumer habits. In summer, electricity use typically peaks during the hottest part of the day, when air conditioners are running on high. In winter, less daylight means electricity use peaks twice: once in the morning when people wake up and turn on their lights and appliances and again when people get home from work.

Bill Impact of New Prices

The Nov. 1 RPP price reflected in the "Electricity" line of utility bills will remain unchanged from the current rate, which has been in effect since May 2016.

Why Prices Depend on the Time Electricity is Used

Time-of-use electricity prices are like many cell phone rates, which are cheapest when demand is lowest: during the evenings, on weekends and on holidays.

In Ontario, when demand is lower, most of the power we use comes from sources like nuclear generators and large hydroelectric stations, which are designed to run all the time. This is called "baseload" power.

As daytime begins, more people and businesses turn on their lights, appliances and devices. When demand is higher, and all of the baseload power is used, the province turns to generally higher-cost sources. These sources, such as natural gas-fired plants, can be quickly called into action to meet rising demand. Other kinds of renewables such as solar and wind contribute to our power needs when they are available.

Setting Electricity Prices

The Ontario Energy Board calculates how much it will cost to supply households and small businesses in the province with electricity for the following year. Supply cost estimates assume normal weather conditions and include:

Price estimates for fuel sources like natural gas, solar, nuclear and hydroelectric

Estimates of how much supply from each type of generation is expected to be available

How much electricity we expect customers to use over the coming year; and

How much has been over or under-collected in the previous year.

The OEB then sets prices for each of the three time-of-use periods in order to recover expected costs while providing incentives and opportunities for customers to reduce their bills by shifting their time of electricity use.

Contracts

A small number of electricity customers - fewer than 1 in 10 - get their power from an electricity retailer rather than their local utility.

Those customers continue to pay the prices stated in their contract, regardless of adjustments to RPP prices.

Tiered Prices

A small number of customers - again, fewer than 1 in 10 - are still on the old pricing system, known as tiered pricing. Prices for customers who pay RPP tiered prices will likewise stay the same. The threshold until which the Tier 1 price applies will rise as usual to 1,000 kWh on November 1, 2016 to reflect the switch to the winter price structure.

The Typical Residential Customer

The OEB used to define the typical residential customer as a household that consumed 800 kWh of electricity per month. A recent review indicates that average residential consumption has declined significantly since the standard was last established. As a result, the OEB has determined that the standard used for illustrative purposes should now be 750 kWh per month.

For more information see:

Report of the Ontario Energy Board Defining Ontario's Typical Electricity Customer (www.ontarioenergyboard.ca) .

For more information

For more information, visit the OEB's consumer website at www.ontarioenergyboard.ca (www.ontarioenergyboard.ca) .

Ce document est aussi disponible en français. (www.ontarioenergyboard.ca)

SOURCE Ontario Energy Board

Image with caption: "The TOU price periods change each May 1 and November 1 (the same day prices are adjusted) (CNW Group/Ontario Energy Board)". Image available at: http://photos.newswire.ca/images/download/20161019_C6306_PHOTO_EN_799735.jpg (photos.newswire.ca)

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Ontario Energy Board holds the line on electricity rates until May 2017; Ontario holds line on winter hydro rates

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016

TORONTO - For the first time in eight years, electricity rates in Ontario will not rise on Nov. 1.

The Ontario Energy Board sets rates for customers on time-of-use pricing every May and November, when it also changes the hours for peak and off-peak rates.

The board says it is holding the line on rates for about five million Ontario households and small business customers next month for the first time since 2008.

Electricity customers will continue paying the same rates they've had since last May until May 2017.

The off-peak rate of 8.7 cents a kilowatt hour is less than half the on-peak rate of 18 cents per kwh, and off-peak hours expand to 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. weekdays and all day weekends and holidays starting next month.

Mid-peak hours, which cost 13.2 cents a kwh, will run from 11:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. weekdays, while on-peak hours will be 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. weekdays.

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Ontario electricity rates will remain unchanged, first time in nearly a decade

globalnews.ca - Wed Oct 19 2016

For the first time since 2008, hydro rates for residential customers in Ontario are not going up.

Ontario's energy regulator, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) conducts a price review twice a year.

In a statement released earlier this afternoon, the OEB announced that the per kilowatt hour charge that appears on the bills of residential customers in Ontario will not change for at least the next six months.

"The prices set last May are still in line with the updated forecast cost of supply, enabling us to keep time-of-use prices level for the next six months," said Ceiran Bishop, manager of supply and infrastructure at the OEB.

The decision comes on the same day Ontario's energy minister, Glenn Thibeault, announced the provincial government has passed legislation to remove the provincial portion of the HST from electricity bills effective Jan. 1, 2017.

The government estimates the benefit received from the HST rebate will save average residential customers in Ontario $11 a month on their electricity bills – or roughly $130 a year.

In total, the legislation will impact the monthly bills of more than five million residential customers in the province and cost upward s of $1 billion annually.

"The government recognizes the need to do more to ensure an affordable energy system for everyone and is committed to providing electricity rate relief that will benefit ratepayers in a meaningful way," said Thibeault.

Hydro One, Ontario's largest electricity distributor and provider of electricity to the majority of the province's rural customers, believes continued rate increases are necessary to maintain a robust and reliable energy network.

"Making sure we invest the money necessary so Ontario has the reliable, safe electricity system it requires, while doing everything we can to control costs is a balancing act our customers expect of us," a spokesperson said.

"This year, Hydro One's portion of the bill, the delivery line, went up by .04 % on average. We try to balance necessary investment with cutting the costs of doing business."

Despite today's decision announcing a freeze on current electricity rates, the price some residential consumers pay for electricity may still continue to go up over the next six months.

As a result of an order given by the OEB, Hydro One has begun the transition to fixed delivery rates.

Rather than pay a surcharge for delivery on every kWh of electricity used, Hydro One customers are moving toward a system in which they will pay a flat rate for delivery.

While some consumers stand to benefit from this “fixed rate” system, particularly those residential customers who use a great deal of electricity, those who have managed to conserve energy and are now using less will see their bills increase.

For instance, Hydro One low-density customers who consume roughly 800 kWh per month could see their total bills increase as much as 3.4 per cent over the next 12 months.

Meanwhile, low-density customers that consume 450 kWh a month could see their total bills go up by nearly six per cent as a result of the move toward fixed-rate delivery fees.

These increases do not, however, take into account savings as a result of the government’s HST rebate and enhanced rural subsidy program.

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258717566

SNC-Lavalin fined $75,000 for generating electricity without a licence; SNC-Lavalin generated electricity without a licence

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Keith Leslie

TORONTO - SNC-Lavalin has been fined $75,000 for operating a gas-fired electrical generating plant at Toronto's Pearson International Airport without a licence for the past 10 years.

The Ontario Energy Board says it inspected SNC-Lavalin's operations and maintenance facilities at the Toronto airport "after it became known" the company was generating electricity without a licence.

The provincial agency has not said how it finally learned the company was operating an electricity generation facility for a decade.

"It is every energy facility owner's and operator's obligation to apply to the OEB for a licence to operate," said Board spokesperson Karen Evans in an email. "SNC, who are providing ancillary services to the Greater Toronto Airports Authority, believed they did not require a licence as the operator of the facility."

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said he's "glad" the company was fined by the OEB, which he called a quasi-judicial organization, and suggested he would ask the board how a power generation facility could operate so long without a licence.

"That's part of the conversation that we'll continue to have with the OEB," Thibeault told reporters. "The public safety was never at risk."

Progressive Conservative energy critic John Yakabuski said the fact that SNC-Lavalin operated the generating station without a licence for 10 years shows the Liberal government is "asleep at the switch" on the energy file.

"When the government doesn't like the news it calls the OEB an arm's-length agency," said Yakabuski.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath called the fact the OEB didn't know the generation facility was being operated without a licence "very worrisome," and said the Liberals always point to the board as the agency that will protect consumers from rising electricity rates.

"You have to wonder how much trust we can have in an agency that's had this debacle occur," said Horwath.

Thibeault said the GTAA did have a licence as the owner of the electrical generating plant, but the operator, SNC Lavalin, didn't get one until it was ordered to do so last June.

The GTAA says the facility supplies electricity to the airport "typically during the heat of summer," and to help manage demand and keep a steady power flow during interruptions from the local municipalities.

Electricity generated at the airport is sold back to the provincial grid when demand is high.

—

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258711580

Power companies told to bill customers monthly, a $10-million cost that will likely end up on bills

Financial Post - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Peter Kuitenbrouwer

A government board has told power companies across the province that by year-end they must send customers a hydro bill every month - a change that could cost up to $10-

million, and will likely show up on the bills of consumers.

The Ontario Energy Board, a provincial body whose "goal is to promote a viable and efficient energy sector," ordered the change in April; it is now beginning to roll out across the province. Although some utilities such as Hydro One, which largely serves rural Ontario, have sent out monthly bills for years, about 1.9 million electricity customers across the province get six bills a year.

"We believe that it is useful to receive a bill every month," said Karen Evans, a spokeswoman for the board. "They are able to adjust their behaviour and manage costs more effectively. We are empowering the customer."

Related

Ontario Power Generation reworks 'free of smog' ad after complaint, pressure from group (business.financialpost.com)

Hydro One scrambles to revamp customer service after outrage over electricity prices (business.financialpost.com)

She could not say whether the board consulted any consumers; a news release said the board consulted with "distributors and ratepayer advocacy groups." Ontario electricity consumers already pay among the highest rates in Canada.

There may be a benefit to monthly bills; there is certainly a cost.

Toronto Hydro switched to monthly bills for some of its 758,000 customers in September. Tori Gass, a spokewoman for Toronto Hydro, said the change will cost her utility $490,000 in new printing costs and $3.1 million in additional postage each year. The utility will pass those costs to its customers.

The change does benefit the utilities in the sense that, when busy consumers receive a monthly bill, it will total roughly half of their previous bill, making it appear they are paying less. The user may not immediately notice notice that the new bill is for one month instead of two.

To compound this perception, Toronto Hydro bills in September include a "time of use comparison" which contrasts kilowatt hours used in "the current period" to "the previous bill," making it look as though a consumer's usage has declined. It has not; it's just that the previous bill was for two months.

Evans said that the board will discourage utilities from passing the increased cost of monthly bills to their customers.

"We have asked utilities to look at making their billing more efficient," she said. "They will have to justify those costs and show how they are going to mitigate those costs."

But she did not say who would bear the costs, if not the customers.

The Ontario Energy Board did not calculate what the switch to monthly billing will cost province-wide. Evans said: "It would be impossible to do so."

Based on Toronto Hydro's increased printing and postage costs, the move could cost utilities province-wide about $10-million.

John Friesen, a spokesman for Horizon Utilities, which serves 244,000 customers in Hamilton and St. Catharines, said his utility continues to send out bills every two months. He said he does not know when Horizon will switch to monthly bills.

"We continue to encourage customers to move to electronic billing for environmental and cost reasons," he said.

Ontarians who consume 1000 kWh of electricity pay $163 for electricity each month, compared with $82 for Quebecers. Only Prince Edward Island has higher power prices than Ontario, according to a study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers.

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258744274

Shuffled lives to pay bills; Sky-high hydro rates are hitting Canadians in the wallet

Toronto Sun - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Anthony Furey
Page: A3

"I'm a single mother of two and we literally live in the dark," writes Ontario resident Grace Dadone. "I do my laundry between 10 and midnight. I try to save on energy costs by going to my mom's once a week - and still my bill is sky high."

"I don't use my dryer anymore and hang my clothes to dry," writes John Lopes, frustrated with high energy prices. He sets his dishwasher to run in the middle of the night, rarely has lights on, and now hardly uses heating in the winter.

Yet, despite all of these efforts, Lopes found his August bill had gone up by 39% compared to last August.

This is a very, very common theme in many of the calls and e-mails I've been receiving from people sharing their hydro headaches. Ontario residents are jumping through hoops to live within the restrictions the government has boxed them in. Yet, still their rates go up.

"I live in a highrise apartment building and not once in 10 years have I turned on my heating or airconditioning," writes Linda Skarott, who previously worked as an accountant for Ontario Hydro. "Yes, I'm cold in winter, but nothing that extra sweaters and blankets won't fix. And yes, I'm hot in summer, so I frequent malls and libraries on the hottest days."

One caller from Kemptville - who himself had energy woes - told me a truly sad story about a woman who was always going to the mall daily to keep cool. When he offered to buy her an A/C unit and even install it himself, she declined, afraid of what it would do to her bills.

"In six short years, our monthly bill has gone from $160 per month to this last bill being $470," says Warren from Cambridge. "This, even as our family does everything right. Laundry on the weekend, dishwasher at night, extra lights turned off. It is affecting our overall family health with the constant frustration of rising bills."

"Every bill I pay three times the usage in other charges such as delivery and so on," writes Raj Maharajh. "I no longer use my house A/C."

I've heard these same issues from hundreds of people. They've stopped using the stove. They no longer turn the heat on. Their family schedules have become slaves to the offpeak times. It's almost like the government thinks it's not their job to serve the people, but that it's the people's job to serve them and their agenda.

"Most have no idea what it feels like to skip meals so that your kids can eat," writes in Caroline Campbell, who's stressed out by hydro bills. She's a mother of five who's had to stop working as a nurse due to degenerative pain. "They have no idea what it is like to do all this and still not be able to get by."

Real people. Real hardships. And it's all directly caused by lousy government decisions.

afurey@postmedia.com @AnthonyFurey

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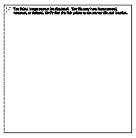

258738135

Home builders push for slow energy plan

The Globe and Mail - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline:SHAWN McCARTHY
Page: B1

Builders who have constructed "net-zero" houses are urging Ottawa to go slow with any proposal to change the building code to require super-energy-efficient buildings to ensure the rising costs don't add to Canada's housing affordability problems.

Their warning comes as the federal government is set to announce a series of measures this fall aimed at improving energy efficiency and boosting the use of renewable energy in residential and commercial buildings. Ottawa will announce plans to phasein changes to the national building code, eventually reaching a "net-zero" standard that would require all new houses to be virtually energy self-sufficient.

Toronto-based Mattamy Homes constructed five net-zero houses in Calgary as part of a demonstration project with Natural Resources Canada, but CEO Brian Johnston said consumers were unwilling to pay a significant mark-up for the houses, which cost an additional $100,000 each to build.

"I would say measure twice and cut once and involve the industry" in enacting policy, Mr. Johnston said. "Builders are generally in support of making homes more energy-efficient. They just want to make sure it is done in a proper way.

"Let's face it: there are some huge affordability issues, and the government risks exacerbating that issue.

"And that's an enormous issue - the affordability problem - that will run counter to this idea of increasing the energy efficiency of homes," Mr. Johnston said.

The Liberal government is unveiling a series of measures - including a minimum national carbon price - ahead of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's meeting in December with premiers, in which he hopes to conclude a pan-Canadian climate strategy.

While the government promotes its carbon-pricing plan as a crucial "market-based" policy, Environment Minister Catherine McKenna argues regulatory measures are also needed to meet Canada's international commitment to reduce greenhouse gases.

Environment and Climate Change Canada calculates that 11 per cent of the country's annual greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions come from building, although that figure does not include the generation of electricity needed for lighting and cooling. The proposed changes to the building codes would occur in stages over the next 15 years, and are part of a long-term strategy that aims to cut emissions by more than 80 per cent by 2050, as countries try to put the brakes on global warming.

On the building code, the federal government does not set regulations but produces a model code - updated every five years - that most provinces adopt to avoid a balkanized regulatory system. Ottawa is expected to gradually toughen energy-efficiency standards in the model code until it reaches a net-zero level.

Ottawa-based Minto Group Inc. has built five net-zero homes, including four townhouses that were completed in September and are now on the market. The company is generally supportive of a gradual toughening of standards but it must be done "with a degree of prudence," said Derek Hickson, its director of sustainability.

He said "2030 would be a lofty goal," although Ontario has announced it will have a net-zero standard by that date or sooner as part of its climate action plan.

Minto found the additional cost of building a net-zero house was between $40,000 and $60,000, and it remains to be seen whether buyers will accept that higher price. Mr. Hickson said the higher mortgage payments can be fully offset by lower utility bills.

He said the costs of building high-efficiency homes has dropped by 65 per cent since 2008 when Minto built its first one, and those costs will likely continue to decline. "Now we're using technology that is off-theshelf; it's technology people are familiar with," he said.

Mattamy Homes' Mr. Johnston said his company supports a gradual toughening of standards, noting houses are now dramatically more efficient than they were a generation ago. But he added consumers are not willing to pay a significant premium in order to reduce their annual energy bill.

And banks don't take into account lower energy costs when they assess whether they are willing to provide a mortgage to a home buyer. Ottawa also recently made it tougher for home buyers to qualify for large mortgages in order to reduce the risk of defaults.

Environmental advocates are urging the government to move as quickly as possible to implement the net-zero standard. Vancouver - one of the few cities with its own building code - has said that, by 2025, all new buildings must be energy self-sufficient. But they say the policy must be complemented with programs to encourage retrofits of the existing building stock.

"Net-zero building codes drive an energy transition from fossil fuels to clean power, so they're a fantastic tool for new homes and buildings," said Clare Demerse, federal policy adviser for the advocacy group Clean Energy Canada.

THE 'GREEN' HOUSE EFFECT

'Net-zero' 101 Minto, an Ottawa-based real estate development and property management company, has built five net-zero energy ready homes in suburban Kanata that are designed to use 65 per cent less energy than a typical new home.

SOLAR

The sun's energy is collected through rooftop solar panels, producing electricity the home needs year-round.

INSULATION

Two extra layers of rigid exterior insulation.

Triple-pane windows.

Doubling the insulation in the basement walls and under the floor.

ENERGY-EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES

A heat-recovery ventilator draws in fresh, filtered air while exhausting stale air.

A drain-water heat recovery system captures heat from used hot water.

A cold-climate heat pump heats and cools the home.

LED lighting is two times more efficient than standard compact fluorescent lights.

The heat-pump hot-water tank is more than twice as efficient as typical gas hot water systems.

Low-flow plumbing fixtures reduce water use.

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258668180

Business owners stagnated by energy costs, red tape, report says

Windsor Star - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Dave Battagello, Windsor Star

Small business owners being choked by red tape and high energy costs need the Ontario government to lend a helping hand, said a joint report by the Windsor-Essex and Ontario chambers being released on Wednesday.

The 30-page "Obstacles and Opportunities" report includes a series of recommendations to remove barriers to small business growth.

"The overall message from small business owners is there are a lot of rules and regulations," said Matt Marchard, CEO for the local chamber. "The complexities are getting more every day, so they need some help.

"The government has put in these rules, so they should help people in a better way to follow the rules."

Cited as an example are complications in getting potential employees the proper training and certifications needed to fill job vacancies, the report said. Overall, three million people in Ontario are employed by small businesses, but it could be a lot more, said chamber officials.

Ontario's employment standards regulations and apprenticeship programs need reform and updating, the report said.

"Right now, $600 million (of economic growth) is being left on the table in our region because employers can't get qualified people right now," Marchand said.

"Policy solutions" and a one-stop centre to properly steer small business owners through the regulations are also sorely needed, the report said.

Small business would "appreciate better customer service in its dealings with government" and should be able to "get their questions answered in a speedy fashion," the report said.

"There needs to be a single access point - a concierge service," Marchand said. "We have to have some place for small business to ask how they can follow these rules and the best way to do things."

The report also noted how 33 per cent of small businesses in Ontario say increasing energy prices have already caused them to delay or cancel further investment.

There were 38 per cent of business owners who reported electricity prices have the greatest impact on their ability to remain competitive.

"The projections are for additional (hydro cost) increases in coming years," Marchand said. "We have to ensure that Ontario remains a competitive jurisdiction, not only in Canada, but states in the midwest such as Ohio and Michigan."

A recent government decision to rebate the eight per cent tax on hydro bills was a good first step, the report said.

"We have to continue to look for ways to reduce the cost because there are other jurisdictions that are up to one-third cheaper with regard to energy and power," Marchand said.

The chambers are also calling on the provincial government to conduct a "cost of doing business analysis" in Ontario and make the findings publicly available.

The joint chamber report is to be unveiled Wednesday with Ontario Chamber CEO Allan O'Dette to be in Windsor for its release.

"Small businesses in Ontario are being held back by a diverse set of challenges that need to be addressed by all three levels of government," O'Dette said.

"We are encouraging the provincial government to implement our report's recommendations so that we can ensure that our economy will have sustained economic growth for many years to come."

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258748779

World Energy Day

Sudbury Star - Thu Oct 20 2016 **Page:** A3

Working people and small business owners from Sudbury and the surrounding area will gather on Saturday to mark World Energy Day, protest rising hydro rates, and to raise food bank donations for those who can no longer afford their bills. "Every day, we're hearing about more and more people who are having to decide whether they want heat or whether or they want to eat ," Hydro One Not For Sale member Felicia Fahey said in a release. "That's not a decision anybody should ever have to make." Hydro One Not For Sale pointed to the early 2000s, when Mike Harris'Conservative government privatized the province's energy markets, as the point at which rates started to rise. They're rising even more quickly now, the group said, because the Liberal government of Premier Kathleen Wynne and energy minister Glenn Thibeault has started privatizing the province's largest hydro utility, Hydro One, which in turn forces local utilities such as Greater Sudbury Hydro to raise its rates. Saturday's rally will start at noon at Downe Playground, 1299 Gemmell St. Speakers will include MPP France Gelinas, representatives from Hydro One Not For Sale, OPSEU, CUPE, and the Sudbury District Labour Council. All attendees are urged to bring healthy food donation for local food banks. After the rally, attendees will march to the office of Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault, 555 Barrydowne Rd.

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258713805

Ottawa politicians ask province for lower rural hydro rates

metronews.ca - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Haley Ritchie - Metro

Signed, sealed and delivered: Osgoode ward Coun. George Darouze said residents will be making election decisions based on a petition he delivered to Queen's Park on Wednesday.

Darouze joined MPP Lisa MacLeod in Toronto on Wednesday to present a petition that demands the province lower hydro rates for Ottawa's rural residents.

It's the latest effort by Darouze, who also penned a letter to Premier Kathleen Wynne last month, to deliver some hydro bill relief to his rural constituents.

Darouze said there are 45,000 Ottawa residents, many in his ward, who are not part of Hydro Ottawa grid but instead pay Hydro One rates. Those rates are on average 30 per cent more expensive electricity, a number Darouze believes is unacceptable.

"The impact on myself, and my residents, is that we pay 30 per cent more than anyone else," said Darouze. "The pressure is financial. People have to make decisions about whether they eat or keep the light on."

The petition delivered to Queen's Park on Wednesday - titled Fair Hydro to Ottawa - calls for the provincial government to allow Hydro One customers in Ottawa to pay a harmonized rate.

The province's energy minister now has 45 days to deliver an answer to the petition, which Darouze said could be an important election issue.

"It's perfect timing, to get an answer before Christmas," he said. "We will be making our choices in the next election to see who will help us. We need political will, we need the pressure, to make this change."

The city tried to solve hydro rate discrepancy about a year and a half ago by itself, by trying to buy the areas served by Hydro One and bring them under the umbrella of Hydro Ottawa. In the end the city couldn't afford it, according to Darouze.

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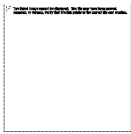

258745089

Big PDI questions still have to be answered

Peterborough Examiner - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Peter Morgan
Page: A4

It's great that city council is taking steps to educate us about the potential sale of PDI. I hope they do this properly by not only promoting the benefits, but also by looking at the downside, including the long term consequences of a sale. Some key questions that need to be answered are:

A) Is the sale necessary? In other words, will PDI fail as a utility if we don't sell it? Surprisingly, this question has yet to be answered. If no, what changes can be made to PDI to help it adapt to the future?

B) If yes, is Hydro One a suitable buyer?

Hydro One has been rated by the Provincial Auditor as one of the worst run utilities in North America, and has been harshly criticized by the Provincial Ombudsman for its terrible customer service. And we've all heard about crippling hydro rates. Why should we expect different performance and lower rates if Hydro One buys PDI? Should we be concerned that the majority of PDI will be owned by private investment firms? Will private owners care about local concerns?

C) If yes, what alternatives are there to selling to Hydro One? Perhaps PDI ownership could be maintained locally through a cooperative or trust of some sort. This has been done elsewhere in Ontario, in the small town of Embrun outside of Ottawa, and right at our doorsteps by Veridian, a municipally owned co-op just 30 kilometres south of Peterborough. Veridian offered to discuss a merger months ago, but the City refuses to even consider it until an offer from Hydro One is dealt with. Why are we limiting our options right from the start?

D) If we sell, what assurances can we have that our future energy needs will be met. All indications are that communities that develop the ability to produce, store and distribute electricity locally will be best prepared for a sustainable energy future. Will Hydro One meet these needs, or perhaps force us to rely on nuclear energy at the expense of local energy producers? Will we have any say about our energy future if we sell to Hydro One, or another company?

City Council has a great opportunity to regain the confidence of the community by having an open discussion of all the issues, not just whether we should take the money and run. We should expect no less.

Peter Morgan

Hazeldean Ave

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258739796

Charging stations a step closer

The Barrie Examiner - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Bob Bruton
Page: A3

The switch could be flicked on new vehicle charging stations in Barrie's 2017 budget.

Councillors have approved staff looking into the feasibility of installing level 2 EV (electric vehicle) charging stations for both Barrie residents and city operations.

"I realized we needed staffto develop a feasibility/business plan if we want to be ready for when EVs become common-place," said Coun. Sergio Morales.

"This is not a question of 'if it's coming' but a matter of how quick the uptake will be. Having a plan means not missing out on any future funding available, knowing how to roll them out to where people will use them the most, as well as being able to make the necessary preparations for their effect on the power grid."

The electric vehicle chargers Ontario grant program is working with 24 public and private sector partners to eventually create a network of electric vehicle stations in cities, along highways, at workplaces and public places across this province. Applicants could apply for funding as much as 100% of the total costs to purchase and install an EV charger.

But launched in December 2015 with applications accepted until February 2016, it didn't meet the city's time lines or parameters.

"They (provincial officials) weren't looking for 100 municipalities to apply, they were looking for somebody to put together a provincial grid," said Barry

Thompson, Barrie's manager of energy management.

"I'm assuming with their (the Liberal government's) climate change plan, there will be more grant money probably coming forward and certainly this (Morales') motion will now give us a rational for going ahead, and if there is something, we would certainly apply for it."

The Ward 9 councillor's motion asks for a comparison of free and paid charging station use, how other municipalities operate their programs, possible locations, costs, potential partnerships to help pay for capital and operating expenses and a strategy that would provide for the installation in multi-residential developments.

"The city will need to develop a balance between continuing the tradition of providing public infrastructure, which will soon include EV charging stations, while also doing its due diligence to reducing or eliminating costs to taxpayers," Morales said.

"With potential continuation of subsidy funding, potential partners such as Metrolinx, and a parking strategy deficit and sponsorship policy that together have the potential to see

EV charging stations installed throughout the city at low or no cost, can we achieve both? Absolutely, they go hand in hand."

There are two different types of EV chargers.

Level 2 EVs can charge a car in three to five hours, but a level 3 EV can charge a car in less than 30 minutes. There's a corresponding difference in costs too; a level 2 charging station is $8,000-$20,000, while a Level 3 can cost $80,000-$100,000.

The County of Simcoe received $267,350 in provincial funding for three level 3 electric vehicle chargers.

There are also planned EV chargers at the McDonalds Restaurant on Bayfield Street in Barrie, as well as Tim Hortons in Alcona, Elmvale, Midland and Collingwood.

The province says level 3 EV stations are generally to be strategically placed -near highways, for example -to promote inter-city travel where cars can get up to 80% charge within 20 to 30 minutes.

Level 2 EV stations are generally to go close to major trip attractions and workplaces to promote in-city travel, and charging for people who plan to spend more time at a given location.

Use of all the charging stations will be carefully monitored, the province says, to help it better understand if there are service gaps or areas where there are too many charging stations or if they are underutilized.

Close to 500 charging stations - more than 200 level 3 fast-chargers and almost 300 level 2 ones - are to be installed across Ontario at more than 250 locations.

All EV stations under this program are to be available for public use no later than March 31, 2017 and would be the largest public network of level 3 stations in Canada.

There are nearly 7,000 electric vehicles currently on Ontario roads.

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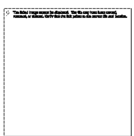

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Chalk River opens new lab, focus not on 'basic' research

ottawacitizen.com - Thu Oct 20 2016
Byline: Tom Spears, Ottawa Citizen

A shiny new lab building at Chalk River Laboratories is the first of a wave of new construction that will gradually replace infrastructure that dates in many cases to the mid-1900s.

The Harriet Brooks Building - named for Canada's first female nuclear physicist - is a $113-million structure holding 10 different labs that do materials science.

It will give support to the nuclear industry, including nuclear generating stations and medical isotope producers.

For instance, reactor operators have to know whether the channels that hold uranium fuel and heavy water coolant are strong enough to operate under high pressure.

They need to know that the chemistry of fluid in the reactors is good, that hydrogen hasn't reacted with the zirconium in the reactor to make the metal degrade in quality.

The new lab will do all this, and will also provide data for operators such as Ontario Power Generation or Bruce Power when they have to show federal regulators that they are running their plants safely.

What the new lab won't do is research in the fundamental field of nuclear physics, the type known as "basic" research.

A spokeswoman for Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd., which owns the site, said "there will be room for" such research, if someone from another federal department or a university wants to come in and do it.

"This is more than science for science's sake. Your efforts have practical applications, real value, and enduring benefits," Natural Resources Minister Jim Carr told the audience at a ribbon-cutting on Wednesday.

One of the last scientists to do basic research at Chalk River took issue with his remarks. John Hardy, whose group was shut down to save money in 1997, now leads a research group at Texas A&M University that does basic research with a superconducting cyclotron.

"Good science is never for 'science's sake'; its goal is to increase human understanding of how the world works. All the practical applications that governments love couldn't exist without the basic discoveries that are required first," he said in an email.

"I find it ironic that Harriet Brooks, for whom the new building has been named, was herself a basic researcher in nuclear physics, who was active a hundred years ago, long before anyone imagined that there could be applications for something as esoteric as the atomic nucleus."

The lab will be continuing work that Chalk River already performed, but in a new building and with new equipment. Some of the old lab equipment dated from the 1970s, and the buildings are in many cases even older. One staffer compared this to replacing a 1970s car with a new car - it does the same job, but isn't the same machine.

Utilities that approach Chalk River Labs for help like to look ahead before a problem occurs, said Gina Strati, the energy program director in the new complex.

"They may look at materials degradation, they may look at lifetime issues such as 'how long will my steam generators last?' and 'what should the chemistry be to ensure that this particular asset will last as long as possible?' So we do that kind of work for them."

The new lab was approved under the previous Conservative government; the Liberals have approved another $800 million to update or replace other labs at the site.

Meanwhile the one remaining reactor, NRU, is scheduled to close for good in 2018. It won't be replaced.

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258717773

Alberta's Notley promises details of coal phase-out plan coming this fall; Notley promises coal phase-out plan this fall

Canadian Press - Wed Oct 19 2016
Byline: Dean Bennett

EDMONTON - Premier Rachel Notley says Alberta will roll out specifics this fall of its plan to phase out coal-fired electricity and promote renewable energy.

Notley, in a state-of-the-province speech Wednesday, said the plan will include financial help to coal emitters closing their plants and transitioning to cleaner forms of power.

There will also be details on how proponents will be able to bid to replace coal generation in the Alberta market.

"And we will set out more detail on how we will promote the construction of clean, renewable energy - wind, solar, thermal and hydropower - efficiently, economically and without undue subsidy," Notley said.

Notley's government has promised to end coal-fired electricity generation by 2030. It's part of a larger climate-change plan outlined last year that includes a broad-based carbon tax beginning in January.

The tax will increase gas prices at the pump and home heating bills, although lower- and middle-income earners will receive partial or full rebates.

Other plans call for a cap on oilsands emissions, an energy efficiency program and a methane-reduction program.

In her speech, Notley stressed that while the government won't inflict deep cuts to get out of the current recession, public-sector budgets are at their limit.

"We are very unlikely to have a lot of headroom for major new spending proposals until recovery occurs," she said.

"People providing public services or other services funded by the provincial government need to find innovative ways to do more with the funding that they have now."

Municipal leaders may have to make choices, she said. "The exciting new proposals that they have will probably need to be paid for by reallocations.

"Starting a new project might mean moving money from an old (one)."

A protracted slide in the price of oil has cuts billions of dollars from Alberta's bottom line. The province is projected to run a $10.9-billion deficit this fiscal year, some of that just to pay for daily operating and program expenses.

Notley's speech took a swipe at former Progressive Conservative governments, although not by name.

She said former governments should have done more to diversify the economy. And, she said, by refusing to bring in a credible climate-change program, the Tories gave ammunition to opponents of Alberta's attempts to get a pipeline to tidewater to take advantage of the global market.

She criticized the Tories' flat tax on personal income, since replaced by the NDP with a graduated tax which increases taxes for those in higher brackets.

"Socialism for the rich and austerity for everyone else is a completely discredited approach," Notley said.

Wildrose energy critic Leela Aheer said promises and plans are of little comfort to thousands of Albertans losing their jobs due to low oil prices.

"There are families that are suffering right now - right now - that can't put food on their tables," Aheer told reporters.

"Let's actually do something for these families."

Alberta Party Leader Greg Clark said the tone of the speech was inappropriate.

"She spent an awfully long time running down the opposition," said Clark. "What she is doing is creating division in Alberta at a time when a premier, when a leader, ought to be bringing our province together."

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