Message

From: John Cannella [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JOHN CANNELLA5E4]
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Subject: Today's News - Thursday, March 2, 2017

Today's News

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Date: Thursday, March 2, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Too many 'unknown' solar farms: Farmer

Northumberland Today.com - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Valerie Macdonald
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There are too many solar farms being built in the area west and south of Rice Lake in Northumberland County that few know anything about, says longtime Campbellcroftarea farmer John Kordas. About two weeks ago, Kordas said he received a notice from ...

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thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Rob FergusonRobert Benzie

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Our hydro hysteria generates hydro hypocrisy: Cohn

thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Martin Regg Cohn

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Will Kathleen Wynne's last-ditch hydro fix just add to the mess?; Wynne's haste on rates likely too late for 2018 vote, and plan has possible negative long-term effects

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Byline:ADAM RADWANSKI

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thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
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Chris Selley: Three parties are selling cheaper hydro. Will Ontarians buy?

National Post - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Chris Selley

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Stop - The Price Is Too High; Thibeault urged to kill wind, solar energy program

Toronto Sun - Thu Mar 2 2017
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Liberals will raise your taxes to offset hydro costs

Ottawa Sun - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Patrick Brown
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Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal government will try to make you believe they are fixing this electricity mess, but every time they touch it, they make it worse. Don't be fooled by them: The Liberals will pay for their scheme by raising your taxes, ...

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Reevely: Cutting today's hydro bills, for today's votes, with tomorrow's money

ottawacitizen.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: David Reevely, Ottawa Citizen

"Smoothing out" the costs of Ontario's energy system by taking longer to pay off generating contracts, as the Ontario Liberals are reportedly planning to do, means borrowing from the future to make ourselves more comfortable now. The ...

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Bruce Power Life-Extension Program ranked top infrastructure project of 2017

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 2 2017 **Page:** A3

The Bruce Power site is about has become an even busier place since its Life-Extension Program began on Jan. 1, 2016. On Feb. 21, Top 100 Projects (top100projects. ca/2017filters/) ranked Bruce Power's Life-Extension Program ...

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OPG job losses rumoured; Mayor attempting to confirm with energy minister

North Bay Nugget - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Jennifer Hamilton-Mccharles
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North Bay Mayor Al McDonald has been trying to confirm if employees at Ontario Power Generation's North Bay operation are to be transferred to other operations in Ontario. McDonald said he's been working on this for about four ...

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Hydro costs stifling quail operation; Electricity costs skyrocket at local farm despite consumption being reduced by 40 per cent

The Chatham Daily News - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
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Over the past 12 years, Scot and Cheryl Ryckman have developed an ideal niche operation with their quail farm in this east Chatham-Kent community. It's the only one of its kind in Canada that produces quail meat and the demand is high from among ...

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Veridian Corporation, Whitby Hydro to Move Forward with Merger Evaluations, Oshawa PUC Not to Proceed

Marketwired - Wed Mar 1 2017

DURHAM REGION, ONTARIO--(Marketwired - March 1, 2017) - The CEO's of three leading Ontario utilities who are currently evaluating the benefits of a merger, namely Veridian Corporation ("Veridian"), Oshawa Power and Utilities ...

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Hamilton developer really digs geothermal technology

thespec.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline:mmcneil@thespec.com

It's not the best economic climate for building condos with geothermal heating and cooling but developer Jeff Paikin says he's in for the long haul when it comes to using the technology. Paikin's New Horizon Development Group is starting ...

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Clean nuclear will avoid billions in consumer cap and trade costs

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: James Scongack
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On Jan. 1, 2017, Ontario's new cap and trade program came into effect. In a general sense, the program taxes operations that generate large volumes of greenhouse gases (GHGs). It then redirects the tax revenue to new investments meant to reduce ...

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Free LED lights, low-flow showerheads? Alberta rolls out residential energy savings plan

CBC.CA News - Wed Mar 1 2017, 9:27pm ET
Byline:CBC News

Alberta is rolling out an energy savings program which will cover the cost of LED light bulbs, low-flow showerheads, smart thermostats and other cost savers ? including installation ? as part of a five-year, $645-million program funded by the ...

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Too many 'unknown' solar farms: Farmer

Northumberland Today.com - Thu Mar 2 2017
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There are too many solar farms being built in the area west and south of Rice Lake in Northumberland County that few know anything about, says longtime Campbellcroftarea farmer John Kordas.

About two weeks ago, Kordas said he received a notice from Renesola of Mississaugua about a 500-kilowatt ground-mounted solar installation proposed for 6330 Ganaraska Rd., adjacent to his farm.

It is identified as GreenLife Solar 19, a project Renesola has taken over from

GreenLife Projects Inc.

Kordas said he circulated the information to his neighbours, but no one knew anything about it. Neither did Municipality of Port Hope Deputy Mayor Greg Burns or two area MPPs he contacted right after that.

Kordas's concerns about the solar installation include what he believes will be an adverse impact on land values on his own 650 acres, and the knowledge that his hydro bills continue to go up as more green energy projects spring up.

"We're not paying lower energy costs. That's enough for me," said the man who has contacted local riding MPP Lou Rinaldi and neighbouring Peterborough MPP and Agriculture Minister, Jeff Leal to protest more solar construction in the county.

Kordas says his family are multigenerational working farmers, and the land slated for solar panels is good agricultural land which he used to rent and farm himself. It makes no sense to convert it to a solar farm, as far as he is concerned.

When contacted for his comments on the situation, Rinaldi said his office has asked the Ministry of the Environment to clarify the status of the Ganaraska Road acreage where the solar farm is to be built, and is awaiting information.

Classes 1, 2 and 3 of agricultural lands can't be used for solar, he said, but "beyond Class 3 it is permissible."

Initially, the Agriculture Ministry identified the land as Class 6 (which would not be prime agricultural land), but since then said more investigation is needed to be done before it could verify what the land class is.

Minister Leal is aware of Kordas's concerns, a spokesperson for his office said, but an awaited statement on the situation from Leal was not received after two days of promises (see sidebar).

At this time, there are two very large solar farms in operation in West Northumberland - one is south of Rice Lake on Alderville First Nation land, and the other is northeast of Baltimore in Hamilton Township.

When reached for comment about the former GreenLife Solar Projects taken over by Rensola, headquartered at 5650 Tomken Rd. inMississauga, Rensola's construction manager Brendan Phillips, said of the 20 projects it has in Ontario, five of them are in West Northumberland. There is a sixth with no set location at this time.

"It's complicated," was all Phillips would say about the sixth project during a Tuesday interview.

All of the five West Northumberland solar farm installations "have FIT3 contracts, yes," he said of permission given by the provincially created Independent Electricity System Operator for his company to go forward and construct the five projects in West Northumberland. They must be in operation by April of 2018 to comply with their contracts.

Construction is expected to start this year on: 1. G24, a 500-kilowatt solar farm at County Roads 9 and 15 north of Harwood in Hamilton Township.

2. G1, a 250-kilowatt solar farm at 2882 Shelter Valley Rd., northeast of Vernonville and north of Highway 401 in Alnwick/Haldimand Township.

3. G12, a 500-kilowatt solar farm at 171 Isaac Rd. near County Road 9, also north of Highway 401 in Alnwick/Haldimand.

4. G6, a 100-kilowatt solar farm at 58 Moore Rd. in Alnwick/Haldimand near the boundary with Cramahe township.

5. G19, a 500-kilowatt solar farm proposed for 6330 Ganaraska Rd., immediately west of Bewdley on Rice Lake, in the Municipality of Port Hope.

A public information meeting is being scheduled for the end of this month with the Municipality of Port Hope so people can attend and ask questions about the Ganaraska Road solar project, Phillips said, adding that. anyone can reach him at 705 241-3514 or at brendan.phillips@renesola.com.

He also said the Ganaraska Road solar project's soil is not prime agricultural land, according to a study that has been done.

Another public meeting has been set up with Alnwick/Haldimand for April 18 at 7 p.m. at the Grafton Town Hall concerning Rensola's Moore Road solar installation, he also said.

"We are more than happy to talk with anyone about these projects and help this process along."

Asked if public opposition can stop these five solar farms, for which the company has contracts, Phillips said he did not believe so.

At this time, Hamilton Township council has taken the position not to support any more groundmount solar farms, given the problems related to the construction of the Baltimore-area facility. Silt and water ran off the hilly grounds of the solar farm into streams, neighbouring properties and roadways during its construction. A lawsuit was initiated.

Alnwick/Haldimand council has supported some of the solar farms Rensola is constructing within its borders, but has not taken a position on the Moore Road project.

The provincially created Independent Electricity System Operator grants Feed In Tariff contracts to companies like Rensola and GreenLife. And while planning and construction matters are usually dealt with at municipal and county levels, that does not include facilities and projects under the Green Energy Act and FIT programs. That authority lies with the provincial government and the IESO.

There is currently a provincially imposed moratorium on projects larger than 500 kilowatts. vmacdonald@postmedia.com twitter.com/NT_vmacdonald

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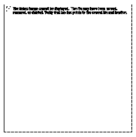

268040907

Premier Kathleen Wynne's hydro relief plan will kick in this summer

thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Rob FergusonRobert Benzie

Premier Kathleen Wynne will slash electricity prices this summer - just in time to cool ratepayers' anger over hydro bills that soar due to air conditioner use.

Wynne will unveil the plan for an additional 17 per cent reduction in hydro rates Thursday at Queen's Park. That's atop the 8 per cent rebate on the provincial harmonized sales tax launched two months ago, the first phase of the Liberals' 25 per cent solution.

"When we're making significant changes to the electricity sector . . . people are expecting us to do this right," Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault said after a three-hour cabinet meeting Wednesday where the plan was finalized.

"I'm making sure that we don't have to ever do this again," said Thibeault.

As first disclosed Wednesday by the Star (www.thestar.com) - before the measure had even gone to cabinet - Wynne's plan is designed to turn down the political heat on the Liberals.

With hydro rates doubling over the past decade, the governing party is struggling in the polls with an election 66 weeks away - June 7, 2018.

Opposition parties seemed blindsided by the Liberal proposal, claiming that saving money by spreading the costs of electricity generation contracts over a longer time period is a "shell game."

The tactic will save ratepayers money now but cost more down the road and do little to tackle high underlying costs in the electricity system, critics insisted.

"The money needs to come from somewhere. Will this government come clean and acknowledge that?" Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said in the Legislature's daily question period.

"They have created a mess," said Brown, whose electoral fortunes are largely riding on voters being upset with the Liberals and demanding a change next year.

The New Democrats are also banking on Wynne's popularity remaining low in order to defeat the Liberals, who have been in power since 2003.

"What they're proposing are short-term, stop-gap measures," Deputy NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh later told reporters.

"The interest payments are going to put more money in the hands of bankers," said Singh.

Thibeault evaded specific questions on how much the longer amortization of costs - which he called "snowplowing" - could add to hydro bills down the road.

He slammed a plan released by the NDP (www.thestar.com) on Monday to cut rates between 17 per cent and 30 per cent as unrealistic and criticized the Conservatives for not having any proposal.

Tory MPP Todd Smith, his party's energy critic, said that manifesto will come sometime after a policy convention in November.

Sources told the Star the Liberals' reduction in rates will come mostly from "smoothing out" the financing costs of electricity generation contracts over longer periods of time.

It is essentially refinancing a mortgage to take advantage of lower payments over a longer term on nuclear reactors, natural gas-fired power plants, and wind turbines.

By extending the amortization periods over the life of nuclear, natural gas and wind and solar projects instead of a 20-year time period could, officials say the cost of contracted generation could be slashed by more than $1.5 billion annually.

Ratepayers would see the impact on the "global adjustment" line of their hydro bill within months.

That's the charge added to bills 12 years ago by former Liberal premier Dalton McGuinty to cover the cost of the $50 billion in power contracts with public and private generators who are paid more than the market price for their electricity.

It is needed because those producers are on the hook for building and maintaining enough generation capacity to ensure a reliable power supply.

The levy also covers the premiums paid to green energy generators, such as wind and solar companies who sell electricity to the grid.

Queen's Park is also planning to end the practice of electricity ratepayers subsidizing social programs that hand over up to $65 a month to low-income Ontarians struggling with hydro costs.

That burden will instead be transferred to taxpayers.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa indicated it won't impact his plan to get the province back in the black this spring.

"I'm very proud to say that we're balancing the books," the treasurer said.

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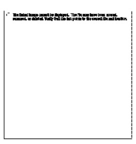

268044089

Announcement on cuts to Ontario hydro bills coming Thursday; Announcement on cuts to hydro bills coming

Canadian Press - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Allison Jones

TORONTO - Ontario electricity ratepayers will learn Thursday how the Liberal government plans to reduce their bills, which reportedly includes a move akin to refinancing a mortgage that's being slammed as just kicking costs down the road.

The plan is to slash soaring hydro bills by another 17 per cent largely by paying the costs of electricity generation contracts over longer periods, Toronto Star reported Wednesday.

The Liberal government faces no bigger political issue at the moment than hydro bills, which have nearly doubled in the last decade, and Premier Kathleen Wynne had promised that further relief - in addition to an eight-per-cent rebate that took effect Jan. 1 - would be announced before the spring budget.

Wynne and Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault are set to make their announcement Thursday morning. After a cabinet meeting Wednesday afternoon, Thibeault wouldn't say whether relief would come all at once or in phases.

"I would like to see it all done at once to ensure that we can get the best bang for every ratepayer's dollar," he said.

It could take some time to take effect, if regulatory changes or legislation are needed, Thibeault said, but it could perhaps be made retroactive.

Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown said the reported plan would just shift costs from people's hydro bills to tax bills.

"The money needs to come from somewhere," he said. "Will this government come clean and acknowledge that in their leaked plan, taxes are going to go up? They're simply playing a shell game."

Thibeault said Ontario Power Generation did something similar to reduce nuclear refurbishment cost increases.

"It's something that OPG has recognized that works, but for us in terms of our smoothing - or our rate mitigation plans, we're not putting anything out there right now," he said.

Energy consultant Tom Adams said in a blog post that the plan would create a "big new electricity debt" in order to make rates "appear" to decrease.

"In a nutshell, Wynne's plan is to stretch out the recovery of current electricity generation costs over a longer time period than currently is the case," he wrote.

It's not clear whether the underlying contracts would be extended or if the Ontario Electricity Financial Corporation, which manages the debt of the former Ontario Hydro, would fund the difference, Adams wrote.

The Star reported the benefit from the plan would be more than $1.5 billion a year, reflected in decreased global adjustment costs.

The global adjustment, which accounts for up to 70 per cent of electricity rates, is the charge consumers pay for above-market rates paid to power producers in 20-

year contracts meant to ensure a steady supply.

Auditor general Bonnie Lysyk has estimated the global adjustment cost $50 billion between 2006 and 2015 and increased by 1,200 per cent between 2006 and 2013 - meanwhile, the average electricity market price dropped by 46 per cent.

NDP deputy leader Jagmeet Singh said the reported plan wouldn't address the root causes of problems within the electricity system, such as the high-paying, long-term contracts.

"When they talk about smoothing out payments ... that means extending a bad contract and by extending it the interest payments are going to put more money in the hands of bankers," he said.

The NDP on Monday presented its plan to lower hydro bills, and it included renegotiating power contracts they say have led to high costs and an oversupply of energy.

The government will also shift the Ontario Electricity Support Program for low-income customers to the tax base, rather than being funded by other ratepayers, the Star reported.

Wynne has previously signalled that more savings will be coming for rural and northern ratepayers, who face significantly higher costs than urban customers, and Thibeault has suggested that changes are on the way for time-of-use pricing.

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268047012

Our hydro hysteria generates hydro hypocrisy: Cohn

thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Martin Regg Cohn

Call it the 25 per cent solution - electrical and political.

That's how much your hydro bill will be reduced (www.thestar.com) by Premier Kathleen Wynne this year.

That also happens to be the percentage level her Liberal government has been reduced to in recent public opinion polls.

Rising rates and plummeting polls have jolted Wynne into an emergency response. And repentance.

Reaching for the political equivalent of a defibrillator, the premier is deploying a high-voltage electrical shock to revive her government on its deathbed. When it is formally released Thursday, her plan - first revealed by my Star colleagues (www.thestar.com) - will be dissed and dismissed, dubbed a shell game within a political game.

The critics will be right. But when a province falls victim to hydro hysteria (www.thestar.com) - wrongly accused of having the highest electricity rates in North America, and wrongly blamed for killing jobs - well, two wrongheaded criticisms can still make the critics sound right in the end.

Not so much a self-fulfilling prophesy as self-serving hypocrisy.

For we would be wise to abide by the old adage: Be careful what you wish for.

Ontarians have long bought into the dream that we could all buy low-cost electricity in perpetuity, as in neighbouring Quebec and Manitoba. Never mind that we lack their geography, with their bounty of cheap hydro power.

Lacking their abundant resources, we opted for resourcefulness: Financial engineering to pay for our nuclear engineering.

Now, the Liberals are dipping into the well again, buying off voters with their own money. Ontarians wanted cheaper hydro, and henceforth they shall have it.

But lower prices, as we learned long ago, come at a cost. Financial shortcuts have long-term consequences.

Consume now, pay later. It's the Ontario way.

Whether or not you think the latest plan is necessary, it's not necessarily nutty. Experts have told the government that most of our electricity infrastructure has a much longer useful life than the 20 years it has typically been banking on.

Like homeowners who grow weary of an overly-aggressive amortization that pays down their mortgage in 20 years instead of 25 - leaving them house-rich but cash-poor - ratepayers are looking for relief. The government's remedy is to smooth out the cost curve, stretching out the amortization of our electricity assets - nuclear and gas-fired power plants or wind turbines - further into the future, so that ratepayers don't have to bear as much of the burden upfront.

The Liberals are also shifting an electricity subsidy for low-income ratepayers onto the tax base, on the grounds that it's a social program, not a hydro program. In total, the government expects to reduce bills for all ratepayers by roughly 17 per cent.

And as previously announced (www.thestar.com) , they are rebating the 8-per-cent provincial portion of the much-hated HST on electricity, as demanded by the opposition over the years. Taken together, it hits the psychological hurdle of a 25-per-cent drop in hydro bills.

Will voters buy it? Or grumble about being bought off with their own money?

Urban residents who barely noticed their hydro bills - internet and mobile bills are rising faster - will wonder about the windfall. Rural ratepayers who complain about higher delivery charges probably won't be pacified.

Will hydro's high price points remain a talking point, right up to the next election in 2018? Or will this perennial issue fade away, as it has in previous years, now that the Liberals have cauterized the electrical burn?

Rightly or wrongly, the Liberals realized they couldn't do nothing. Unlike the Progressive Conservatives under opposition leader Patrick Brown, who have said nothing about how they would reduce hydro bills (beyond overstating the alleged costs).

The New Democrats pre-empted the government earlier this week with a quickie plan of their own to reduce hydro bills even more - by up to 30 per cent. Their proposal came only after years of conspicuously avoiding any concrete solutions beyond an HST holiday (they keep counting on Ottawa to forgive the rest of the tax).

A more valid criticism is that the Wynne government is merely deferring costs, not cutting them. Fair point, though the usual targets - renewable energy, cancelled gas-fired power plants, and nuclear rebuilds - are not quite the culprits that critics love to lambaste (And in fairness, the Liberals have dialled down some of the more costly green energy (www.thestar.com) programs in recent years).

Like all three major parties in government, the Liberals are guilty of their fair share of blunders - notably what I've called the stealth privatization of power plants over the years, and the sell-off of Hydro One. But the real reason rates rose so rapidly is that the Liberals rebuilt a crumbling electricity infrastructure, and tried to pay down the hated debt retirement charge (www.thestar.com) - both inherited from the Tories.

Eventually, the bills come due and repairs become overdue. By and large, the big cost increases of the past decade can't simply be wished away - until election day.

If you're a voter dreaming of paying less for hydro, your wish may soon come true. For better or for worse.

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

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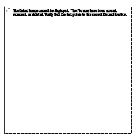

268049086

Will Kathleen Wynne's last-ditch hydro fix just add to the mess?; Wynne's haste on rates likely too late for 2018 vote, and plan has possible negative long-term effects

theglobeandmail.com - Wed Mar 1 2017, 9:49pm ET
Byline:ADAM RADWANSKI

Kathleen Wynne's Liberals are frantically trying to make up for lost time in addressing public fury over soaring hydro bills heading into next year's Ontario election.

But if not too little, exactly, the governing party's new-found urgency on the matter may very well be too late - both to help it recover from its dismal poll numbers, and to provide the province with a serious solution to a pricing problem decades in the making.

Courtesy of a plan brought before provincial cabinet on Wednesday, the Liberals are set to claim that residential hydro bills will soon be fully 25 per cent lower than this time last year. To achieve that, they have settled - in addition to a rebate of the 8-per-cent provincial sales tax announced last fall - on a "smoothing out" of energy costs that stretches costs of power-generation contracts over a longer period than the contracts currently allow.

It's not a crazy idea, in theory. In an op-ed published earlier this week in The Globe and Mail, approvingly cited by a source in the Premier's office, a quartet of professors from Ivey Business School made a reasonable case that the useful lifespans of generation assets such as wind turbines and gas-fired power plants - on which Ontario utilities have spent billions of dollars over the past decade - will exceed contracts that are typically for 20 years. So it makes sense, the authors argued, to try to spread some of those contracts' costs to after that 20-year period - possibly by offering generators with existing contracts the opportunity to bid on new, longer ones.

But while reopening the contracts might have been an enticing option for the Liberals if they had moved on it sooner, it would not fit their political needs now. They need savings to be felt by ratepayers before the 2018 campaign starts and protracted negotiations would not allow that. And a government that spent years mired in a scandal involving the sudden cancellation of power-plant contracts around a previous election knows full well - and is constantly reminded by the energy sector - that it would have to move extra-cautiously around any attempt to change the terms of existing deals. That leaves the government, the source acknowledged, embracing a second option raised by the Ivey professors: using public funds to subsidize rate cuts by energy utilities, until those expensive existing contracts have expired.

In the op-ed, even this latter option sounds fairly logical. Subsidies would be designed to equal the difference between annual amortization under the current contracts, and what that amortization would be if calculated according to assets' actual lifespans. It would purportedly be an easy cost for the government to absorb even if it contributes to a budget deficit, given historically low interest rates, and somewhere in the 2030s, money would be returned to provincial coffers because then the amortization gap would work the other way.

But as the actual policy is rolled out by the province, the timing and early messaging - as well as history - offer ample cause for skepticism.

A party facing imminent defeat, and already flailing about trying to make pocketbook angst go away (most obviously with a recent about-face on the merits of road tolls), does not seem ideally suited to crafting a sophisticated model to flatten costs over decades.

The 25-per-cent figure - in which a few other surprise mechanisms to come are also supposed to play a role - does not provide reassurance. Maybe the government was happily surprised to find that its proposed measures arrived at such a nice, round number, but it might also be that it is trying to make complicated policies fit an arbitrary target.

And if you're familiar with past intersections of Ontario's elections and its energy system, the echoes are eerie. There is a long, sorry record of governments trying to buy goodwill (or ease anger) by trying to manipulate hydro prices - both Bob Rae's NDP and Ernie Eves's Progressive Conservatives doing the system huge damage with rate freezes as they unsuccessfully tried to hold office.

The Liberals have flirted with similar stuff for years, with Dalton McGuinty (in 2010) and Ms. Wynne (last year) using public funds to pay for energy rebates - a somewhat problematic premise, since it uses money collected from all taxpayers to the particular benefit of those who consume the most electricity. But what they're now pitching is a more structurally significant attempt to change the way energy is priced.

At this point, they might feel they don't have much choice. Overdue but expensive investment in the energy infrastructure during Mr. McGuinty's first term, followed by a disastrous gamble on green energy in his second, has given way to public demand for something dramatic to be done about prices that have risen wildly above inflation. And the opposition parties - the NDP already making a dubious promise of a 30-per-cent rate cut, the PCs for now playing coy - will inevitably make it sound all too easy to turn back the clock to when power was relatively cheap.

But if one of those parties wins office, it will at least have to live with the consequences of its own decisions. The worry with the Liberals, who might be too late now to atone with voters for past mistakes no matter what they do, is that their last-ditch clean-up attempt will just add to the mess that the next government wades into.

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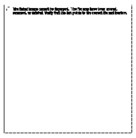

268035620

Plan to cut hydro rates is a reasonable response to real pain: Editorial

thestar.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Star Editorial Board

Premier Kathleen Wynne's move to cut Ontarians' hydro bills by 25 per cent should offer welcome relief both for ratepayers and for a provincial government that has been wearing this issue like a millstone.

While the cut is far too long in coming, Wynne deserves credit for acting decisively after she took personal responsibility last fall for rising public anger over hydro rates, calling it her own "mistake."

The move, apparently approved by cabinet on Wednesday, is a constructive response. It's better thought-out than the New Democratic Party's plan to cut hydro prices, and miles ahead of the few unhelpful ideas put forward by Progressive Conservative Leader Patrick Brown.

The Liberals, according to exclusive reporting by the Star's Robert Benzie and Rob Ferguson (www.thestar.com) , plan to stretch the financing costs of the wide array of electricity generation contracts that Ontario has signed over the years to pay for nuclear reactors, natural gas-fired generators, wind turbines, solar panels and hydroelectric power.

This is similar in principle to arranging for lower mortgage payments in exchange for taking a longer time to pay. While the move doesn't erase the miscalculations and bad deals made over the years, it should achieve two goals - making sure the lights stay on while bringing real relief to consumers.

True, the rate cuts amount mainly to rejigging how we'll pay, not the total amount. While Ontarians will pay less now, we will still pay the same amount eventually and it will take longer to dig out from under the legacy of bad decisions made by governments of all political stripes over many years.

Nevertheless, taking longer to pay is a reasonable response to real pain. It's consistent with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault's comments in the legislature that the much-needed rebuilding Ontario's electrical system "actually came at the expense of many families."

Recognizing that modernizing the system costs money and that the burden should be shared reasonably puts Ontario's energy policy on a better track. It's the right approach to improving infrastructure: we constantly repair and improve our roads, for example, but we stretch the cost over time to make it more affordable. And we expect all taxpayers, not just drivers, to shoulder the cost.

It's a sensible approach that is sadly missing from both NDP and Tory proposals to deal with high hydro rates.

The NDP's 13-page plan misses the mark by a wide margin. It heads in the wrong direction by calling for the unelected Ontario Energy Board to have a wider mandate to review political decisions on energy, which is the job of voters.

The NDP also relies on asking the federal government to stop charging its 5-per-cent portion of the HST on hydro bills. (Wynne's Liberals have already removed the 8-per-cent provincial portion.) Does NDP Leader Andrea Horwath truly believe the federal Liberal government would come to the rescue of her party on this issue?

The other area where the NDP misses the point is in linking the privatization of Hydro One to hydro bills. While there are good reasons to question the government's selloff of the utility and how that's being done, when it comes to rates privatization is a red herring. Rates began climbing and bad decisions were made while Hydro One was entirely in public hands; there's no evidence that keeping it public would make this particular problem any better.

As for the PCs and Brown, their response to the real hardship many Ontarians have suffered from their bills is just sad. Brown has repeated the lie that Ontario's hydro rates are the highest in North America. They're not and he knows it.

He criticizes the plan because "the money needs to come from somewhere." Indeed it does - but so what? Unlike Wynne, he won't say how much he would lower rates. His party promises a plan next fall. That's far too late; the debate is going on now.

The weak response from the PCs is inadequate for people who aspire to lead Ontario. While Wynne's plan may not be perfect, it's a step in the right direction.

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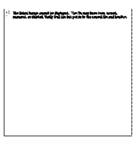

268039576

Chris Selley: Three parties are selling cheaper hydro. Will Ontarians buy?

National Post - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: Chris Selley

In eighteen months, the Ontario Liberals will attempt their moonshot: re-election, even after all they've done. At the moment, it seems nothing will hinder them in that endeavour - apart from all the other stuff - so much as the remarkable surge in

Ontarians' hydro bills in recent years. And so, hydro customers of Ontario, your votes are now up for auction.

Would 25-per-cent-off tickle your fancy? According to a Toronto Star report on Wednesday, that's what the Liberals are aiming for with a plan to refinance the government's contracts with electricity producers - essentially paying less every year, but for more years. The 25-per-cent would reportedly include the eight-per-cent "rebate" - which is to say a taxpayer subsidy to ratepayers - announced in September.

Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault would neither confirm nor deny any specific plans on Wednesday, but a recent analysis by researchers at the Ivey Energy Policy and Management Centre at Western University suggested such a plan might save the province $1.7 billion in energy-production costs in 2018, or about eight per cent of the total.

Of course, refinancing your house doesn't make your house cheaper. "The quid pro quo is that consumers would pay more for electricity in the future to reflect the longer amortization period," the researchers wrote in the Globe and Mail, "specifically during the years beyond the end of the original contract and up to the useful life of the generation assets."

Feh. Surely we can do better than that. Do I hear 32 per cent? That's what the NDP is flogging, along with its special orange sauce. "(The Liberal) plan is to help bankers; our plan is to directly help people," deputy leader Jagmeet Singh told reporters Wednesday. (Hey there, friend - don't you hate bankers?)

It's a very NDP plan. In addition to the standard poking around in contracts in search of escape clauses and cheap methods of renegotiation or cancellation, they want the province to sell electricity the way it sells alcohol - that is, they think customers should pay the same for the juice no matter how much it costs to get the juice to them. Thus the 32-per-cent discount would benefit rural Ontarians, who currently pay more for juice transport; the average reduction would be 17 per cent.

Being New Democrats, they also dislike the supply-and-demand component of the current system: they would scrap peak and off-peak pricing, because it stresses out senior citizens, moms and other sympathetic stock characters and their stock families. They would buy back the portions of Hydro One we've already sold off, both for its profits and on principle, and consider shutting down the Pickering nuclear plant ahead of schedule in the face of huge surplus supply. They would ask Ottawa to knock the HST off electricity, in exchange for ... well, how about a commemorative plaque? And they would strike a panel of penny-pinching experts to find yet further lucrative savings, because they're always in the last place you look.

Related

Kelly McParland: Kathleen Wynne tries to outrun her own 'suboptimal outcomes' with Magical Re-election Show (news.nationalpost.com)

Rex Murphy: In Ontario, the taxpayers sustain Wynne's green energy perpetual motion disaster (news.nationalpost.com)

Ontario PCs close in on majority territory as Wynne's support continues to plummet, poll says (news.nationalpost.com)

The Progressive Conservatives, as yet, have nothing to offer you except a guarantee that an offer is coming. If either of their opponents' plans (as reported in the Liberal case) were particularly impressive, one might say they had missed the boat. As neither of them is, one might simply hope the Tories are taking their time to come up with something better - which might well not mean bigger.

The chances are pretty slim that salvation awaits via any plan short of legislating contracts out of existence. Surely Liberals have been desperate enough for long enough to pick and eat any low-hanging fruit. That's not to say your hydro bills mightn't go down - and soon. The Liberals are desperate, and when the Liberals are desperate they make things happen. But a lower hydro bill isn't much use if Queen's Park is taking the money out of your other pocket while you're turning the air conditioning back up.

If the election were tomorrow, this would all be fair enough: it's a policy debate on an important issue. But the Liberals will want to be able to point to cheaper hydro bills, not just promise them, and they have time to make that happen. Thibeault insists he wants to "get it right" - but it depends what "it" is. The last circumstance in which you want any government crafting policy on a tricky file is in a panic, tied with pink eye in the polls and with an election looming. Knowing what the Liberals specifically are capable of in that circumstance, and on this very file, one worries short-term relief might come at even greater long-term cost.

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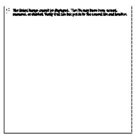

268063409

Stop - The Price Is Too High; Thibeault urged to kill wind, solar energy program

Toronto Sun - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Antonella Artuso
Page: A5

An Ontario hydro distribution company is saying enough already with the high-priced wind and solar energy the province keeps buying despite a glut of electricity in the system.

The board of Niagara-onthe-Lake Hydro released an open statement Wednesday that asked Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault to kill the FIT 5 program - the latest round of renewable energy procurement - before the contracts are signed.

NOTL Hydro says the program guarantees 20-year contracts to wind and solar energy suppliers at above-market rate prices.

"We are not against renewable generation, we are against the method of how the province is procuring it," Jim Ryan, chairman of NOTL Hydro, said in the statement. "We cannot continue to add $30 million here and $20 million there to the overall cost and not realize that this is going to have a cumulative impact. Today's high prices are evidence of this."

The distribution company says it analyzed the financial impact of FIT 4, the last round of mostly solar renewable procurements, completed last June.

"Ontario electricity consumers will be paying an estimated $27.4 million a year over and above the already high cost of electricity in Ontario and will contribute another $61 million to the Global Adjustment each year," the statement says.

"The generation being built under these contracts, predominately solar, will begin producing electricity in 2017 and 2018 and will continue to generate high-priced electricity over the 20-year life of these contracts."

The board went on to say that it believes in renewable energy but argued it should be procured based on the "market demand at commercially acceptable prices."

A response from Thibeault's office was not immediately available.
aartuso@postmedia.com

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268063485

Liberals will raise your taxes to offset hydro costs

Ottawa Sun - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Patrick Brown
Page: A9

Kathleen Wynne and her Liberal government will try to make you believe they are fixing this electricity mess, but every time they touch it, they make it worse.

Don't be fooled by them: The Liberals will pay for their scheme by raising your taxes, and your electricity rates will increase again the moment they have the chance.

Their plan will only end up punishing Ontarians by putting us on the hook for their colossal failure that has led to skyrocketing electricity prices.

Ontario once had some of the most competitive electricity rates in North America. We've plummeted to having some of the highest and fastest rising.

The cost of electricity when the Liberals took power was 4.3 cents. It's now gone up to 18 cents, or in other words a 400% increase - the fastest rising rates in North America.

Don't forget, it was this Liberal government that caused this problem. They introduced the Green Energy Act, otherwise known as the Bad Contracts Act.

The global adjustment, otherwise known as Wynne's mismanagement cost, was also introduced by Liberals and has magnified the cost of hydro to new heights. This pays for the cost of their bad contracts. Since 2009, we've given away $6 billion in surplus energy as a result, to places like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York.

It has only been the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party to call for the repeal of this act. We will not sign any more of these contracts, and we will dig into each one of these contracts for exit clauses.

We will also review and rein in exorbitant executive salaries in the electricity sector, which the Liberals defend while Ontarians suffer financially month to month. The

Hydro One CEO should not make $4 million a year.

And we will stop the fire sale of Hydro One because it means we will lose control of rate increases in the future.

Wynne admitted that she made this mistake last fall, and this was echoed last week by her energy minister.

However, they never felt a hint of regret when they collected enormous political donations from wind and solar companies. Between 2009 and 2016, the Wynne Liberals shelled out 30 green energy contracts to companies that collectively have donated $1.3 the province w million to the Ontario Liberal Party.

Ontarians cannot be fooled: The Wynne Liberals will negotiate more of these bad, overpriced wind and solar contracts with their donor friends, and it will come at a huge cost to taxpayers.

Your rates will go up again. Your taxes will go up.

The Liberals don't have a history of listening to ratepayers, or our auditor generals, on this issue. They snubbed the auditor general in 2011 who warned these bad contracts would rapidly escalate electricity rates. They snubbed the auditor general in 2015 who pegged the cost to Ontarians at $37 billion in overpayments, with a price tag of $133 billion by 2032. And they have snubbed every ratepayer who has been suffering with hydro bills for years.

The Liberals had a chance to exit the very costly Samsung wind energy contract and save taxpayers billions, but instead rejected that option.

Ontario's energy system is not the envy of North America. We are the laughing stock, and businesses across ill tell you why this is damaging our province.

Don't let them say to you that this is a commitment to green energy. We aren't running our hydroelectricity plants at full tilt, including Niagara Falls and plants in Northern Ontario. This is very reliable and underused green energy.

The Wynne Liberals are only concerned about this crisis because they want to get re-elected in 2018. This is why they didn't act years ago.

Brown is the leader of the Ontario PC Party

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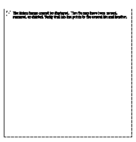

268032792

Reevely: Cutting today's hydro bills, for today's votes, with tomorrow's money

ottawacitizen.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline: David Reevely, Ottawa Citizen

"Smoothing out" the costs of Ontario's energy system by taking longer to pay off generating contracts, as the Ontario Liberals are reportedly planning to do, means borrowing from the future to make ourselves more comfortable now.

The Toronto Star reported the government's plan Wednesday morning (www.thestar.com) , citing unnamed sources speaking before Premier Kathleen Wynne had made sure her cabinet was on board. "We will make sure that we have immediate relief for Ontarians in the very near future, but no decisions have been made at this time," Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault told the legislature.

As described, the plan is like refinancing a mortgage, taking longer to pay it and increasing the total amount you owe in exchange for smaller monthly payments now. A typical power contract pays off the generating company's capital expenses, plus operating costs and profit, over 20 years. If that contract pays the company 10 cents a kilowatt-hour, maybe we can extend it a decade but lower the price to eight cents a kilowatt-hour.

Yes, we're locked in for 10 more years and the contract will be worth more to the company in the end, but boom: we've cut the immediate cost by 20 per cent.

The idea makes political sense. After 15 years in power the Liberals will be in rough shape for 2018 no matter what, but no single thing hurts them more than the monthly bills we get full of cryptic arithmetic that always seems to add up to higher and higher numbers. Extending contracts is essentially a finance gimmick but it would make an immediate difference.

When he was the energy minister, Ottawa West-Nepean MPP Bob Chiarelli would talk about how we were suffering through a temporary bulge in our hydro bills. This was misleading, in that the bulge would never narrow again, but at least years of eye-bugging increases would be followed by relative stability. We'd get a lot of expensive things done, like upgrading those nuclear plants and replacing dirty coal-fired generating stations with windmills and gas, and then ease up.

A Liberal policy of overspending on green-energy contracts is part of the problem. Mis-estimating demand and buying more generation than we need is part of the problem. But also, and more than anything else, Ontario's power system got rickety because of decades of underspending on both generating plants and transmission wires and we had to make up for it. Even worse, the Ontario Hydro of old undercharged customers even for its underinvestment, so there was a gap to make up there, too.

The Ontarians of the past stole from the Ontarians of 2005 and the Ontarians of 2005 decided not to do the same to the Ontarians of 2030. Now the Ontarians of 2017 are saying whoa, whoa, whoa, let's not go overboard on the virtue here.

This is, for better or for worse, a plan. Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown experimented with calling the posited Liberal move a "shell game" Wednesday. "The member opposite hasn't produced any plan whatsoever," Finance Minister Charles Sousa shot back, gleefully.

As policy, well, it's not necessarily bad. It doesn't mean subsidizing the hydro system with tax dollars, which really would be a shell game. It doesn't mean tearing up contracts, which leads to spending money on nothing. There's a plausible argument for it.

We're spending $26 billion to refurbish nuclear plants at Darlington and on the Bruce Peninsula, a truly massive amount of money that's supposed to extend the lives of the reactors involved by 30 to 35 years. But the standard is to cover the expenses over 20 years. That's prudent and cautious: If the reactors need to be shut down early for some reason, at least they'll have been paid off.

Extending the paying-off period so it more closely matches the time we expect to use the reactors means deciding the cushion isn't worth the price we're paying for it. This isn't crazy but it is a choice with consequences.

It means taking a chance that 20 years down the line we'll still be paying for power plants we don't want. Twenty years is a long time. Maybe breakthroughs in conservation or solar technology will have changed everything. Maybe we'll have perfected cold fusion. In that case, the government's move now won't be like extending a mortgage on a house we want to live in, it'll be like making payments on a car that's gone to the scrapper.

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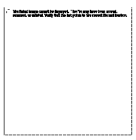

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Bruce Power Life-Extension Program ranked top infrastructure project of 2017

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 2 2017 Page: A3

The Bruce Power site is about has become an even busier place since its Life-Extension Program began on Jan. 1, 2016.

On Feb. 21, Top 100 Projects (top100projects. ca/2017filters/) ranked Bruce Power's Life-Extension Program number one on its Top 100 Canada's Biggest Infrastructure Projects list for 2017.

The $13 billion private investment, which will ensure Bruce Power provides 30 per cent of Ontario's electricity at 30 per cent less than the average residential price into the future, will be made over the next two decades. It will create and sustain 22,000 jobs directly and indirectly across Ontario annually, inject $4 billion into the province's economy every year, and ensure lowcost, reliable and carbonfree nuclear electricity is available for families and businesses.

The site's Life-Extension Program, which is currently underway and remains on time and on budget, will ensure Bruce Power's units will operate through to 2064, said Chris Trahan, Bruce Power's Vice President, Project Management & Construction, Projects and Field Services.

"Our current Life-Extension Program will see strategic private investments in our units over the next decade, which will allow them to operate until their scheduled Major Component Replacement (MCR) Projects begin," Trahan said.

"MCR begins in Unit 6 in 2020, and the important maintenance investments we make over the next three years, as well as the important planning milestones we achieve, will ensure we're well positioned for success."

It is an honour to be recognized by Top 100 Projects as Canada's largest infrastructure investment program, Trahan added.

"The Bruce Power Life-Extension Program will benefit the next two generations of Ontarians by providing low-cost electricity to families and businesses, creating skilled jobs and cleaning the air we breathe."

Learn more about the Life-Extension Program at www.brucepower.com/about-us/life-extension.

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268068916

OPG job losses rumoured; Mayor attempting to confirm with energy minister

North Bay Nugget - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Jennifer Hamilton-Mccharles
Page: A3

North Bay Mayor Al McDonald has been trying to confirm if employees at Ontario Power Generation's North Bay operation are to be transferred to other operations in Ontario.

McDonald said he's been working on this for about four weeks, but hasn't been able to confirm the rumour.

"We need the province to do the right thing and keep the jobs in North Bay," he said.

There are about 60 employees at the North Bay operation, at 133 Elroy Rd.

"No one is talking," McDonald said. "I called their (OPG) director of corporate relations, but he refused to give me any information and they would not tell me anything."

McDonald also contacted Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault.

"He had not heard anything either, but he was going to check and get back to me."

Calls and emails sent to OPG were not returned to The Nugget.

Thibeault also did not respond by deadline.

OPG's Central Hydro Plant Group is headquartered in North Bay and has facilities at a number of locations in the region and service centres in North Bay, Gravenhurst, Campbellford, and Sudbury, according to its website. Some of those facilities have been part of the local community for more than 100 years.

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268063725

Hydro costs stifling quail operation; Electricity costs skyrocket at local farm despite consumption being reduced by 40 per cent

The Chatham Daily News - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: Ellwood Shreve
Page: A1 / Front

Over the past 12 years, Scot and Cheryl Ryckman have developed an ideal niche operation with their quail farm in this east Chatham-Kent community.

It's the only one of its kind in Canada that produces quail meat and the demand is high from among their clientele across North America.

In fact, things were going so well the Ryckmans invested in a production plant in 2015 to make it a "start to finish" operation that produces more than two million quail annually.

But skyrocketing electricity costs have not only made operating their business, Nipissing Games Farm, a challenge, it's also stifled a chance to expand the operation.

Scot Ryckman said they have the opportunity to double their production, but the current cost of hydro is keeping them from making that investment.

They estimated their monthly hydro costs would go from $1,400-$1,500 to about $4,500 with the new production plant, not the nearly $7,000 their latest hydro bill came in at. The bill is also $600 above their February 2015 bill.

Ryckman said most of the increases are due to high delivery charges and global adjustment fees on the bill. The delivery charge for their last bill was $2,048 and the global adjustment fee was $2,588 for a total of $4,636.

He said they recently spent $30,000 to install "frequency drives," which is a three-stage system for motors to run at peak efficiency that resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in consumption for the operation. "But there's been no change in the bill," he said. And so the Ryckman's have raised the price for their quail meat.

"Without the increase in the sale price. .. there would be no profit. We'd be in a loss situation," Ryckman said.

Cheryl Ryckman said they have raised the price to $125 per case of 72 birds from $120, beginning June 1.

That hasn't sat well with customers, that range from the U.S. Eastern Seaboard to Texas and California, as well as British Columbia and Quebec.

Cheryl Ryckman said demand is so great for their product, especially among various immigrant populations where quail is a diet staple, that they are sold out of birds until mid-June.

be making a profit," she said.

The Ryckmans' operation has 35 full-time employees in the processing plant, four full-time employees on the farm operation along with another 35-40 part-time positions for students hired to catch the quails to be processed.

Ontario NDP leader Andrea Horwath visited their farm on Wednesday as part of a tour to get firsthand stories about the impact of skyrocketing prices.

She said part of an NDP plan to get hydro costs back under control would be to bring Hydro One back under complete public ownership, to stem the impact privatization of the electricity system has had on rates.

"We've allowed our system to have more and more private profits built in," Horwath said.

She noted Manitoba and Quebec have kept their hydro systems publicly run and residents and businesses there are paying less than half of what Ontarians are paying.

"We have to have a system that's working for the people of Ontario."

Horwath said the NDP also plan to end time of use pricing, which peaks at above 18 cents a kilowatt-hour, to a flat rate of 10.3 cents per kilowatt hour, estimated to create a savings of 10 per cent.

The NDP plan also calls for eliminating the unfair delivery charge to rural and small towns and make it equal to the delivery charge paid by urban hydro customers.

Another aspect of the NDP plan calls for eliminating the over-production of hydro, which has resulted in high global adjustment prices as the province sells off excess hydro at cheap prices to neighbouring jurisdictions, which is subsidized by Ontario customers.

When asked what he thinks are the chances of seeing a significant drop in hydro rates anytime soon, Scot Ryckman, said, "I'm not real confident in anybody being able to get (hydro costs) back under control."

But, whatever political party is able to achieve this will get his support, he added.

The couple has recently been contacted by someone interested in buying their operation and moving it to the U.S. where the cost of electricity is cheaper.

They are proud of what they have built and have dreamed of their children taking over the business some day. But if selling is what they have to do to take care of their family, they say that's what they'll have to do. eshreve@postmedia.com @DailyNewsES

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268022083

Veridian Corporation, Whitby Hydro to Move Forward with Merger Evaluations, Oshawa PUC Not to Proceed

Marketwired - Wed Mar 1 2017

DURHAM REGION, ONTARIO--(Marketwired - March 1, 2017) - The CEO's of three leading Ontario utilities who are currently evaluating the benefits of a merger, namely Veridian Corporation ("Veridian"), Oshawa Power and Utilities Corporation ("Oshawa PUC") and Whitby Hydro Energy Corporation (Whitby Hydro"), have announced today that Oshawa PUC will be amicably withdrawing from further merger discussions. Both Veridian and Whitby Hydro have confirmed they are fully committed to moving forward with due diligence and review of a possible merger.

In late 2015, the respective leadership teams of Veridian, Oshawa PUC and Whitby Hydro began discussions to identify the potential benefits of a merger that would create value for all shareholders and customers, as well as position the combined entity for the future. Since that time, all parties have participated in rigorous business case analysis and valuations.

On March 1st, 2017, the parties jointly announced that Oshawa PUC had amicably withdrawn from future merger discussions and only Veridian and Whitby Hydro would proceed to the next stages of merger review.

"This is not uncommon in merger proceedings. Merger evaluations are designed to ensure all parties can deliver benefits to their respective shareholders and customers. Oshawa PUC has chosen to withdraw as they believe benefits to their shareholders and customers are not sufficient," said Michael Angemeer, President and CEO of Veridian Corporation.

In 2012, the Provincial government conducted a review of Ontario's distribution facilities and encouraged local utilities to drive efficiencies and find benefits to customers. Consolidation, or merging with other local utilities, was one pathway to achieve this if the right set of variables existed for all parties involved.

"It was an informative process and one that we were pleased to participate in together with our partners, Veridian and Whitby Hydro," said Ivano Labricciosa, President and CEO of Oshawa PUC. "We conducted a thorough review of the potential merger and for us, it was in the best interest of our customers and shareholders to withdraw at this time. We thank all of our stakeholders who contributed to this process and assisted with our investigation and we wish both Veridian and Whitby Hydro success in their ongoing evaluation of this merger."

Veridian and Whitby Hydro re-affirmed their commitment to the next phase in the process and stand by the prospective merits of the proposed merger.

"From our perspective, consolidation is a viable pathway to ensure that we can improve efficiencies, deliver safe and reliable service while also putting the customer first," said John Sanderson, President and CEO of Whitby Hydro. "Those are at the top of our list for core principles guiding this assessment." He also said that, "the merged company should also lead to an increased ability to participate in new business that will offset some of the risks of disruptive technology."

The core principles of the assessment also included ongoing municipal ownership and control, responsible and sound governance as well as diversification and growth.

"We look forward to next steps and to ongoing consultation with our communities. We set out to deliver benefits to all of our customers and shareholders and we look forward to delivering that result at the end of this process," said Angemeer.

More information on the proposed merger and upcoming opportunities for community consultation can be found at one of our dedicated websites.

About Veridian Corporation

Veridian Corporation owns and operates Veridian Connections, a subsidiary company that distributes electricity, generates power and provides energy services to more than 120,000 customers. The City of Pickering, the Town of Ajax, the Municipality of Clarington and the City of Belleville jointly own Veridian Corporation. The utility is the fifth largest municipally owned electric utility in Ontario. Veridian has a successful history of effective growth through two mergers and five acquisitions, and now serves nine communities east and north of Toronto more efficiently than any other large non-contiguous utility in Ontario. Veridian has a keen focus on reliability, customer communication and helping to lower customers' electricity bills through the delivery of innovative conservation programs and reasonable rates. Veridian not only contributes to local communities through industry leading financial returns, but also helps build stronger communities through the support of youth, health, economic development, education, the arts, the environment and the disadvantaged. Industry leading employee and public safety, environmental programs and a focus on employee engagement has created an environment that has attracted seven consecutive Canada's Greenest Employer awards and one Top GTA Employer award. Veridian has now diversified into renewable energy, and will be establishing other value added offerings for its customers

Please visit (learnmore.veridian.on.ca) />
About Oshawa Power and Utilities Corporation

Oshawa Power and Utilities Corporation (OPUC) is the holding company for a diversified group of four subsidiaries involved in energy distribution, telecom ventures, clean power generation and solar energy generation. Through its subsidiaries OPUC provides: safe, reliable and efficient electricity distribution services to over 57,000 customers; develops, constructs and operates clean and green energy generation assets in Ontario; and provides a reliable dark fibre optics communications network within Oshawa and the Region of Durham. OPUC is wholly owned by the Corporation of The City of Oshawa.

Please visit (learnmore.opuc.on.ca) />
About Whitby Hydro Energy Corporation

Whitby Hydro Energy Corporation is a holding company owned by The Town of Whitby. Contained within are two separate and distinct subsidiaries - Whitby Hydro Electric Corporation and Whitby Hydro Energy Services. Whitby Hydro Electric Corporation is an electricity distributor licensed by the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) to deliver electricity to homes and businesses in our service area of the Whitby, Brooklin and Ashburn communities. Our organization serves more than 41,500 customers.

Please visit (learnmore.whitbyhydro.on.ca) />
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268036670

Hamilton developer really digs geothermal technology

thespec.com - Wed Mar 1 2017
Byline:mmcneil@thespec.com

It's not the best economic climate for building condos with geothermal heating and cooling but developer Jeff Paikin says he's in for the long haul when it comes to using the technology.

Paikin's New Horizon Development Group is starting construction on the third phase of his City Square condo project downtown on Robinson Street, the 10th structure he has built in the Hamilton-Burlington area with geothermal energy rather than natural gas.

Geothermal heating uses pipes buried more than 200 metres deep to capture earth energy to heat or cool a building. The technology has been around for decades and proponents are hopeful it will become more widespread as government initiatives are rolled out in an effort to lower greenhouse gases.

Even without incentives, Paikin says, there is still a strong economic case for geothermal in condo projects.

"If the price of natural gas is super low like it is these days, it's about even. But if gas is super high, it is a huge saving," he said. "There is a capital cost upfront and some maintenance costs going forward but in the end, over a 20-year period, there are some pretty significant savings."

A big economic advantage is price consistency, he adds.

"We can tell you more than 20 years from now how much you will be paying for heating and cooling. It's fixed and known, which is comforting to people."

Paikin argues that natural gas prices most certainly will rise at some point, which would mean huge savings in heating and cooling costs for people not relying on it.

Few other developers in the Hamilton-Burlington area are using geothermal heating and cooling, says Stan Reitsma, head of Geosource Energy Inc. in Caledonia. Stanton Renaissance - has announced they'll incorporate geothermal heating and cooling at The Connolly, their condo project on James Street South.

Reitsma - whose company digs holes for geothermal projects across the province - estimates that only one per cent of existing buildings are using the technology.

"But we fully expect to grow significantly. With the Ontario Climate Action Plan, we see geo coming on very strong," he said.

The provincial plan, being rolled out in stages, will create incentives to increase the use of clean energy technology.

Reitsma, who is also vice-president of the Ontario Geothermal Association, has meetings scheduled with government officials to discuss possible ways to encourage developers to use geothermal in more projects.

Geothermal primer

What is geothermal heating and cooling?

It's a heat exchange system that uses the earth's energy deep below the surface, which remains constant at about 20 C, to heat or cool buildings and to help provide hot water.

How does it work to provide heat in winter?

Water that's circulated through pipes buried in the ground absorbs heat from the earth and carries it into the home. A heat pump inside the house concentrates thermal energy and transfers it to air, so it can circulate through traditional ductwork.

How does it work to provide cooling in summer?

Heat is extracted from the air in the house and transferred through the heat pump to the ground piping. The water solution in the ground loop then brings down the temperature in the house.

Is other energy required?

A small amount of electricity is needed for a refrigerant compressor, ground loop pump and fan.

What are the environmental benefits?

Fossil fuels are not used to produce heat-lowering greenhouse gases.

Even with electricity produced at a power plant to operate a geothermal system factored in, total emissions are far lower than with conventional methods.

(Information from the Geosource Energy Inc. website and Spectator files.)

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Clean nuclear will avoid billions in consumer cap and trade costs

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 2 2017
Byline: James Scongack
Page: A6

On Jan. 1, 2017, Ontario's new cap and trade program came into effect.

In a general sense, the program taxes operations that generate large volumes of greenhouse gases (GHGs). It then redirects the tax revenue to new investments meant to reduce GHGs. In its broadest sense, it places a value on carbon. Since this program has taken effect, we've been getting a lot of questions about what it means for Bruce Power and nuclear in general.

As a clean electricity producer, Bruce Power will not receive any of the proceeds from this program. We receive a fixed price for our electricity and will not financially benefit from this program. However, what cap and trade does do is further re-enforce the value of clean sources of generation, with the largest in Ontario being nuclear - about 60% of our electricity in 2016.

Bruce Power's continued role in the supply mix will avoid costs to ratepayers as the only possible replacement to nuclear output would be from fossil fuels such as coal or natural gas. We avoid millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases annually by generating 30% of Ontario's electricity at 30% less than the average price of power.

Avoiding millions of tonnes of greenhouse gases from Bruce Power nuclear means avoided costs for ratepayers under cap and trade.

In fact, according to a report released by the Asthma Society, between 2017 and 2064, the end-of-life of the Bruce Power units, clean nuclear, when compared to alternatives, will avoid between $12 billion and $63 billion in carbon costs that ratepayers would have to fund if this output was replaced by fossil fuels. This is based on a range of carbon pricing options as there is consensus by experts the cost of carbon will only increase.

Putting this into perspective, Bruce Power is spending $13 billion through our Life-Extension Program that will see our site operate through 2064.

While cap and trade is a widely debated issue, what is clear is that the clean nature of nuclear power will continue to have long-term value as a critical source of electricity that provides lowcost, stable prices first and foremost, and also keeps clean the air we breathe.

Sometime we think of environmental issues in the abstract around cost and GHG figures, like I just did above. However, let's never forget that thousands of Ontarians suffer from asthma and other respiratory conditions. Clean electricity from Bruce Power means fewer smog days, cleaner air and healthier communities. I met a young name named Matthew during our work with the Asthma Society who shared his story in one of our TV ads about what clean air means to him - that's more meaningful than any of these numbers, as he can now go outside in the summer and breathe.

This is something you can't put a price on, and something every Bruce Power employee is proud of.

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Free LED lights, low-flow showerheads? Alberta rolls out residential energy savings plan

CBC.CA News - Wed Mar 1 2017, 9:27pm ET
Byline:CBC News

Alberta is rolling out an energy savings program which will cover the cost of LED light bulbs, low-flow showerheads, smart thermostats and other cost savers ? including installation ? as part of a five-year, $645-million program funded by the province's carbon tax.

"This is about making sure Albertans can save money on their electricity and natural gas bills," Environment Minister Shannon Phillips told The Homestretch on Wednesday.

"These are services that are available in other jurisdictions that have energy efficiency programs, and Alberta is really just catching up."

The Residential No-Charge Energy Savings Program is open to homeowners and renters in the province and there are currently no limits, but that could change.

"We will take it as it comes," Phillips said.

"We have within the energy efficiency budget the funds available for this first round of programs, this is just phase one. In the longer term there will be other programs as were recommended to us by our energy efficiency panel."

The program is expected to be in full swing by April and registration can be done online or by phone.

Another element of the program is a rebate for the use of solar panels.

"It's a five-year program, the first two years are a rebate for 75 cents per watt. Those rebates will be available starting in mid to late April," Phillips said.

"There is quite a lot to do before you get to the point of having solar panels installed, so we really encourage people to download the checklist from the Solar Energy Society of Alberta."

With files from The Homestretch

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