Message

From: John Cannella [/O=IMO/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JOHN CANNELLA5E4]
Sent: 2017-03-09 6:19:58 AM
Subject: Today's News - Thursday, March 9, 2017

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Thursday, March 9, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

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Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault promises lower electricity bills by summer

Stoney Creek News - Wed Mar 8 2017
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Winnipeg Free Press - Thu Mar 9 2017
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The Pallister government is expected to introduce legislation today to create a Crown corporation tasked with achieving new targets for reducing electricity and natural gas use in the province. The new entity - to be known as Efficiency ...

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Governor Cuomo Announces Collaboration with Israeli Software Company to Provide First-of-Its-Kind Monitoring System for Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant

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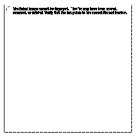
Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y., issued the following news release: Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a new partnership with Israeli software company mPrest to launch a first-of-its-kind, high-tech predictive tool that monitors the function of ...



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'Coal is in decline' and it looks like not even Donald Trump can pull the industry's long-term future out of the fire

Financial Post - Wed Mar 8 2017
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David Goldman/The Associated PressA coal miner in Welch, W.Va. The coal industry has an ally in Donald Trump but sector analysts predict over the long-term there is no competition between it and natural gas as a source of electricity. At ...

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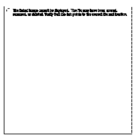

268558869

Bruce Power working to outline facts on Ontario electricity costs

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 9 2017 Page: A5

Electricity bills are the subject of a great deal of discussion and debate in Ontario right now, and Bruce Power takes seriously its role as a provider of lowcost electricity.

"We also believe we have a role to play in informing the public on electricity generation in Ontario and to convey the facts about clean, reliable and low-cost nuclear power," said James Scongack, Bruce Power's Vice President, Corporate Affairs & Environment. "We have a number of tools designed to further the conversation, and the latest addition is a video explaining the elements that make up your electricity bill."

The video, which can beon Youtube at 'Know Your Electricity Bill' outlines, in plain language, the three elements of an electricity bill, including distribution and transmission charges, regulatory charges and electricity itself.

The cost of electricity used generally represents about half of your bill, while the other charges make up the other half. In 2016, the average cost of electricity on household bills was 11 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh).

Bruce Power provided all of its electricity to the Independent Electricity System

Operator at 6.6 cents per kWh compared to solar (48 cents per kWh), gas (17 cents per kWh), wind (14 cents per kWh) and hydro (6 cents per kWh).

Residents of Bruce, Grey and Huron counties will be receiving more information about electricity pricing and how to understand bills through a brochure, which will be distributed to 50,000 homes across the region in the coming weeks.

For an interactive look at the cost and clean air benefits of the various electricity sources, the public is invited to try the Bruce Power iPad and iPhone Apps, which have calculators that allow users to see how adjusting the electricity supply mix would impact their bill and the environment.

In addition to the Cost and Clean Air Calculator, the Apps also feature a new Climate Change Calculator, which focuses on electricity supply mix considerations related to emissions targets to help Ontario meet its reduction goals by 2020 and 2050.

"The App speaks to what's important to Ontarians - facts on where their electricity comes from and what each electricity source costs, as well as understanding how a clean, modern electricity system is important to meeting our climate change goals," Scongack said. "Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, however, facts are facts and by sharing the facts in an innovative way, we can help further the energy dialogue."

The free App, which is available through the App Store, is part of Bruce Power's family of social media tools, which include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

To learn more about the App visit www.brucepowerapp.com or www.brucepower.com.

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268505900

BGIS CEO Launches New Building Energy Innovators Council (BEIC)

Marketwired - Wed Mar 8 2017

TORONTO, ONTARIO--(Marketwired - March 8, 2017) - The CEO of Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions (BGIS) (NYSE:BBU) (TSX:BBU.UN) Gordon Hicks, has announced the launch of the Building Energy Innovators Council (BEIC). The BEIC is an industry-driven initiative to accelerate the collaboration, innovation, and adoption of clean building technologies across Canada.

The Council will provide input to Federal and Provincial Governments related to the types of incentive programs and policies required to increase adoption of new energy efficient building technologies and renewable energy solutions, supporting the transformation of the built environment into the low carbon era.

The BEIC will support utilities and governing bodies such as the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO), with the promotion of their renewable energy and energy efficiency incentive programs and ensure they are effectively communicated industry-wide and adopted by owners and occupiers of Real Estate.

"Building technologies that improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions are in high demand and we recognize the importance of creating awareness of new, clean technologies and enhancing the economic viability for their adoption within the real estate sector." said Gord Hicks, CEO, Americas, BGIS and Chair of the BEIC. "The BEIC is made up of an innovative group of industry leaders, representing the information and communications technology (ICT), building services and construction, and renewables and clean technology sectors, committed to making this change happen."

In the first year of operation, the BEIC will consist of up to 25 Founding Members who are recognized leaders from across the industry including; General Contracting, Mechanical, Electrical, HVAC, Lighting, BAS Controls, Solar Power, Hydrogen Fuel Cell, Electric Car Charging, Energy Storage Solutions, ICT, Geothermal, Financial Services and District heating & Cooling. Current organizations holding a seat as a BEIC Founding Member include:

Brookfield GIS	Enwave	Morgan Solar
Brookfield Renewable	Forum Equity Partners	NRStor Inc.
Carma Industries	Geosource Energy	Philips Lighting
Cisco	MediaEdge	Schneider Electric
Ecobee	Mitsubishi Electric	Stantec
EnerNOC	Modern Niagara	University of Waterloo

"The BEIC looks forward to promoting innovative, energy efficiency and renewable solutions that will result in value for real estate owners and occupiers by decreasing their operating costs and reducing carbon emissions, while creating jobs and helping to build a robust, clean technology sector, and prosperous future economy," said Hicks.

Brookfield Global Integrated Solutions (BGIS) is a leading provider of real estate management services, including facilities management, project delivery services, energy and sustainability solutions, building performance management, workplace advisory and management, and real estate services. With a combined team of over 7,000 team members globally, BGIS inspires better business performance across its client's real estate portfolios by developing and implementing real estate and facilities management strategies. Globally, BGIS manages over 300 million square feet of client portfolios across 30, 000 + locations in North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and Asia.

Further information is available at www.brookfieldgis.com.

BGIS is a subsidiary of Brookfield Business Partners, a business services and industrial company focused on owning and operating high-quality businesses that benefit from barriers to entry and/or low cost production. Brookfield Business Partners is listed on the New York and Toronto stock exchanges (NYSE:BBU)(TSX:BBU.UN).

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Ontario Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault promises lower electricity bills by summer

Stoney Creek News - Wed Mar 8 2017
Byline: Kevin Werner

Alectra Utilities' customers could see a 27 per cent cut in their electricity costs by the summer under a proposed strategy announced by the Ontario government that promotes a 25 per cent reduction in hydro bills.

In addition, rural residents, along with small businesses, will also see "significant" savings once the Liberal's Fair Hydro Plan is passed by the legislature, said Ontario Minister of Energy Glenn Thibeault, who was at Alectra's Hamilton office March 8 for a news conference.

"It's will depend on everyone's bill, "said Thibeault. "(But) they will see the savings by the summer. This is the single largest electrical rate reduction in Ontario's history."

Max Cananzi, president of Alectra's electricity distribution company, said under the provincial plan Alectra customers could receive on average about a 27 per cent reduction on their bills, while small businesses may see on average a 28 per cent cut. He said on a monthly bill - Alectra will be sending monthly electricity bills starting May 1 to customers - from $115 to $200, the savings could be anywhere from $40 to $50.

On a sample bill distributed by Alectra officials, a monthly bill of $146.56 would be reduced to $105.77, a $39.77 reduction.

Cananzi said the savings from the provincial hydro plan is on top of the expected $40 on average savings Alectra has promoted to its customers over the next 10 years as the result of merging Horizon, PowerStream, Enersource and acquiring Hydro One Brampton, which was all completed last month.

The electricity savings comes from a number of initiatives by the Ontario government, said Thibeault including extending the province's repayment costs (identified on electricity bills as the global adjustment) from 20 years to 30 years, but will add $25 billion in interest expenses.

"Yes, it is going to cost us more over the 30 years," said Thibeault. "It is the right thing to do because it is fairer for everybody."

The Liberals argue since the electricity assets will be providing power to generations of people beyond the next 20 years, everybody should pay the cost for upgrading the service.

"It shouldn't be just our generation pay for assets that will be used by many, many other generations," said Thibeault. "So we decided as a government to extend the global adjustment payments for 30 years."

Thibeault, Hamilton Liberal MPP Ted McMeekin, and the Liberals, who have been under pressure from Ontarians to cut electricity costs, both acknowledged their government messed up when it signed long-term contracts for green energy producers.

Back in 2009 when the Liberals signed the contracts, "it looked like the right thing to do," said Thibeault. "These contracts led to a lack of competitive tension. And when you have a lack of competitive tension: higher prices. That's one of those mea culpas that we say we could have done better."

In addition, the provincial government has removed a number of social programs from the rate-based bill, such as the affordability fund for low-income customers and First Nations residents, and will now pay for the programs through taxes. The cost is projected to be about $2.5 billion over three years.

"We are in a good fiscal place to meet our deficit reduction targets," said Thibeault, in answer to a question if Ontario can afford to spend the money.

He said over the next four years Ontario's hydro rates will only increase by two per cent a year.

Electricity rates have soared over the last decade, increasing faster than inflation, and contributing to rising anger among the public, protests in Hamilton, and plummeting approval rates for Premier Kathleen Wynne.

Rural residents are projected to have even deeper electrical rate reductions under the Liberal plan. Last fall the Ontario government cut the delivery cost of electricity by $60 in the rural and northern areas. Under the Liberals plan there will be an additional $75 reduction.

"So these families will go from about $175 (in delivery costs) to $38 on average," said Thibeault.

McMeekin said the Liberals' proposal has received good reviews from his constituents with "calls ranging easily 12 to 1 in favour.

"There was a collective sigh of relief across my riding," he said.

Mayor Fred Eisenberger, who is one of Hamilton's representatives on the new

Alectra Utilities Ltd. board, applauded the Liberal electricity strategy, including eliminating the coal-fired plants

"Making that (savings) almost 50 per cent is beyond significant," he said. "That's wonderful."

Opposition parties have already criticized the Liberals' hydro plan as "kicking it" down the road.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said recently that "we have to stop the damage the Liberals are doing to our hydro system and tackle the root cause of the hydro problem."

Hamilton East-Stoney Creek NDP MPP Paul Miller said the Liberal plan "is disastrous" to residents and businesses.

The NDP unveiled its proposal to reduce electricity costs by up to 30 per cent by opting out of time-of-use pricing, cap profits for private power producers supplying energy to the grid, ask the federal government to eliminate its five per cent HST, and buy back shares in Hydro One to return it to public ownership.

Thibeault, who was appearing in Hamilton at nearly the same time Wynne was holding a roundtable discussion about hydro rates with non-Toronto media in Queen's Park, dismissed the NDP plan, calling it "more of an ideology than ideas."

He said the 30 per cent reduction is a number "that doesn't add up.

"Our plan will bring relief immediately as soon as we can get the legislation passed," he said. "They are talking about spending billions of dollars to buy back Hydro One. Doing that won't save a single cent on the ratepayers' bills."

Progressive Conservative leader Patrick Brown has yet to present his party's hydro plan.

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Hydro on layaway Wynne plan will cost children and grandchildren

Toronto Sun - Thu Mar 9 2017
Byline: Shawn Jeffords
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Premier Kathleen Wynne says her grandchildren will be paying for her plan to slash hydro rates today.

Wynne made the comments during a conference call with media from across the province. The premier has been aggressively selling the plan to cut hydro rates by 17% since it was announced last week. The cut jumps to 25% if a previous 8% HST rebate is included. But the price-tag of the rate cut - an estimated $25 billion in interest payments over the next 30 years - also came up again during the call.

Wynne acknowledged that the costs for instant relief from the rates comes at a price, and she doesn't regret it. The government plan re-amortizes current 20-year contracts with electricity generation companies over 30 years, lowering current payments but incurring substantial debt. But the assets covered in the energy deals will have a life beyond the contracts, she said.

"My grandchildren will be paying for these things," she said. "But they will be using them at the same time."

Wynne told reporters that she and her team explored a number of options to dramatically cut rates but none provided the kind of customer relief that her government wanted in the nearterm. That includes renegotiating green energy contracts which pay high rates to generation companies, she said.

"We actually had some of our business officials look at whether we could do it," she said. "There are hundreds of these things. They looked at some of the biggest ones. Even if we could have renegotiated them, it was going to be 53 cents off the bill here and 25 cents here. So, we weren't seeing the kinds of returns that we needed."

Wynne said she spoke with an academic who suggested the government simply legislate the deals away.

"He said you could just pass legislation and you could make them all null and void," she said. "Well, we'd be in court forever."

The premier also said that in the future, her government will approach green energy contracts differently. She pointed out that most of the previous deals were signed under her predecessor, former Premier Dalton McGuinty. sjeffords@postmedia.com

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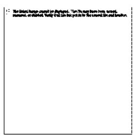

268546652

Hydro savings slightly higher in Hamilton

thespec.com - Wed Mar 8 2017

A provincial plan to lower hydro rates will lead to slightly lower rates in Hamilton than the rest of the province, says Max Cananzi, president of Alectra Utilities.

Residential fees will drop by 27 per cent, with small businesses seeing a 28 per cent decrease. That compares to the 25 per cent average the province says will result from a series of moves the Liberal government previously announced.

"We ran it through our models, and our demographics are a little different than the average provincial," said Cananzi.

Cananzi made that statement at a media conference that saw Ontario minster of energy Glenn Thibeault in Hamilton to spread word about his government's Fair Hydro Plan.

The government hopes to have its plan become legislation over the next few weeks with the costs savings going into effect in early summer.

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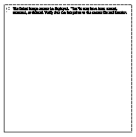

268576713

How hydro is viewed by Ontario politicians

The Chatham Daily News - Thu Mar 9 2017
Byline: Dan Gelinas Wheatley
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Andrea Horwath and the NDP have released their plan on how they would reduce monthly hydro bills. She came to Chatham-Kent to meet with upset Hydro One customers who have been burdened with gigantic increases in their monthly bills. It would be worth your time to read her plan.

Not to be outdone, Premier Kathleen Wynne also introduced a plan. But unlike the NDP's proposal, the Liberals will lower costs by passing them to our children, their children and their children's children. This was only done so the Liberals can finally look like they actually care.

This is ludicrous and is nothing but a shell game to gain support for the next election.

I, for one, do not want my children or grandchildren paying for the Liberals' scandals, their lack of leadership and their selling off of Hydro One.

Under Wynne, the Liberals view our hydro costs as nothing more than a mortgage. They want to re-finance the costs of contracts and increase the profits of banks as well as the private shareholders of Hydro One by supposedly lowering our monthly bills, but prolonging the length of time, paying into the lives of the next many generations.

I do not believe the people of Ontario agree with this plan and we need to let Wynne and the Liberals know this.

The Conservatives under the leadership of Patrick Brown isn't any better. They have not even taken the time to put out a plan. On March 3, Brown joined John Moore on NEWSTALK 1010, to talk about Ontario's energy system. Brown was unable to relate to the hurt being felt by all of us in Ontario because of these high hydro costs. He does not understand the fears single mothers are experiencing because they cannot feed their children the food they need to grow up healthy. The main reason is due to hydro bill three to four times higher than normal, limiting their purchasing power.

Brown has no idea what to do and will not change the ways the Ontario government is helping the Hydro One status quo.

The Conservatives will not jeopardize big businesses and their CEOs' ability to make more wealth. Brown will not give us the change we need to build Ontario back up again.

Wynne has lost all her credibility and what little trust she might have had. Her word doesn't mean diddly-squat.

As for her hydro plan, she has again tried the old shell game but we are too smart to fall for her trickery. Her goal is to keep her hydro family in a position of continued profits at the cost of Ontario families and future generations.

The June 2018 election will give us the chance to send a message to any provincial government who wants us to give up our ability to feed our households in order to pay for their mistakes and greed. It's time for change! Dan Gelinas Wheatley

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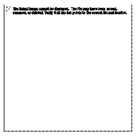

268557067

Reducing hydro rates seen as "a small step" toward long-term solution

Belleville News - Thu Mar 9 2017
Byline: John Campbell
Page: B4

Jeff Hamilton, chair of Trent Hills and District Chamber of Commerce and plant manager of Dart Cup in Campbellford, said he's "pleased" Premier Kathleen Wynne's government "has finally decided to address" the issue of "spiralling hydro rates."

However, his group and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will still push for change and insist the government "continue to look at ways to put a permanent cost reduction in place to ensure long-term sustainability," he said.

Re-amortizing Hydro One's debt over a longer period of time won't alleviate the concerns of businesses which include hydro rates that remain "a barrier for growth," Hamilton said.

"We need to get to the root causes of why we got to where we are today."

Hydro rates have a "severe effect on our costs" which can't be passed on entirely to customers in the price of its finished goods, he said.

Among the new measures announced last week that will see residential hydro bills cut by 25 per cent this summer was an expansion of the Industrial Conservation Initiative program.

"There were special incentives for industry before but the threshold for the amount of usage was quite high," MPP Lou Rinaldi said.

The threshold is being lowered from 1 mW to 500 kW to target small manufacturing and industrial consumers.

"The majority of businesses should qualify for some kind of reduction and that's based on time of use," as well as "other caveats," Rinaldi said.

Hamilton estimated the hydro bill at Dart's Campbellford plant has increased by 20 to 30 per cent.

There are other places in North America that "make things attractive to do business," he noted.

"There are no plans at this time for Dart to go anywhere," having been in the community for more than 30 years, but the reality is that while it "might be able to ... weather the storm, a lot of businesses can't."

The provincial government "recognized that Ontario has had enough" by reducing hydro rates even further but it "was a small step," Hamilton said. "We want to see long-term sustainability."

Trent Hills Mayor Hector Macmillan, who's been a fierce critic of the government's handling of the Hydro One portfolio, said its latest move "may perhaps be too little too late" as the Liberals prepare for next year's election.

Their motivation was "purely political, not that it wasn't also the right thing to do," he said. "If it wasn't so blatantly clear that Ontarians are pissed right off it never would have happened because this government has been that arrogant ... We have told them time and time again this is not affordable, it's not reasonable."

Macmillan cited "a list of boondoggles the last decade," including the decision to sell off 60 per cent of Hydro One to pay down debt and to fund infrastructure projects.

"When a corporation starts to sell off its assets off the end is near. What do you do for an encore?" he said, "especially when its a successful revenue generator. Now you've lost that income as well."

Rinaldi acknowledged the challenges being faced by companies as well as their "struggles" but he noted "Ontario is still the number one place (in Canada) for foreign investments" and has the lowest industrial and commercial taxes in the country.

"When you look at the big picture, things are not all that drastic," he said, adding: "Can we do better? Absolutely.

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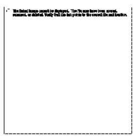

268558878

OPG aims to produce isotopes for deep space exploration

Kincardine News - Thu Mar 9 2017 Page: A8

Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and its venture arm, Canadian Nuclear Partners, are participating in a project to produce isotopes in support of deep space exploration.

Under the agreement, OPG would help create isotopes at the Darlington nuclear station east of Toronto that will help power space probes.

"This is a very exciting project," said Jeff Lyash, OPG President and CEO. "No pursuit pushes the boundaries of our scientific and technical limits like space travel. We are proud to have Ontario play a part, however small, in this most noble of human endeavours."

Lyash noted that OPG employs a similar isotope process in its Pickering units to create Cobalt 60 for use in the sterilization of surgical and medical supplies.

"This project is just another example of the broad economic and societal benefits of nuclear power. It provides clean, low cost power, it helps in the medical world and if successful can be a part of the next generation of space travel," he added.

Background Facts All deep space exploration projects are powered by plutonium

238 (Pu 238). These include the Voyager 1 and 2 (both launched in 1977 and now in interstellar space); the Curiosity Rover currently on Mars; and the Mars 2020 Rover.

Plutonium 238 is an isotope of plutonium. However, Pu 238 cannot sustain a nuclear reaction and therefore cannot be used as a fuel in a nuclear reactor or in a nuclear weapon. Production at the Darlington station will help boost a dwindling global supply of the material.

Plutonium 238 emits steady heat due to its natural radioactive decay. The heat generated decreases slowly in a highly predictable manner and can be harnessed into electric energy onboard a space ship. In addition, the heat keeps scientific instruments warm enough to function in space.

OPG is seeking approvals to have isotope production begin by 2020.

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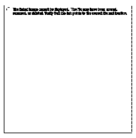

268564171

Province to create energy-saving entity

Winnipeg Free Press - Thu Mar 9 2017
Byline: Larry Kusch
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The Pallister government is expected to introduce legislation today to create a Crown corporation tasked with achieving new targets for reducing electricity and natural gas use in the province.

The new entity - to be known as Efficiency Manitoba - would take over responsibility for energy-savings programs now carried out by Manitoba Hydro.

The Progressive Conservatives promised to create such an entity during last year's election campaign. Its formation was recommended several years ago by the Manitoba Public Utilities Board (PUB).

Sources said Efficiency Manitoba will be directed to create policies and programs to reduce annual electricity growth by 1.5 per cent over the next 15 years. For natural gas, the savings target would be three-quarters of one per cent.

The government served notice Wednesday Crowns Minister Ron Schuler would introduce Bill 19 (The Efficiency Manitoba Act) today but refused to provide any details.

A spokeswoman for Premier Brian Pallister said she could not confirm or deny the information obtained by the Free Press.

The new corporation's main mandate would be to encourage the delivery of energy-efficiency services through a variety of mechanisms, including the private sector and NGOs, a source said. In addition, Hydro could bid to deliver services to some sectors, such as large industrial users.

With the creation of the new corporation, Manitoba Hydro would relinquish delivery of its popular Power Smart energy-savings program, which might be operated under a new name.

Hydro would foot the bill for the new entity, which would have a budget in the range of $60 million to $100 million per year, a source said.

It's anticipated some people working in Hydro's energy-savings unit would move to the new corporation.

Efficiency Manitoba would be supervised by a nine-person board of directors appointed by the provincial cabinet.

The new corporation would also be subject to third-party independent reviews, including by the PUB.

Every three years, Efficiency Manitoba would be required to present a plan to the PUB outlining the benefits of its programs and their costs.

The PUB would then make a recommendation to cabinet on whether the plan should be approved or modified. Once the plan was approved, funding would flow from Hydro.

In 2013, Philippe Dunsky, a Montreal energy consultant, told a PUB panel Hydro, once considered the industry leader for its Power Smart program, appeared to be taking a big step backwards in its plans for conservation savings over the next decade.

Dunsky said he had compared Hydro's 2010 savings through energy-efficiency programs to those offered by utilities in 48 states and four provinces. He also examined Hydro's planned savings for 2015 against utilities in British Columbia, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Vermont and Nova Scotia.

His analysis showed Hydro's 2010 performance was in the bottom half of North American utilities and its planned savings for 2015 was 70 to 88 per cent lower than the five comparison providers.

The previous NDP government later hired Dunsky to assist with the establishment of an arm's-length body to set and measure targets annually for the conservation of power in Manitoba. It envisioned the new entity as a Hydro subsidiary. However, the former government didn't follow through on the initiative.

Dunsky is said to have submitted a report to the NDP government in early 2015, but it was never made public. He wasn't available for comment Wednesday.

By the 2016 election campaign, then-premier Greg Selinger said the NDP was committed to keeping energy savings programs under Hydro's jurisdiction.

A poll conducted by Probe Research late last year designed in consultation with CUPE Manitoba found only 12 per cent of Manitobans favoured the creation of a new energy-efficiency agency to take responsibility for energy-savings programs, while 78 per cent said Manitoba Hydro should continue to run Power Smart. Another 10 per cent of respondents said they were unsure. The poll was considered to be accurate within plus or minus 3.1 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

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Governor Cuomo Announces Collaboration with Israeli Software Company to Provide First-of-Its-Kind Monitoring System for Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant

Targeted News Service - Mon Mar 6 2017 Page: n/a

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y., issued the following news release:

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a new partnership with Israeli software company mPrest to launch a first-of-its-kind, high-tech predictive tool that monitors the function of power transformers at New York State's Robert Moses Niagara Power Plant. The collaboration follows the Governor's unity and economic development trip to Israel where he held a working lunch with Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat and Israeli Business leaders. The new, innovative technology, developed by the New York Power Authority in collaboration with mPrest, will identify and prevent potential costly problems with the plants electrical transformers before they occur.

"New York's collaboration with Israel's mPrest on this cutting-edge technology is the latest example of how the strong economic ties between us are benefiting all New Yorkers," said Governor Cuomo. "By finding efficiencies at New York's Niagara Power Plant, which is one of the largest renewable energy sources in the nation, this new partnership will increase efficiency and reduce costs, while ensuring that New York remains at the forefront of technological innovation."

This new digital innovation enables the power plant to forecast potential problems with its electrical transformers with enough lead time so engineers can address equipment breakdowns or other issues. The technology prevents disruption in plant operations, avoids loss of power, and mitigates the associated negative economic impact. The software system uses data from the power plant's transformer and various sensors, advanced algorithms, historical performance data, and lab reports to assess the real-time "health" of the transformer's functionality.

mPrest, based in Petach Tikva, Israel, worked with NYPA to develop the new software for deployment on the Niagara Power Plant's transmission system. The cooperation between mPrest and NYPA began after a NYPA presentation at the Israeli Smart Energy Association in 2015. NYPA provided $975,000 for the project and mPrest approximately $1.3 million. The project was also supported with $900,000 in funding from the Israel-U.S. Binational Industrial Research and Development Foundation, which was established by the U.S. and Israeli governments in 1977 to support and promote industrial research and development that mutually benefits both countries, particularly in high-tech industries.

NYPA and mPrest are continuing to work together with the Global NY initiative and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to advance Governor Cuomo's Reforming the Energy Vision strategy. REV is designed to foster the development a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers and reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030.

Richard Kauffman, New York State Chairman of Energy and Finance said, "This innovation is a game-changer in power monitoring and problem diagnosis, and is yet another example of Governor Cuomo's REV strategy to make our power system both cleaner and cheaper for New Yorkers. The New York Power Authority and mPrest are setting the bar for others to rise to, and this technology shows how drawing new innovation into the power sector helps us lead in growing a clean energy economy."

Gil C. Quiniones, NYPA President and CEO said, "Our transformer system is a critical piece of our statewide power infrastructure, raising the voltage or 'electrical pressure' of power so that it can be transmitted long distance over the state's grid . Through our collaboration with mPrest, we can now accurately predict potential failures through better diagnostics and prognosis. As we actively pursue becoming the 'first completely digital utility in the country,' it is through cutting-edge technological innovation - like this one made possible with the intelligence, dedication, and cooperation of our partners across the ocean in Israel - that we have developed a unique, effective way of monitoring our transformers."

Natan Barak, President of mPrest said, "Our partnership with Governor Cuomo, New York State, and the talented, forward-thinking electricity engineers and experts at the New York Power Authority has resulted in the development and deployment of a first-of-its-kind, comprehensive monitoring and control system. In a record amount of time, we, together with NYPA, determined what was needed, and created an unprecedented, effective solution that will reduce operational risks, deter unplanned downtimey, and prevent expensive maintenance costs. I believe that this technology achievement will lead to broader partnership between Israel and New York State."

Before it was first operational in Niagara, the software was tested using historical performance data by the Electric Power Research Institute. EPRI conducts research and development relating to the generation, delivery, and use of electricity for the benefit of the public. NYPA is also looking at other applications for this technology and plans to install the system at additional locations.

About Reforming the Energy Vision

Reforming the Energy Vision is Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's strategy to lead on climate change and grow New York's clean energy economy. REV is building a cleaner, more resilient and affordable energy system for all New Yorkers by stimulating investment in clean technologies like solar, wind, and energy efficiency and generating 50 percent of the state's electricity needs from renewable energy by 2030. Already, REV has driven 800 percent growth in the statewide solar market, enabled over 105,000 low-income households to permanently cut their energy bills with energy efficiency, and created thousands of jobs in manufacturing, engineering, and other clean tech sectors. REV is ensuring New York reduces statewide greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030 and achieves the internationally recognized target of reducing emissions 80 percent by 2050. To learn more about REV, including the Governor's $5 billion investment in clean energy technology and innovation, visit www.ny.gov/REV4NY and follow us at @Rev4NY.

About NYPA

NYPA is the nation's largest state public power organization, through the operation of its 16 generating facilities and more than 1,400 circuit-miles of transmission lines.NYPA uses no tax money or state credit. It finances its operations through the sale of bonds and revenues earned in large part through sales of electricity. More than 70 percent of the electricity NYPA produces is clean renewable hydropower.

About mPrest

mPrest is a leading-edge provider of mission-critical monitoring and control technology and solutions. With a global track record including the command and control system for the renowned Iron Dome, mPrest "connects the dots", enabling the integration of multiple systems and sensors to optimize performance and dramatically reduce cost and risk. For more information on mPrest, visit www.mprest.com.

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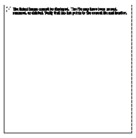

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'Coal is in decline' and it looks like not even Donald Trump can pull the industry's long-term future out of the fire

Financial Post - Wed Mar 8 2017
Byline: Geoffrey Morgan

David Goldman/The Associated PressA coal miner in Welch, W.Va. The coal industry has an ally in Donald Trump but sector analysts predict over the long-term there is no competition between it and natural gas as a source of electricity.

At their most generous, Las Vegas oddsmakers put the chances of Donald Trump winning the U.S. presidency at 25 to one. In other words, a long shot and one that likely mirrored any potential rebound by the country's thermal coal miner stocks.

Coal mining companies have faced a constant "onslaught" of new regulations in the months and years leading up to the most recent U.S. election, said Cloud Peak Energy Inc. chief financial officer Heath Hill, including Barack Obama's Clean Power Plan, which was designed to encourage cleaner burning natural gas and renewable power at the expense of coal-fired electricity.

"It was effectively a 'keep coal in the ground' campaign, where the NGOs were really well supported by the administration's coordinated regulation and implemented rules in a way that were very disadvantageous to the coal industry," Hill said.

But as we all know, Trump did overcome the odds and the effect on coal stocks became quickly apparent. Despite a recent pullback, Cloud Peak shares have risen 112 per cent in the past 12 months and the company is one of several thermal coal miners to post massive stock price rebounds.

TSX Venture-listed Corsa Coal Corp.'s share price rocketed 120 per cent over the same period. Similarly, Westmoreland Coal Co. is up 91 per cent and CNX Coal Resources has gained 122 per cent.

The thermal coal rebound following years of low coal prices, increasingly stringent regulations and big-name bankruptcies has been dramatic, but analysts don't believe it will last. They warn the industry is likely to continue losing market share to natural gas and renewable energy sources in the long term even with Trump in the White House.

The biggest factor driving coal out of the power market is the cost competitiveness of natural gas, not new regulations, said Jone-Lin Wang, vice-president of power and renewables at researcher IHS Markit.

"You're going to have a near-term tug of war (between coal and gas for market share), but, generally speaking, coal is in decline and that, even for Trump, is hard to reverse," she said.

U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) data show that electricity production from natural-gas-fired power plants surpassed coal-fired generation in the U.S. for the first time in late 2015.

Nevertheless, coal miners believe things are changing and big investment players are buying their story. For example, Toronto-based Connor, Clark & Lunn Financial Group Ltd. recently doubled its investment in Cloud Peak, to 1.8 million shares, and boosted its holdings in Westmoreland by 175,888 shares to bring the firm's position up to 251,991 shares, according to Bloomberg data.

Hill said Cloud Peak, which operates three mines in a coal-bearing formation underlying Wyoming and Montana, can compete directly with natural gas in the power market when gas prices range between $2.50 and $3 per gigajoule. He also said the coal business has fundamentally changed to supply power plants on shorter-term contracts.

"We need to have the cost structure so we slow the mine down when the demand isn't there and ramp it up when it is, so it's not a five-year, stable sellout of the coal business that it used to be; it's much shorter term and more nimble," he said.

The EIA's most recent forecast projects coal-fired power will claw back some its market share from natural gas even beyond 2020, and potentially as late as 2030, given that Obama's Clean Power Plan was blocked Feb. 9.

But Wang said IHS Markit expects coal fired-power production to drop as early as 2018, "because we are likely to see continual retirements of coal plants."

The problem for thermal coal miners is that their domestic market is disappearing. For years, coal-fired power accounted for 50 per cent of the total electricity output in the U.S., but it has since fallen to 30 per cent.

Luke Sharrett/BloombergA bulldozer operates atop a mound of coal at the Tennessee Valley Authority Paradise Fossil Plant in Paradise, Ky.

"We expect coal's share to further decline to below 30 per cent in 2020 and barely over 20 per cent in 2030," Wang said.

Coal-fired power plants across the U.S. have been retiring and new plants have not been built to replace the lost coal-fired generation capacity.

"Since Trump's election, we have seen coal retirement announcements actually accelerate rather than slow down," said Wade Schauer, Wood Mackenzie research director of power and renewables, in an email. "This trend is being driven by state policies and utilities looking beyond the next four to eight years."

A shrinking market in North America will force companies such as Cloud Peak to increasingly look toward export markets. Hill said Cloud Peak already has customers in South Korea, but is also eyeing growing markets in Japan and China.

Looking beyond Trump's initial four-year term in office, Hill said that investments in carbon capture and storage technology can help his industry be cleaner and stay competitive. The company is asking the new administration to consider a subsidy for carbon-capture technology in the same way the U.S. government currently subsidizes renewable power projects.

Related

Ottawa requires provinces to phase out coal by 2030, expected to affect taxpayers (business.financialpost.com)

Forget oil: Why natural gas could be poised for even bigger things in 2017 (business.financialpost.com)

Hill said he's hopeful that new technology can lead to either retrofits of existing coal-fired power plants or, potentially, the construction of more efficient plants.

But Wang said it's unlikely new coal plants will be able to compete with gas unless capital costs sharply decline.

"When it comes to dispatch, day in, day out, who gets to run based on short-run dispatch costs, then it's a tug of war between coal and gas based on current prices," she said. "When it comes to new builds, gas wins. Period."

The capital cost of a new gas-fired power plant is roughly US$1,400 per kilowatt of installed capacity, compared to US$3,500 per KW for coal-fired generation capacity.

"They're not close," Wang said, adding that gas plants can also be built faster than coal-fired power plants.

Wang expects natural gas prices to average between US$2.50 per GJ to US$3 per GJ between now and 2020 before increasing thereafter as coal-fired power plants are decommissioned and gas power emerges as the largest source of electricity in the U.S.

In the EIA's most bullish case, natural gas prices will average US$4 per GJ in 2020, US$8 per GJ by 2030 and close to US$10 per GJ by 2040.

"Having the coal plants there does put a bit of a constraint on the gas price," Wood Mackenzie's principal natural gas analyst Gabe Harris said. The retirement of coal plants, he said, could lead to a "longer, more intense" increase for natural gas prices.

"I think that's one of the dangers that people are seeing in retiring coal plants: there's going to be a spike," he said.

In the near term, however, the outlook for natural gas has recently deteriorated in North America. After a strong start to the critical winter heating season, NYMEX gas prices have tumbled from more than US$3.60 per GJ in January to US$2.82 this week as a result of warm weather in important markets such as Chicago and the U.S. northeast.

"It's been the warmest winter in my 20-year database," Harris said. "Between October and now, I estimate we've lost 4 [billion cubic feet] per day of gas demand."

The winter heating season has been weak, but GMP FirstEnergy analyst Martin King said in a March 6 research note that gas prices may have bottomed and he expects a "choppy" recovery over the course the year.

"At this stage, we do not rule out a US$3-plus per mmBtu handle in the near term, even with warmer than average weather," he said.

Some natural gas producers, including Calgary-based Painted Pony Petroleum Ltd., have scaled back spending plans as a result of the weaker gas outlook this year.

Such news gives thermal coal mining executives some reason to be bullish on their industry. In its fourth-quarter update, CNX Coal cited EIA forecasts that show coal-fired power plants will burn 41 million more tonnes of coal in 2017 than they burned in 2016.

"We believe this stronger coal burn and continued destocking should sustain improvements in coal supply-demand fundamentals for the upcoming periods," the company said.

Hill said the Powder River Basin, where Cloud Peak operates, once produced 400 million tonnes of coal per year, but it produced just 320 million tonnes last year.

"We think there's a case for it to produce between 325 million to 350 million tonnes, but not go back up to historical highs," he said.

Hill said Cloud Peak's goal is to be the lowest-cost coal supplier in North America, and maintain its own market share with utility companies even as natural gas and renewables create wider competition among power producers.

"This is a very competitive fuel source that utilities have an economic decision to burn," he said.

Financial Post

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Dominick Reuter/AFP/Getty ImagesDonald Trump made support for the coal industry and miners a prominent part of his presidential campaign narrative.

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