Message

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Today's News

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Date: Wednesday, September 20, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Federal government eyes energy retrofits in buildings; In a report released Wednesday, the Canada Green Building Council said the country could reduce its emissions 51 per cent by 2030 if owners worked with government and investors to revamp their energy consumption

theglobeandmail.com - Wed Sep 20 2017, 6:00am ET
Byline:SHAWN McCARTHY

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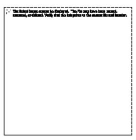

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The federal government is ramping up its effort to encourage building owners to invest in energy retrofits, as one industry group reports Canadians could save money while cutting greenhouse gas emissions in existing buildings by 50 per cent in the next dozen years.

Ottawa is working with provinces to announce measures this fall for retrofitting non-residential buildings as well as support for individual homeowners. It is also developing standards to provide landlords and their lenders some assurance that investments will yield the promised reductions in emissions and energy costs.

The building sector was one of several targeted under the federal-provincial-territorial clean energy and climate agreement reached last December.

In a report released Wednesday, the Canada Green Building Council said the country could reduce its emissions 51 per cent by 2030 - easily exceeding the government's target of 30 per cent - if owners worked with government and investors to revamp their energy consumption.

The effort would include investments in modern heating and cooling systems for aging office towers and factories; the installation of new windows, insulation and lighting, and spending on renewable energy systems that would reduce consumption of electricity and natural gas from utilities.

Environment Minister Catherine McKenna said the focus on existing commercial and institutional structures is part of a broader effort to reduce GHGs from residential and non-residential buildings, which account for 17 per cent of the country's emissions.

"All across the board, we're thinking about how do we create the right incentives," she said Tuesday during a visit to New York for a week-long series of climate-change events coinciding with the opening of the United Nations General Assembly.

The government is still in talks with provinces on how it will encourage the investment in building efficiency and low-carbon energy use.

"How do we help support companies, businesses on retrofits? That can be through our infrastructure bank, looking at large retrofits and creating the financing opportunities," she said.

The federal government - one of the largest building owners in the country - has embarked on its own plan to upgrade energy systems, including the recent announcement of a district heating project for a cluster of buildings in Ottawa.

It estimates the energy used for heating and cooling buildings accounts for 12 per cent of Canada's annual emissions of greenhouse gases, a figure that rises to 17 per cent when electricity is included.

The federal and provincial governments are planning to issue tougher codes for new buildings in the coming years but that will make a small dent in emissions, given the longevity of existing structures.

"We need action in the existing building sector," council president Thomas Mueller said. "But it requires federal and provincial governments working on progressive policies to make that happen, and to provide opportunity and incentives for investments in retrofits."

He said the types of investment proposed by the council would be profitable over time, with payback periods ranging from 18 months to several years.

Mr. Mueller said Canadian pension funds have been major investors in LEED-certified buildings, and could play a key role in providing the financing for energy-efficiency retrofits that have long-term payoffs.

The council pioneered the implementation of the LEED program, which provides green certification for new buildings. The industry also has standards for LEED certification for existing buildings.

With a report from Michelle Zilio in New York.

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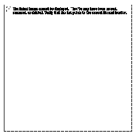

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Thibeault testifies in Sudbury bribery trial; Energy minister tells court that Liberals did not promise him promotion to cabinet

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A former New Democrat MP who left his party to run in an Ontario byelection for the provincial Liberals testified Tuesday that he asked for, and received, income replacement and paid jobs for two staffers.

But the Liberals did not promise him a promotion to cabinet if he won the 2015 byelection, Glenn Thibeault, who is now Ontario's energy minister, told the trial of two provincial Liberals in Sudbury, Ont., facing charges under the Election Act.

The two Liberals are accused of offering would-be byelection candidate Andrew Olivier a job or appointment to get him to step aside for Thibeault, who was Premier Kathleen Wynne's preferred candidate. Pat Sorbara, who was Wynne's deputy chief of staff and Liberal campaign director, and local fundraiser Gerry Lougheed have pleaded not guilty.

Sorbara also faces a second charge, alleging that she bribed Thibeault to become the candidate by arranging for paid jobs on the byelection campaign for two of his constituency staff. Thibeault said he and Sorbara discussed the income replacement and paid staff jobs before he was an official candidate, but that no commitments were made.

Thibeault testified that he did receive income replacement of $3,500 - he was worried about making mortgage and car payments after leaving his NDP job - and that he asked about paid byelection campaign jobs for two staffers. However, the income replacement and paid staffer jobs didn't come until January 2015, Thibeault testified, which was weeks after he was already appointed as the candidate.

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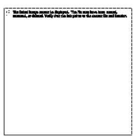

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Mixed News On The Future Of Former Lambton Generating Station

Blackburn News - Wed Sep 20 2017

The mayor of St. Clair Township is disappointed in the direction taken by Ontario Power Generation regarding the former Lambton Generating Station.

OPG has told the township that tenders for the clean up will be awarded by the middle of 2018. Steve Arnold says he and council were told Monday the stacks and other buildings involved in coal production will be levelled but the office buildings will stay. The entire project should wrap up in 2022.

Council would have liked to develop the 900 hectare site into residential lots.

"We're not going to have that greenfield space that we asked for," says Arnold. "We're very disappointed that's not going to be the long term plan but we'll work with them and try to make it the best we can."

OPG will retain ownership of the property.

"The switch gear is going to be left there in place because that's still a part of the electrical grid of the province," says Arnold. "All the towers, all the transmission lines will be there because there's a number of gas-fired plants that were put in place as a replacement for Lambton Generating Station."

Arnold adds OPG officials promised to meet with them on a quarterly basis to provide updates.

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Ontario Energy Minister meets with Kenora chamber

Kenora Daily Miner and News - Wed Sep 20 2017

Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault is meeting with local business communities across the region.

The minister was in Kenora where he met with Kenora and District Chamber of Commerce members on Friday, Sept. 15 to talk about changes to the Fair Hydro Plan and supports for small businesses.

"It was a good response," he said. "You've got a very engaged chamber with a lot of very strong businesses talking about the importance of energy in their business costs. Many of them weren't aware of the Save on Energy program, which can save them significant dollars, so [we were] talking about how we can communicate that better as a government, because I think the government needs to do a better job of that."

Under the Fair Hydro Plan, electricity bills for residents and more than 500,000 small businesses and farms have been reduced by 25 per cent as of July 1.

However, some small businesses don't receive the reduction if they're considered Class B consumers, but Thibeault said he's discussed other options for businesses looking to reduce their bills, such as the Industry Conservation Initiative for large energy consumers.

Thibeault also said there are eight jurisdictions that receive extra deductions under the Rural Remote Rate Protection Plan, including Hydro One medium and low density customers, but not Kenora Hydro.

For Hydro One customers, there is a "significant reduction on distribution charges "to bring them online with the Ontario average," he said. "We're talking a 40 to 50 per cent reduction for people on the Hydro One R2 designation in places like Atikokan or Sioux Lookout because we've brought down their distribution charges while there are significant savings that are happening to those type of ratepayers."

Andrew Scribilo, past president of the Kenora chamber, said Thibeault seemed "very upfront and honest" during the chamber meeting, which was held in a question and answer format.

"It was very open and there didn't seem to be anything hidden. They do want to make plans in the future [as to] what's accessible for business, small business and residential customers," he said.

Scribilo added that the chamber will take a lead on making business owners aware of the incentive programs.

Since the Ontario legislature has returned after the summer break, Thibeault said the most important item for the ministry right now is the Long-Term Energy Plan, which he dubbed a "Thanksgiving turkey."

"It's really going to talk about fairness and choice for people," he said. Public consultations on the plan were held from October to December in 2016, including one in Kenora.

In the meantime, Thibeault said he recommends that "every single business owner and every single resident" contact their local utilities in order to access programs they can qualify for.

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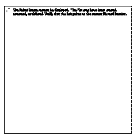

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Plasco rising from the ashes?; Waste-toenergy company trying for a comeback

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A company once hailed as the future in waste management for the City of Ottawa is trying to reestablish itself as a player in the green energy industry after burning through more than $300 million in its unsuccessful first attempt.

Plasco is trying to make a comeback.

Now calling itself Plasco Conversion Technologies Ltd., the company is taking a new approach to its business and is differentiating itself from its earlier days as Plasco Energy Group Inc.

While it is paring back on its grand aspirations, the company's founder says he still believes in its technology, which is supposed to burn garbage and turn it into electricity and a type of synthetic gas that can also be burned.

"Plasco, as it was, had been targeting to be in the business of building, operating and owning energy from waste plants using its own technology," company founder Rod Bryden told the Sun.

"We have been able to confirm to our satisfaction and some others'that the product was good then and is good now. We have done very limited things that have simplified the product and made it more easily produced, lower cost and more easily sold."

Bryden said the firm is being funded by a number of wealthy individuals. He would not provide any specifics and is under no obligation to do so, as Plasco is a privately held business venture.

The earlier incarnation of Plasco planned to secure contracts with municipalities that were looking for ways to deal with their waste. Through those contracts, the company wanted to secure land, build wasteto-energy conversion facilities and sell electricity to the public grid.

Plasco's new business model will instead see the company sell its technology to municipalities and to other businesses that already have waste-management facilities, or are in the process of constructing them.

The move would see the company selling a patented product. Bryden said he hopes the slimmed-down business model will be more attractive.

Bryden bought what remained of Plasco in September 2015 for $1. The company is being held under Bryden's new holding company, RMB Advisory Services Inc.

In 2005, the original Plasco had eight employees led by Bryden, who was set on proving that the company's proprietary technology could use plasma - a very high-temperature gas - to convert garbage into energy.

By 2008, Bryden had convinced city council, led by then-mayor Larry O'Brien, to provide city land for a demonstration project. After years of trials, Plasco received the certification it needed from the Ministry of the Environment in 2011, which allowed the company to move ahead with a commercial plant.

Part of the deal with the city required the company to secure the financing needed to build the largescale commercial plant by the end of 2014. Had the company met the commitment, the city had agreed to pay Plasco as much as $9.1 million a year to take as much as 300 tonnes of garbage a day. The company attracted more than $300 million in investment over the years to help fund its ambitious agenda.

With the support of city council waning and unable to secure even more funds, Plasco sought protection from its creditors under the Companies'Creditors Arrangement Act (CCAA) in 2015 after it could no longer meet its financial commitments.

The newly reshaped version of Plasco no longer carries a majority of its debts nor has any ownership of the company's failed Trail Road test facility.
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Budget to move power lines grows

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Brant County council will consider adding $1.5 million to the budget of a project to relocate power lines along a stretch of Powerline Road that is rapidly undergoing urbanization.

The public works committee has endorsed a staff recommendation to add to the budget so Hydro One can go ahead with proposed relocation works in advance of roadwork widening along Powerline scheduled for the summer of 2018.

The money will come from a combination of development charges and long-term debt to be repaid by future development charges.

"Those lines have to be moved if we want to go ahead," said Coun. Brian Coleman, the committee chairman.

"We knew it was going to happen. It will be a big improvement over the mess of lines that are there right now.

"That the lines will be underground is a big plus. Hopefully we can come in under budget."

Capital projects manager Joe Murphy told the committee in a staff report said that WalterFedy was awarded a consultant contract for the widening and urbanization of Powerline Road from Rest Acres Road to Mile Hill Road in June 2015. Since that time, the consultant has completed a class environmental assessment which recommends the widening and urbanization of that stretch of Powerline. The lines will go underground.

The design is 90 per cent finished and county staff are in the process of acquiring the necessary property to utility relocations before finalizing the design.

WalterFedy, county staff and Hydro One are working on requirements to relocate the lines. They will include relocation of hydro distribution lines and high voltage transmission towers.

The total of works estimated by Hydro One is about $800,000. That does not include the cost for site works associated with the relocation of Hydro One transmission towers. The staff anticipate the cost for relocation of the towers at $700,000.

Meanwhile, Hydro One's estimate to relocate the distribution lines will be $1.29 million, of which the county's portion will be slightly less than $700,000.
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