Message

From: John Cannella [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=CD667C6D53774DD0A749783BB02AE89D-JOHN CANNEL]
Sent: 2017-05-08 6:27:14 AM
Subject: Today's News - Monday, May 8, 2017

Today's News

powered by:

Date: Monday, May 8, 2017
Edited by: John Cannella (John.Cannella@ieso.ca)

Contact Editor

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Industry News

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Electricity costs continue to plague some Ontario small businesses; Despite the provincial government's promise to implement relief programs for crushing hydro bills, businesses are in 'wait-and-see mode'

theglobeandmail.com - Sun May 7 2017, 4:31pm ET
Byline:SHOWWEI CHU

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North Bay Nugget - Sat May 6 2017
Byline: Vic Fedeli
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Windsor Star - Mon May 8 2017
Byline: Trevor Wilhelm, Windsor Star

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Welland Tribune - Sat May 6 2017
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Electricity costs continue to plague some Ontario small businesses; Despite the provincial government's promise to implement relief programs for crushing hydro bills, businesses are in 'wait-and-see mode'

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An Ontario artisanal cheese maker wants to take his business off the grid and a food processor is being counselled to use more electricity in order to qualify for an energy-conservation program.

These small- and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are contemplating actions they normally wouldn't take in order to deal with Ontario's soaring electricity costs, even though the province has pledged more financial aid to relieve them.

On April 27, the Wynne government promised to spend $2.5-billion (www.fin.gov.on.ca) over the next three years on relief programs to help households and SMBs deal with their crushing hydro bills.

Under the Fair Hydro Plan, households and about 500,000 small businesses and farms can expect their electricity bills to drop an average of 25 per cent starting this summer. The reduction includes an 8-per-cent rebate that began on Jan. 1 and an additional 17 per cent that comes from lower time-of-use (www.oeb.ca) rates effective May 1.

Julie Kwiecinski of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said the group's 42,000 Ontario members are in wait-and-see mode. "The real picture of what the government's hydro plan will mean to each of our members won't be revealed until they start seeing their bills this summer."

Electricity costs have been an issue for SMBs in Ontario after mandatory smart meters were introduced in November, 2010, charging time-of-use prices. Unlike households, many small businesses operate during regular business hours and have to pay on-peak rates for electricity that are more than twice (www.oeb.ca) as much as off-peak rates.

"We would like to have seen time of use eliminated altogether," Ms. Kwiecinski said. "But at least time-of-use rates are going down and some of the pressure is being taken off."

Ratepayers face other pressures on their hydro bills. In addition to time-of-use rates, there is a regulatory charge, a debt-retirement charge, a delivery charge for distribution and transmission of electricity and a global-adjustment fee, which partly covers the $50-billion investments the provincial government made in recent years on nuclear reactors, natural-gas-fired power plants and wind turbines.

Tor Krueger, owner of Udder Way Artisan Cheese Co. of Stoney Creek, Ont., said his hydro bills really shot up this past winter and that's why he wants to get his power off the grid.

"I'm definitely pushing for it because, for me, it's the thing that makes the most sense," he said.

Mr. Krueger recently got a loan from the Business Development Bank of Canada to upgrade his facility so he can get federal certification and sell his handmade goat cheeses across Canada. To get off Ontario's electricity system, he'll need to get his landlord on board because he cannot afford the $50,000 to $60,000 investment.

In addition to lower time-of-use prices, the Wynne government has pledged to cover a number of electricity-support programs previously paid by ratepayers and will eliminate the debt-retirement charge for commercial and industrial users next April.

The government also has promised to refinance a portion of the global adjustment (news.ontario.ca) over a longer period of time to give today's ratepayers a break.

Mid-size businesses won't qualify for the 25-per-cent reduction on their hydro bills because they use more than 250,000 kilowatt-hours (kwh) of electricity a year and exceed a demand of 50 kilowatts (kw), according to the government (www.ontario.ca).

Some will now be able to sign up for the Industrial Conservation Initiative (ICI), whose participation threshold is being lowered to 500 kw from a monthly average-peak demand of over one megawatt. The ICI was introduced in 2010 to give larger electricity users a break on their bills by shifting hydro consumption to off-peak hours.

"But there's still a large swath of companies - probably two or three thousand - that really don't have any opportunities available to them," said Ian Howcroft, a vice-president at Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME). "And we need to ensure that there is some type of program to address their high electricity costs."

The CME has urged the Ontario government to create an industrial-electricity rate - something manufacturers and food processors such as Kisko Products Inc., the maker of Mr. Freeze, could really use.

The Woodbridge, Ont.-based company spent over $100,000 last year to install energy-efficient LED lighting in its offices and factory. But while its electricity costs dropped, the global-adjustment fee kept rising along with the company's total bill, which stood at more than $277,000 in 2016.

"As a medium-size business trying to survive in a very competitive environment, how in the world do I recoup that money?" asked Kisko president Mark Josephs, who is celebrating the family business's 40th anniversary this year.

He said ECNG Energy - an energy-efficiency auditor - recommended Kisko get an assessment to see if it makes sense for the company to use more electricity and qualify for the ICI program.

"I think this is absolutely ridiculous," he said. "So this is what we're being told to do in order to ensure we don't get hosed even more."

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Energy minister misleading the North

North Bay Nugget - Sat May 6 2017
Byline: Vic Fedeli
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To the editor: Once again, I need to write to address the misleading facts Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault is intent on spreading.

I find it truly troubling a cabinet minister in Ontario believes he can say anything he wants, even if it's not true.

After reading his April 29 interview with The Nugget, it's clear he has not read the provincial budget.

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines'budget this year is $767 million. Not only is that $70 million less than last year, it's even less than the $804 million the ministry had back as far as 2014.

So coming up with some "we had one-time money last year" excuse is just that - an excuse. The budget has been slashed again - the facts are the facts.

I would have hoped a minister from Northern Ontario would have actually read the budget, especially the sections that deal with the North.

With respect to the Ring of Fire, an infrastructure commitment was in the 2014 budget, then cut-and-pasted into the 2015 budget, and again copied and put into the

2016 budget.

Sadly, there was no mention of the Ring of Fire in this year's budget. Not one single word. It's apparent that unless we keep pushing for this huge project, the Liberal government will continue to ignore the North.

Vic Fedeli

Nipissing MPP

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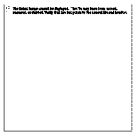

272824402

Chamber of Commerce calls for suspension of cap and trade in Ontario

Windsor Star - Mon May 8 2017
Byline: Trevor Wilhelm, Windsor Star

The Windsor region's Chamber of Commerce has joined forces with others from across Ontario to demand the province kill its cap and trade program, saying it is having a devastating economic impact on local business.

Matt Marchand, president and CEO of the Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce, said Sunday the stakes are high in Essex County. He said the potentially high cost of working under the cap and trade system could have businesses, such as Essex County's greenhouses and agri-food operations, fleeing to coal burning jurisdictions like Ohio.

"It's the layering of all these costs - the 400 per cent increase in electricity prices, now greenhouses have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars a year in carbon taxes," said Marchand. "And to what end? All we end up doing is shipping the jobs to Ohio so they can plug into a coal plant. I think at some point you have to ask yourself, does this make a lot of sense? I think the collective answer is no it doesn't."

The resolution calling on the government to suspend cap and trade passed over the weekend at the Ontario Chamber of Commerce annual general meeting in Sarnia. The Windsor-Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce was among nine chambers to co-sponsor the resolution.

"It's really a collective effort of all chambers across Ontario coming together to speak with one voice on the detrimental impact of cap and trade on our ability to drive investment and jobs here in Ontario," said Marchand.

Cap and trade is a government-mandated effort to reduce pollution by giving economic incentives for reducing emissions. The government sells permits allowing businesses to produce pollutants. Organizations that want to increase emissions must buy more permits from others willing to sell them.

The chambers argue that with the introduction of cap and trade to Ontario on Jan. 1, businesses and communities are at risk of being unable to transition to a low carbon economy and still remain viable.

He said businesses like greenhouses that use a lot of energy are more exposed to the effect of cap and trade, and are at risk of subsidizing other industries instead of making the intended transitions.

The chambers maintain that such businesses are not being given enough opportunity to develop new technology and processes to meet the carbon emission targets. They argue these industries will pay significant fees for credits while facing major technological hurdles to reduce carbon emissions that will cost millions of dollars.

While the companies are facing these costs, Marchand said there is a risk that cap and trade proceeds could be directed away from their industries, giving little support in the development of low carbon technologies.

If the government won't suspend the system, the chambers have several suggestions for mitigating the "risks."

Those suggestions include investing in local economies an amount equal to what was drawn through cap and trade.

The chambers want to ensure that cap and trade proceeds from exposed industries are used to develop processes and technologies to help them meet emissions targets. They also want the government to allow adequate time for more research and development or give credit to companies that are developing low-carbon technology.

The chambers are also urging the government to recognize other environmental priorities and regulations so businesses are able to meet all emission targets. Finally, they want increased cost offsets and support from the government to ensure small businesses can stay competitive.

Marchand said the system puts Ontario at a disadvantage because the only U.S. state using cap and trade is California, which recently raised the cost of its credits.

"Essentially, at the moment, we're just doing cap and trade with ourselves," he said.

"So the end result of all this is Ontario is just too expensive to do business. It hurts consumers paying more at the pump.

"And, as the auditor general points out, it's not going to have any impact or little impact on emissions. It's one of those ideas that sound good when you talk about it in theory. But when you apply it, it actually makes things worse."

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Wind-farm tree-cutting case back in court July 14

Sarnia Observer - Sat May 6 2017
Byline: Neil Bowen
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Companies charged with a Environmental Protection Act violation by cutting trees to make way for a wind farm project will be back in a Sarnia court July 14.

Prior to the July 14 appearance the companies will be reviewing the prosecution's evidence.

Contractor AMEC Foster Wheeler Americas Ltd., current wind farm owner Cedar Point II GP Inc. and former owner Suncor Energy Products Inc. have been charged under the EPA.

All three companies have been charged with a provincial offence for failing to comply with a condition of a renewable energy approval by removing vegetation and/or woodland during the construction of the Cedar Point wind farm in 2015.

Almost an acre worth of Lambton Shores trees - some in provincially significant wetlands - were cleared.

That's on top of another acre of Lambton Shores woodlands inappropriately removed by a private landowner with ties to the Cedar Point project.

The private landowner paid a fine of $6,000 in early 2016, but the Ontario Environment Ministry didn't lay environmental charges against the companies involved in the separate woodlot-clearing case until recently.

Now fully operational, the 46-turbine Cedar Point wind farm spans across Plympton-Wyoming, Lambton Shores and Warwick Township, generating enough electricity to power 30,000 homes in an average year.

Ministry officials started investigating the tree cutting tied to the Cedar Point project in May 2015 after they received a report of protected trees being cut down by the project's contractor.

Members of We're Against Industrial Turbines, Plympton-Wyoming (WAIT-PW) noticed the damaged woodlots and reported it to the ministry, spokesperson Santo Giorno has said.

Giorno said Friday he will be returning in July to watch proceedings. nbowen@postmedia.com With files from Barbara Simpson, Sarnia Observer

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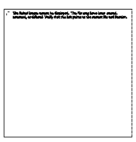

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Hydro plants built to impress

Welland Tribune - Sat May 6 2017
Byline: Karena Walter
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YOU ASK. WE ANSWER. Q: As I was driving in Niagara Falls past Dufferin Islands near the falls, I noticed how beautiful the detailing on the power authority buildings is. It must have been some intensive work to get the shaping of corners and windows on those buildings. The architecture of those buildings are a treasure and I was wondering who cast or built them for the authority? I made a U-turn and saw part of the engravement is spelled with a "v," as in avthority. Why is there a "v" instead of a "u" on the engravement? A: The stately facades of the old power plants along the Niagara Parkway in Queen Victoria Park have stood the test of time.

Their 1905-era builders went out of their way to create grand structures, said Jim Hill, superintendent of heritage for Niagara Parks Commission.

"They were built to impress," Hill said. "They knew there was a sensitivity that they were building these plants in a park. They couldn't just build industrial buildings. They had to put a little effort into the appearance of these places."

But the private hydro companies were also trying to put their best foot forward from a marketing point of view.

Hill said they were selling new technology to consumers, competing against the gas companies, and needed to appear like a safe, solid choice.

"It was a conscious decision to not just build practical modern power plants but make them look aesthetically pleasing and also give this sense of age."

Instead of trying to look sleek and hip, he said they tried to convey their technology was actually the oldest around.

"This is the power of the gods that we're harnessing and it isn't new and scary, it's actually been with us forever and we've just gotten so smart we know how to harness it."

Millions of potential customers would drive by the buildings when visiting Niagara Falls.

There are four former power plant buildings along a short drive, built in 1905 and 1906.

The most stunning is the Toronto Power Generating Station, which says Electrical Development Co. of Ontario Limited above its entrance.

Hill said it was built by M.L.

Peppard and designed by Edward James Lennox, who also designed Sir Henry Pellat's Casa Loma in Toronto. Pellat was an investor in the plant. It operated until 1974.

The gothic-looking Canadian Niagara Power Company building, also known as Rankine Generating Station, is surrounded by water at Fraser Hill. It was designed by Algernon S. Bell, who was associated with the financiers J. P. Morgan, William Rankine and Edward Adams. Built by Anthony Douglas of Cataract Construction, it was in operation the longest until 2009.

Riders of the new zip line land on a platform next to the Ontario Power Generating Station. It's in the gorge by Murray Hill and was built by O.B. Suhr. The designer was Paul N. Nunn and it ran until 1999.

The Ontario Power Company's Gate House is located by Dufferin Island.

Hill said the buildings symbolized the height of technology of the day, but their construction was less so, with stones hauled away by horse-drawn carts.

As for some company names chiselled with the letters "V" instead of "u" - it's an old Roman style likely used to add to their old-fashioned appearance.

Hill said it gives the buildings a classical vibe, taking you back to a totally different era.

"It's kind of cool that they were built to impress over 100 years ago, and people in the 21st century are still impressed," Hill said. "The builders and the designers back then can be proud. They were coming out of the 19th century and even in the 21st century people are still impressed with the scale and look of these unique buildings." Send your queries to Karena Walter by email at kwalter@postmedia.com; by Twitter @karena_ standard or through Facebook at www.facebook.com/karenawalter Fact finder The four former power plant buildings on Niagara Parkway came under the care of Niagara Parks Commission in 2005 after it signed an agreement with Ontario Power Generation and Fortis Ontario. The commission is currently looking at adaptive re-use and procurement opportunities for the properties. "These facilities will allow us to examine and potentially create additional world class experiences and products, while remaining consistent with our overall mission, vision and stewardship responsibilities," Niagara Parks Commission Chair Janice Thomson said in an email.

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Manitoba Hydro wants to raise rates 46% in 5 years

CBC.CA News - Fri May 5 2017, 9:20pm ET
Byline:CBC News

Mounting debt is forcing Manitoba Hydro to increase rates across the province, the Crown corporation says.

The company is asking the Public Utility Board if it can raise rates by 7.9 per cent this year and next.

If approved, the new rates would come into effect Aug. 1, 2017 and then April 1, 2018.

This year's rate increase is on top of the 3.36 per cent rate increase approved last year. Manitoba Hydro says it intends to raise rates by almost eight per cent for five years. That means cumulatively, between 2016 and 2021, rates will rise 46.25 per cent. After that, the utility predicts it will only need to ask for two per cent annual rate increases.

Manitoba Hydro CEO Kelvin Shepherd called the rate jump absolutely necessary.

"Two major projects, the Keeyask Generating Station and Bipole III transmission line at the same time, has resulted in Manitoba Hydro taking on a significant amount of debt to finance the construction," he said in a news release.

After the completion of both these projects, Manitoba Hydro estimates its debt will have grown from $11 billion to $23 billion.

Businesses, poverty advocates concerned

Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Loren Remillard said the hike is disconcerting for the local business community, especially smaller manufacturers.

"What we're talking about here, a potential 46 per cent increase in a very short period of time ? that may be such a sharp rise ? it may present a hardship for small businesses to absorb that," he said.

Josh Brandon, a spokesperson with the Social Planning Council, said megaprojects should not be financed on the backs of the poor.

"That will be the highest rate increase we have seen in a generation," he said.

"That is going to have a very significant impact on the lives of low-income people who are already struggling."

Manitoba Hydro said along with mounting debt from the large projects, it is concerned about a range of other risks, including the potential for a drought hitting production and ongoing capital costs relating to maintenance of existing Hydro infrastructure.

A decline in electricity exports to the United States of 25 to 30 per cent since 2008 has hit the utility's revenue, said Manitoba Hydro.

Without rate increases, Shepherd said Manitoba Hydro's core business would be running at a loss.

Hydro rates in Manitoba have long been some of the lowest in North America, with only Quebec offering lower electricity rates.

Those low costs have historically been one of Manitoba's greatest competitive advantages, said Remillard. Despite his concerns that Manitoba will become less attractive to business, he said he understands why Hydro wants to increase rates.

"We do respect Hydro's management and board as it works to try to address what are some serious, significant financial challenges," he said.

Shepherd said Hydro's grand plan is to become leaner and more customer-focused.

In February, the Crown corporation announced it would be cutting roughly 900 positions along with reducing its executive team by 30 per cent.

with files from Marianne Klowak and Laura Glowacki

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